



Sister Abhaya murder case: life imprisonment for two accused

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Army chief General Naravane reviews situation along LAC

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Donald Trump rejects COVID-19 aid Bill, calls it 'a disgrace'

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BCCI to hold its Annual General Meeting in Ahmedabad today

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NEARBY



Gupkar alliance leads in DDC polls in J&K

SRINAGAR
The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an amalgam of six parties, on Wednesday managed to sweep six district councils, with an edge in six others, and the BJP managed to secure five councils, with an edge in one district in the maiden District Development Council polls held in 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir. The Gupkar alliance has won 110 seats across the Union Territory.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

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The Hindu Group bags WAN-IFRA awards

CHENNAI
The Hindu Group won two golds and two silvers at WAN-IFRA's South Asian Digital Media Awards. The awards are presented in recognition of outstanding work done by news publishers in digital media.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

Samyukt Kisan Morcha rejects govt. offer to resume talks

Outfit says it wants withdrawal of anti-farmer laws, and not changes to them

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, a joint front of farmer unions, on Wednesday rejected the Union government's offer of talks on the three farm laws, saying they were seeking the revocation of the legislation and not just amendments.

It urged the government to come out with concrete proposals showing an "open mind" and "good intentions" to resume the process of negotiation at the earliest.

Swaraj India national president Yogendra Yadav, reading out a letter from the Morcha to the government, said that farmer unions wanted the government to repeal the



Keeping warm: Flavoured jaggery and milk being distributed among farmers at Ghazipur on Wednesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

three laws, raising fundamental questions with regard to their constitutionality, basic objectives and policy direction. But the go-

vernment had attempted to present these fundamental objections as mere demands for amendments. The letter was addressed to the Joint

Khaps' lead agitation in Haryana

Though the farmers agitation in Punjab is primarily led by farmer unions with substantial political support, "khaps", community organisations representing a clan or a group of related clans, are spearheading the movement in Haryana. ▶ PAGE 9

Secretary of the Agriculture Department and CEO of PM-KISAN, Vivek Aggarwal.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

West Bengal CM speaks to protesting farmers

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday reached out to the protesting farmers in Delhi and assured them the support of her party.

This is the second time this month that she has spoken to the farmers protesting against the farm Bills passed by the Centre.

During the day, a five-member delegation of Trinamool Congress MPs met the farmers in Delhi. The delegation comprised Derek O'Brien, Satabdi Roy, Prasun Banerjee, Pratima Mondal and Md. Nadimul Haque.

Many farmers in small groups had an interaction on the telephone with Mamata Banerjee who assured them of full solidarity with their

movement. Some farmers also requested her to visit the dharna site," a press statement issued by the party said.

"Please come & join our dharna it will give us more strength," said a farmer on the phone to @MamataOfficial. A 5-member delegation of AITOfficial MPs visited Singhur border again to express solidarity with protest-

ing farmers. Bengal CM spoke to multiple groups #KisanDiwas," Mr. O'Brien, TMC's national spokesperson, tweeted.

On December 4, Ms. Banerjee sent a delegation to meet the protesting farmers and reached out to them over telephone. The TMC leadership had hit the streets in Kolkata in protest against the farm Acts.

Cairn Energy wins arbitration award

Will consider all options: India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A taxing journey

A timeline of the conflict

January 2014: Income Tax Department seeks information from Cairn Energy about group reorganisation done in 2006

March 2015: Cairn Energy receives draft assessment order from I-T Department, citing retrospective legislation to seek ₹10,247 crore in taxes. Cairn reacts by filing a notice of dispute

May 2018: Pending arbitration proceedings, I-T Department begins selling Cairn shares to recover tax dues

2018: Three-member international arbitration tribunal concludes hearings in tax dispute

December 23, 2020: Cairn Energy wins arbitration

arbitration award and "will consider all options and take a decision on the further course of action, including legal remedies before appropriate fora."

The government was asked to compensate Cairn "for the total harm suffered," together with interest and cost of arbitration, according to the order.

While the order does not contain a provision for challenge or appeal, the government said it would study the

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Cabinet nod for 100% FDI in DTH service

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in direct-to-home (DTH) services, extension of the licence period from 10 years to 20 and a reduced licence fee.

At a press meet, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar said, "The Commerce Ministry had already spoken of 100% FDI in the DTH sector but because of the guidelines issued by the Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry, the FDI was limited to 49%. We have corrected that aberration today."

The licence fee had been reduced in keeping with the rates in the telecom sector, he stated. A statement from the I&B Ministry said the proposed reduction was intended to align the licence fee regime applicable to the telecom sector and would be prospectively applied.

"The difference may also enable DTH service providers to invest for more coverage, leading to increased operations and higher growth and thereby enhanced and regular payment of license fee by them," the statement said.

Currently, India has 18 crore television sets.

Changes to SC scholarship scheme get govt. approval

Aim is to enable 4 crore students to access higher education

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday approved changes to the post-matric scholarship scheme for students from the Scheduled Castes, including a new funding pattern of 60-40 for the Centre and the States.

The changes were aimed at enabling four crore students to access higher education over the next five years, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Tha-

warchand Gehlot said at a press briefing.

Switching from the existing "committed liability" formula, the new funding pattern would increase the Centre's involvement in the scheme, a statement said. An investment of ₹59,048 crore, of which ₹35,534 crore would be the Centre's share, had been approved.

Acknowledging the delays that have plagued the scheme, Mr. Gehlot said now the amount would be sent to the beneficiaries' accounts

directly.

Social Justice Secretary R. Subrahmanyam said the changes approved by the Cabinet were aimed at enrolling the poorest students, ensuring timely payments and maintaining accountability. He said an estimated 1.36 crore students who would otherwise drop out after Class 10 would be brought into the higher education system under the scheme in five years.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Tamil Nadu govt. gives go-ahead for jallikattu

Every bull tamer will have to get tested



Youth taking part in a jallikattu training session at Pillamaikanpatti near Dindigul, Tamil Nadu. ■ FILE PHOTO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government has permitted jallikattu to be held across the State during the coming Pongal season. But the bull-taming sport would be subject to fresh restrictions in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to an official press release, not more than 300 bull tamers would be allowed to take part in a jallikattu, "manjuvittu" or 'vadamadu' event. All the spectators would have to undergo thermal screening before entering the venue.

To ensure adherence to physical distancing norms, the number of spectators would be limited to 50% of the venue's capacity.

All bull tamers taking part in jallikattu events have to get a certificate from a government-recognised lab, stating that they have tested negative for COVID-19," the press release said.

Distancing norms
Members of the audience would have to wear masks and adhere to distancing norms. A standard operating procedure for conducting jallikattu events would be issued soon. This would be in addition to the SOP being followed since 2017.

Members of jallikattu organising committees, bull owners and tamers and residents across Madurai district welcomed the State government's decision.

Delhi has lowest positivity in entire country, says Jain

City sees less than 1,000 new COVID-19 cases for the third consecutive day; 18 more deaths reported



A health worker conducting COVID-19 test at Sant Ravidas Nagar in north Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed less than 1,000 new COVID-19 cases for the third consecutive day on Wednesday, prompting Health Minister Satyendar Jain to say that the city has the lowest positivity rate in the entire country.

A total of 871 new cases and 18 more deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

0.99% positivity
In all, 87,861 tests were conducted, pushing the positivity

rate to 0.99% in Delhi.

Of the total 6,19,618 cases in the Capital, 6,01,268 people have recovered and there are 8,003 active cases. Also, a total of 10,347 COVID-related deaths have been reported so far.

Reacting to the declining number of new COVID-19 cases, Mr. Jain said: "The [COVID-19] positivity rate has been continuously declining and is the lowest in eight months. Also, for the past three days, Delhi is seeing less than 1,000 cases, and the positivity rate is well under control. Delhi has the lowest positivity rate in the

entire country." About the preparedness of Delhi to roll out the vaccine, he said all necessary requirements are being met and the AAP government is waiting for the vaccine.

"In the first phase of the roll-out, healthcare and front-line workers, people aged above 50 and those with medical complications will get vaccinated," he said.

The government is tracing everyone who travelled to the city from the U.K. since November 25, said a Delhi government spokesperson.

11 PASSENGERS POSITIVE ▶ PAGE 3

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Ludhiana teachers reach Singhu border in show of solidarity

They demand repeal of the farm laws

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A group of 50 schoolteachers from Ludhiana reached Singhu border on Wednesday in solidarity with the farmers' who are protesting against the three controversial agriculture laws brought in by the Centre.

The teachers, who were accompanied by their families, demanded repeal of the laws and said that the government was forcing rules on farmers that were neither desirable nor beneficial to them.

Parminder Kaur, a school teacher from Baba Mukand Singh Senior Secondary School in Ludhiana, said: "The laws the government and the Prime Minister have made are something that we do not want."

C The laws the Central government and the Prime Minister have made are something that we do not want

PARMINDER KAUR
Schoolteacher

The teachers claimed to be one of the first few representatives from schools across States to be visiting the protest site along with their families and children.

Taken leave

"We are here in solidarity with the farmers and we have taken leaves from our work to make the journey and be a part of this protest. We are here for a day and will be returning back home later in the evening. What is the government's issue in taking back the laws? Our demand is simple: the laws should be repealed," said Ms. Kaur.



A group of teachers from Ludhiana with their children at the Singhu border on Wednesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR



Farmers protest against the Central laws at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in Ghazipur; women protesters at the Singhu border in Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA AND SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR



Farmers protest against the Central laws at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in Ghazipur; women protesters at the Singhu border in Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA AND SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

'Desi geysers' a boon for farmers to beat the cold

Sikh committee distributes hundreds of water heaters free of cost to the protesters for bathing purposes at Singhu border

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

With another cold wave forecast to sweep the national capital, 'Desi Geysers' have made their way to the farmers' stir at the Singhu border to help protesters heat water for bathing purposes, among other utilities.

On Wednesday, hundreds of protesting farmers were seen carrying the steel geysers back to their trolleys, some of which were stationed kilometres away from the main stage that has been erected at the protest site.

Vikram Singh, a resident of Kaithal in Haryana, said that with the mercury dipping, bathing had proved to

be a difficult activity since his arrival to the Delhi border.

The 'desi geysers' use wood to heat up water.

Biting cold

"We have been here for almost a week now. Our trolley is parked nearly six kilometres from the main stage. In fact, our trolleys are towards the beginning of the other side of the protest. All these days we were taking a bath from water tankers kept in some of the open spaces, but the biting cold had made the activity difficult. However, now with these geysers, it will be easier as we can just put some wood and heat the water," said Mr. Singh.



'Desi geysers' being distributed by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee at the farmers' protest site in Singhu border on Wednesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Harwinder Singh Tony, another farmer from Mohali, said: "I have been here since the first day. It has been near-

ly a month now and with the cold getting worse, bathing in petrol pumps was becoming difficult. As for the tank-

ers, we had to share the water with several other people. But, now we can have these 'desi geysers' to ourselves and heat water whenever we want to."

The 'desi geysers' are also a common sight in our villages, the farmers added.

Big relief

A farmer from Ludhiana's Rauni village, Palwinder Singh, who is also volunteering at one of the langar services, said: "We have been using these geysers to heat up water, which can be used to wash utensils. We can even boil the water, though we do not use it for drinking purposes much. Distribution

of these heaters is a big boon for those protesting here."

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) on Wednesday distributed hundreds of such geysers, free of cost.

Hardeep Singh Oberoi, a Delhi resident and one of the volunteers with the DSGMC, said: "We have procured around 500 of these 'desi geysers' with contributions made by several people. Distribution started from Wednesday." We sit in our homes and take heated water for granted, but these geysers are a basic necessity for these farmers who are sitting outside in the cold without such a facility, he added.

Will help farmers prosecute BJP leaders: AAP

Party workers protest near South Delhi MP's house for his 'derogatory' remarks

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday said it will provide assistance to farmers who want to file a case against BJP leaders for their "defamatory" remarks against protesting farmers.

Earlier in the day, AAP workers protested near BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri's house for his alleged derogatory

comments about the protesting farmers, the party said.

"Leaders of the BJP have described the farmers as terrorists, anti-nationals, *gun-das*, *dalaals*, agents of Pakistan and China. The farmers now want justice. They have been requesting the Modi government to listen to them, but in turn were abused," said AAP national spokesperson Raghubir Chaddha.

AAP leaders who were going to protest outside Mr. Bidhuri's house were stopped by the police on

their way, said the party.

"Today, we have come here to protest against Mr. Bidhuri. We have only 50-60 people here but to stop us, the BJP has deployed around 500 policemen. This is because the BJP is very scared," AAP MLA Atishi said, adding:

"We demand that Mr. Bidhuri apologise to the farmers for his defamatory and derogatory comments."

Kejriwal encourages AUD graduates to be entrepreneurs, job providers

Delhi CM addresses university's ninth convocation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Addressing the ninth convocation of Ambedkar University Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday told students that they must look towards becoming entrepreneurs and becoming job providers.

He added that the Delhi government was launching a start-up policy that would guide them and provide legal, technical and financial support and requested students to avail the opportunity to start their own business in the politics of the country.

"Many of you have got

placements. I am not saying that you should give that up.

I am saying that you should gain experience in the field and then after a few years, your aim should be to quit the job and start something on your own," Mr. Kejriwal told students.

During the convocation, 1,003 students were awarded with PhD, MPhil, MBA, MA, UG degrees in various fields of studies.

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia congratulated the university and the students for earning their degrees in one of the toughest years for education due to the pandemic. He praised AUD for having a system of having continuous assessments and not relying on one examination at the end of the year.

Short Notice Inviting e-Tender

Assam Police Headquarters invites short notice tender through e-Tendering process from reputed Event Management (Media) agencies empanelled with atleast 1 (one) Navratna PSU in India for awareness campaign against Drug Abuse and Narcotics.

To participate in the tender process through e-procurement portal, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-II (minimum) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> in themselves.

The bidders have to download the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions from the e-Procurement portal of Govt. of Assam. The tender should be submitted on-line through <https://assamtenders.gov.in> as per the date & time prescribed in the RFP.

Dy. Inspector General of Police (MPC), Assam, Uluberia, Guwahati

Janasanyog No.C-9010-20

Office of the Superintending Engineer Irrigation Works Circle Dehradun

E-Tender Notice No. 11/SE/2020-21

Dated 22.12.2020

The Superintending Engineer, Irrigation Works Circle, Dehradun on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand, invites the item rate bids, in two bids system through electronic tendering, for following work from the eligible contractors registered in authorized/valid category for the estimated cost of tender in any department of central government/any state government/U.T. of India.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Earnest Money (In Lac Rs.)	Cost of Tender (In Rs.)	Validity of Tender	Period of Completion
1	Modernization and Renovation of Teltpura Canal in block Vikasnagar, Dist. Dehradun Under NABARD (C.M. Announcement No. 312/2019 (Reach between 1,950 Km to 5,800 Km at different parts of canal)	2.00	4000.00 + 720.00 (18% GST)	120 days	06 months
2	Modernization and Renovation of Teltpura Canal service road in block Vikasnagar, Dist. Dehradun Under NABARD (C.M. Announcement No. 312/2019)	3.70	5000.00 + 900.00 (18% GST)	120 days	06 months

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 26-12-2020.
Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 09-01-2021 upto 05:00 PM
For further details please log on to www.uktenders.gov.in

(R K Tiwari)
Superintendent Engineer
DIPR/UK/14453

Office of the Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Purulia

E-Tender Notice No. 06/EE/2020-21

Dated. 21.12.2020

The Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division, Purulia on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand, invites the item rate bids, in two bids system through electronic tendering, for following work from the eligible contractors registered in authorized/valid category for the estimated cost of tender in any department of central government/any state government/UT of India

Sl. No.	Name of work	Earnest Money (In Lac Rs)	Cost of Tender (In Rs.)	Validity of Tender	Period of Completion
1	Renovation of Bursi, Matari, Odgaon Matari, Darogi, Dhruin-Ildn, Thatri, Setwari, Sera, Barni, Thakra, Naryunka, Sameh-Sari, Siguni-Ist channels in Naugaon block damage due to deviya apada district Uttarkashi under NABARD (Job 1- Renovation of Matari, Odgaon Matari and Darogi Minor)	0.75	2000.00 + 360.00 (18% GST)	120 Days	02 month
2	Renovation of Bursi, Matari, Odgaon Matari, Darogi, Dhruin-Ildn, Thatri, Setwari, Sera, Barni, Thakra, Naryunka, Sameh-Sari, Siguni-Ist channels in Naugaon block damage due to deviya apada district Uttarkashi under NABARD (Job 2- Renovation of Dhruin, Thatri, Setwari and Bursi Minor)	0.75	2000.00 + 360.00 (18% GST)	120 Days	02 month
3	Renovation of Bursi, Matari, Odgaon Matari, Darogi, Dhruin-Ildn, Thatri, Setwari, Sera, Barni, Thakra, Naryunka, Sameh-Sari, Siguni-Ist channels in Naugaon block damage due to deviya apada district Uttarkashi under NABARD (Job 3- Renovation of Sera, Naryunka and Singuni-Ist Minor)	0.97	3000.00 + 540.00 (18% GST)	120 Days	02 month
4	Renovation of Bursi, Matari, Odgaon Matari, Darogi, Dhruin-Ildn, Thatri, Setwari, Sera, Barni, Thakra, Naryunka, Sameh-Sari, Siguni-Ist channels in Naugaon block damage due to deviya apada district Uttarkashi under NABARD (Job 4- Renovation of Barni, Thakra and Simalsari Minor)	0.94	3000.00 + 540.00 (18% GST)	120 Days	02 month
5	Renovation of Kotgaon Canal in Mori Block, Dist-Uttarkashi.	0.75	2500.00 + 450.00 (18% GST)	120 Days	06 month
6	Renovation and Face-liftation of Warm water spring pond at Yamunotri, Dist.Uttarkashi.	0.96	3000.00 + 540.00 (18% GST)	120 Days	06 month

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement 25-12-2020
Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement 09-01-2021 upto 05:00 PM
For further details please log on to www.uktenders.gov.in

(H.K. Ghildiyal)
Executive Engineer
DIPR/UK/14453

Office of the Special Officer and Competent Authority I Monetary Advisory (IMA)

Public Notice for extending claim submission period under Section 7(2) of the Karnataka Protection of Interest of the Depositors in Financial Establishments Act, 2004 (KPIDFE)

- It is hereby informed that as per the orders of the Hon'ble Special Court dated 23.12.2020, the last date for submission of claims by the depositors of IMA has been extended till 03.01.2021.
- All other information informed in earlier public notice dated 25.11.2020, should be read as part and parcel of this notice.
- Depositors, who neither have an Aadhaar number nor a bank account in the country as well those who do not have an ID allotted by the IMA, have also been facilitated to file online claims. Please see website or Chatbot for more details.
- As per Section 7(3) of the Act, any claim applications received after the last date of submission will not be entitled for payment.
- Additional information about claims submission procedure can be obtained by the applicants through any of the following: call centre "080-46885959" between 8AM and 8PM, or the website "imaclaims.karnataka.gov.in", or email "splocaima20@gmail.com" or WhatsApp number "7975568880" or the Chatbot link <https://bot.v-connect.in> or the office of the Competent Authority at 2nd Floor, BMTC Complex, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560027.

Sd/- Special Officer and Competent Authority under KPIDFE Act, 2004 for IMA case, Bengaluru

No.RC/E(Try-Staff)172/2019/116/6592

NOTICE

A Written Test was conducted on 15th March, 2020 at Karmashri Hiteswar Siksha Junior College, Panjabari Road, Six Mile, Guwahati-781022, Assam and Atal Adarsh Vidyalya, Moti Bagh, New Delhi for the post of Junior Accounts Assistant for the Sub-Treasury, Assam Bhawan, New Delhi advertised vide memo No.RC/E(Try-Staff)172/2019/28-29/4520-29 dated 6th November, 2019.

Result has been declared, Undermentioned Roll Numbers, who have qualified in the Written Test are hereby called for Computer Proficiency Test as details given below:-

(A) Roll Numbers: 64, 110, 193 & 355.

(B) Centre for Computer Proficiency Test.

Venue	National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) Delhi Centre, 2nd Floor, Parsvnath Metro Mall, Inderlok Metro Station, Inderlok Delhi-110052
Date	08-01-2021 (Friday)
Reporting Time	1.30 PM
Time of Examination	2.00 PM to 3.00 PM

The Call Letters in respect of the above candidates have been sent by speed post. If any candidate does not receive the call letter, he may contact the office of the undersigned.

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Janasanyog No.D-8578-20

Timings

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RISE 13:46 SET 01:51
FRIDAY, DEC. 25
RISE 07:12 SET 17:32
RISE 14:16 SET 02:43
SATURDAY, DEC. 26
RISE 07:12 SET 17:32
RISE 14:49 SET 03:36

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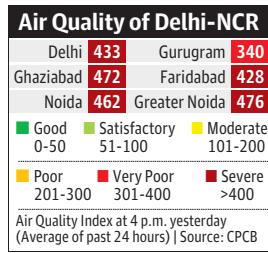
Delhi Palam Today
23°C Moderate to dense fog during morning with cold wave condition. A pleasant sunny day. Pollution level would improve.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
22°C A cold wave condition with dense fog in morning. A pleasant dry day with sunny sky likely.

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THE HINDU

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'Change ward of inmates who threatened Ishrat Jahan'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday directed the jail authorities here to change the ward of three inmates who had allegedly threatened and harassed former Congress councillor Ishrat Jahan, currently in Mandoli Jail after her arrest in connection with a northeast Delhi riots case.

The court also directed the Jail Superintendent to personally monitor all security related issues of Ms. Jahan and the activities of other inmates alleged to be involved in confrontation with her.

The direction came after Ms. Jahan, charged under the anti-terror law, the UAPA, claimed that she was facing "harassment, threats and physical abuse by few women inmates."

Delhi-Meerut RRTS takes shape as construction pace quickens

'Construction work at the Sarai Kale Khan station will begin early next year'

JATIN ANAND

GHAZIABAD

Work on the Uttar Pradesh side of Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS project is on in full swing.

"Visible signs of construction" at Sarai Kale Khan station in Delhi, a senior NCRRTC functionary associated with the project said, will begin manifesting in the first quarter of the coming year.

The 82-km-long Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor is not only the first RRTS corridor being implemented in the country but also the first project of its kind to utilise spherical bearings to enable speeds of up to 180 kilometres per hour and will bring down the travel time between Delhi to Meerut by around 1/3rd.

The commute time from Delhi to Meerut will be reduced to less than an hour from 3-4 hours by road at present. The priority section of the corridor is targeted to be completed in 2023 while the entire corridor will be completed in 2025, according to the National Capital Region Transport Corporation.

Even as foundation work for a viaduct is being undertaken at a fast pace with over 3600 piles and over 3000



Construction on the Sahibabad-Duhai priority section on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

piers having been casted between Sahibabad and Shatabdi Nagar, the launching of the spans of the viaduct is not only progressing but its superstructure is now visible on the stretch on the Meerut Road.

In fact, about one kilometre of the viaduct is ready on the 17-kilometre-long priority section between Sahibabad and Duhai, which will consist of the Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Guldhar and Duhai stations.

"Civil construction is gaining pace inside Delhi and Meerut and work is in full swing at casting yards in Va-

sundhara in Ghaziabad here and in Shatabdi Nagar in Meerut," Puneet Vats, chief public relations officer (CPRO), NCRRTC, said at the facility in Vasundhara on Wednesday.

"As far as the Delhi side is concerned, the resources required for construction on the ground are in the process of being mobilised and the signs of the work being in progress will begin manifesting, to give an estimate, over the next two months," Mr. Vats told *The Hindu*.

The RRTS station at Sarai Kale Khan – where all the three Phase I RRTS corridors

DDA exemption for RRTS structures

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Wednesday recommended a proposal to incorporate operational structures relating to Regional Rapid Transit System corridors in the Master Plan for Delhi - 2021, similar to exemption given to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. "After the notification, all RRTS tracks and buildings will be treated as operational structures and prior approval of local bodies shall not be required for undertaking the construction of these structures," said the DDA.

of Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut, Delhi-Gurugram-SNB-Alwar and Delhi-Panipat will converge – will be seamlessly integrated with the Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station, the Delhi Metro Pink Line's Hazrat Nizamuddin station and the Sarai Kale Khan Inter State Bus Terminal.

The Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS Corridor will have a total of 24 stations and will be elevated for around 70.5 km and 11.5 km of its stretch will be underground. The rolling stock or coaches will be manufactured in Savli, Gujarat under the Make in India initiative.

Nod for ordinance to extend protection to unauthorised colonies

'Move will help in development of Delhi'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

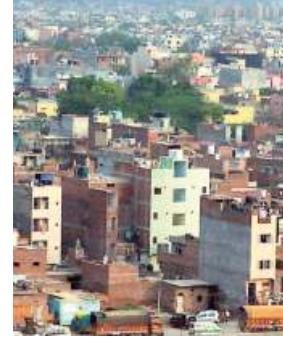
The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved an ordinance to extend the protections given to certain kinds of illegal constructions in Delhi from punitive action for another three years.

The protections to unauthorised colonies that were in existence as of March 31, 2002 till June 1, 2014, jhuggi jhompri or slum clusters (JJ clusters) and constructions on agricultural land were protected from demolition and sealing by the National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Act, 2017, till December 31, 2020.

Announcing the Cabinet's decision, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said it would help in the "development of Delhi".

He said unauthorised colonies, JJ clusters and buildings on agricultural land were deemed illegal, leading to courts giving directions to take action against them over the years.

In order to address this, the NCT of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Act, 2011 was enacted in 2011, follow-



Unauthorised colonies were deemed illegal, leading to court orders on action against them. ■ FILE PHOTO

ing which two three-year extensions were given in 2014 and 2017.

Mr. Javadekar said the Cabinet had approved the ordinance as there was no winter session of Parliament this time.

President's sign awaited
The ordinance would come into effect after the President signs it, he said.

He said legal protections would continue for lakhs of residents.

Since the next master-plan was being drafted, she lodged the complaint. She also alleged that he was pressurising her for depositing ₹55,000 more in his account, the officer said. Efforts are being made to nab the other co-accused, the police said.

Tantrik held for duping woman of ₹85,000

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 55-year-old occultist was arrested from Meerut for allegedly duping a woman in the name of performing rituals for "domestic peace", officials said on Wednesday.

The police received a complaint where the complainant said that she had come in contact of one Pandit Rahul Shashtri on November 19 through phone, they said.

He induced her for performing a *pooja* for domestic peace that would cost her ₹3,500 and also suggested some rituals over the phone.

During the conversation, the complainant was allegedly lured and she ended up depositing the money in his bank account.

The accused managed to get credited different amounts worth a total of ₹85,000 to his account, a senior police officer said.

When the woman realised she had been duped, she lodged the complaint. She also alleged that he was pressurising her for depositing ₹55,000 more in his account, the officer said.

He said legal protections would continue for lakhs of residents.

Since the next master-plan was being drafted, she lodged the complaint. She also alleged that he was pressurising her for depositing ₹55,000 more in his account, the officer said.

"Flyers who were in contact with the infected are being sent to quarantine for 14 days. The people who tested negative can go home, but medical teams will call them to inquire about any symptoms," the official said.

"All the people who have travelled from the United Kingdom to Delhi in the past two weeks will be traced, tested and advised quarantine," added Health Minister Satyendar Jain.

Delhi Police procures decibel meters to check noise pollution

Device will help personnel prosecute noise violations

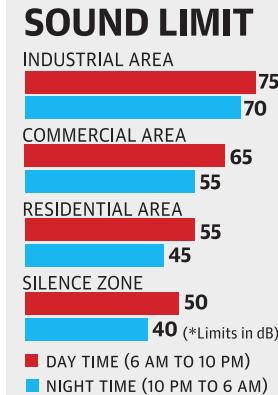
SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

To keep check on noise pollution in the city, the Delhi police have procured 150 sound level meters to identify and prosecute people responsible for noise pollution.

Sanjay Bhatia, DCP (Central) said that the real-time monitoring device will help police personnel measure noise and prosecute violations," said Mr. Bhatia.

He added that the Central District of Delhi Police has used the SLMs for the first time in Delhi and has trained its field officer to use the dev-



music on the stereo in a loud voice. High volume of the stereo was causing nuisance to the people around. Sound of the stereo was found 108.31 DB when measured on Sound Level Meter. The auto driver was fined.

In another case, a police received a call from Chandni Mahal area about a loud sound of DJ. It was checked by Sound Meter and voice found 145.55 db. Subsequently, a notice was issued under to the offender and was fined.

Mr. Bhatia said that in residential area 45 dB sound is permitted during night and if violation is found, then the person will be fined for ₹5,000. For industries the sound limit is 70 dB during night time.

A police officer said that a total of 150 SLMs have been distributed to 15 police districts and other units.

On December 21, an autorickshaw driver outside Jama Masjid was fined for playing

11 people from U.K. flights test positive

Yet to ascertain if they are infected with new strain, says laboratory

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A total of 11 people who travelled from the United Kingdom to Delhi in four flights have tested positive for COVID-19, said Genestrings Lab, which conducted man-

datory RT-PCR tests on the flyers at IGI Airport.

"Since the directive from the aviation ministry, a total of four flights have landed at the Airport. A total of 950 inbound passengers from London were tested at our lab at T3, IGI Airport, and 11 of them tested positive," the lab said in a statement.

The eleven swab samples have been sent to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) for genome sequencing.

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the city government to prepare a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for people who have recovered from COVID-19, but are suffering from post-COVID complications.

tions relating to lungs and other vital organs.

The court directed an Expert Committee constituted by the Delhi government to examine the post-COVID complications aspect and come up with an SOP.

The direction came after petitioner Rakesh Malhotra,

who was infected with COVID-19, said that people who have recovered from the virus are facing serious health issues and are finding it difficult to get back to normal life. "Needful shall be done within two weeks. A copy of the SOP shall be filed along with the next status re-

port," the court said while posting the case for further hearing on January 14.

The court also directed the Delhi government to ensure testing and follow-up in view of the fact that a large number of people had flown into Delhi before suspension of flights from the U.K.

Jahangirpuri, Bawana most polluted areas in Nov.

All 13 hotspots in the national capital witness a reduction in pollution, but still over safe limit

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

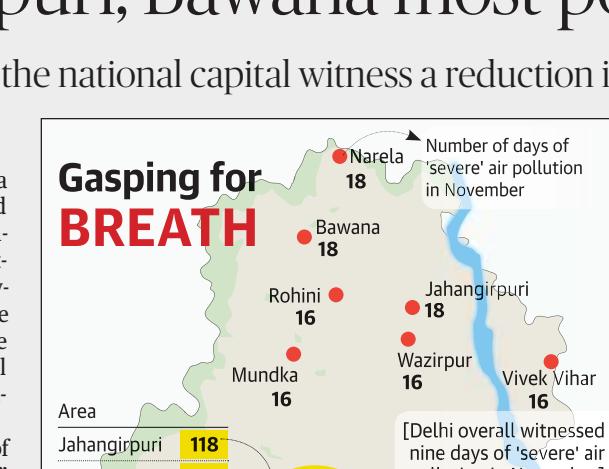
Jahangirpuri and Bawana were the most polluted areas in the city in November and both of them witnessed 18 days each of "severe" air pollution during the month, as per data of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), analysed by *The Hindu*.

Both the areas are part of 13 air pollution "hotspots" in Delhi, with higher levels of pollution compared to the rest of the city.

Among the hotspots, Mundka, Rohini, Wazirpur and Vivek Vihar were the second most polluted areas in November with each of them registering 16 days of "severe" Air Quality Index (AQI).

During the same period, the city as a whole experienced nine days of severe category air pollution.

Same throughout year
Jahangirpuri and Bawana are the most polluted areas in the city for the rest of the year also, in terms of concentration of Particulate Matter, PM2.5, a deadly pol-



ised industries and

Bihar junior doctors on strike for raise in stipend

'Govt. yet to fulfil promise made in 2017'

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

Hundreds of junior doctors of government-run medical colleges and hospitals in Bihar went on strike on Wednesday demanding increase in their monthly stipend. The strike affected health and emergency services in hospitals across the State.

"The State government had assured junior doctors in 2017 in writing that their monthly stipend would be increased once every three years. But 2020 is almost over and our stipend has not been increased yet," Harendra Kumar, the president of the Junior Doctors' Association at the Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH), told mediapersons.

Bihar has eight government-run medical colleges and hospitals where thousands of patients come every day for treatment. Dr. Kumar said the strike would continue "till their demand was fulfilled by the government".

The Resident Doctors' Association too has extended its support to the striking junior doctors.

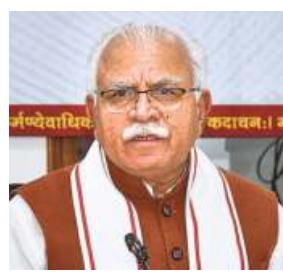
A long queue of patients was seen both at PMCH and the Nalanda Medical College and Hospitals in Patna.

Senior doctors were present in wards in view of the pandemic. "Because of the strike by junior doctors, it has become difficult to provide even emergency services," a senior doctor said.

Cases filed against 13 persons for blocking Haryana CM's convoy

FIR against group of protesting farmers mentions attempt to murder, rioting charges

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH



Manohar Lal ■ FILE PHOTO

The Haryana police have booked 13 people for attempt to murder, rioting, obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions among other charges after a group of farmers protesting the Centre's farm laws waved black flags at Chief Minister Manohar Lal's convoy and blocked its path in Ambala on Tuesday.

The police said an FIR has been registered in Ambala (City) police station against 13 persons who allegedly were involved in blocking

the movement of the 'pilot' vehicle of the CM's convoy and also damaged the bonnet of the vehicle by hurling sticks.

"We have booked 13 protesters on a complaint filed by police personnel on Tuesday under different sections. The accused obstructed public servants from discharging their duty, damaged public property. They attacked police personnel on duty with an intention to kill. So far, no one has been arrested," Ram Kumar, SHO, Ambala (City), told *The Hindu*.

According to the FIR, they have been booked under Sections 307 (attempt to murder), 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon), 149 (offence committed by any member of any unlawful assembly), 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 332 (voluntarily caus-

ing hurt to deter public servant from his duty), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) of the IPC.

Scores of protesters gathered near the Agrasen Chowk in Ambala (City) had on December 22 waved black flags, shouted slogans and blocked the road of the CM's convoy. They were protesting against the new farm laws.

Mr. Lal was in Ambala to address public gatherings for BJP candidates ahead of upcoming election to civic bodies.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.30 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Cold wave to severe cold wave conditions very likely at a few pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha

CITY **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala	-26.7	10.7	Kozhikode	33.9	24.6
Ahmedabad	-29.8	11.7	Kurnool	30.3	15.3
Aizawl	-23.0	8.1	Lucknow	24.3	8.1
Allahabad	-25.2	7.6	Madurai	0.8	22.1
Bengaluru	-27.5	16.6	Mangaluru	34.7	21.4
Bhopal	-28.0	9.6	Mumbai	30.7	19.6
Bhubaneswar	-27.8	12.4	Mysuru	29.0	19.0
Chandigarh	-22.7	6.0	New Delhi	23.3	4.0
Chennai	-29.6	20.4	Patna	24.0	8.4
Coimbatore	-26.4	20.8	Port Blair	0.8	29.7	23.2
Dehradun	-25.0	6.1	Puducherry	28.1	19.7
Gangtok	-14.5	6.2	Pune	29.0	9.7
Goa	-33.0	19.7	Raipur	28.3	11.2
Guwahati	-26.0	11.6	Ranchi	25.0	7.7
Hubballi	-29.0	16.0	Shillong	16.6	7.0
Hyderabad	-28.6	11.2	Shimla	18.1	7.0
Imphal	-22.8	4.2	Srinagar	9.4	4.2
Jaipur	-25.0	8.8	Thiruvananthapuram	0.2	32.7	24.2
Kochi	-31.2	24.6	Tiruchi	30.3	21.4
Kohima	-17.4	5.6	Vijayawada	28.8	17.5
Kolkata	-25.2	13.5	Visakhapatnam	28.4	18.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	34	98	16	147	194
Bengaluru	5	33	24	131	105
Chennai	5	38	158	130
Delhi	16	60	476	458
Hyderabad	7	105	12	143	144
Kolkata	27	32	70	373	302
Lucknow	4	36	34	432	384
Mumbai	15	43	14	356	43
Pune	103	103	103
Visakhapatnam	19	25	61	238	241

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 476 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 19

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Maharashtra's active cases drop to 54,573

7,620 patients discharged; 93 deaths push the toll to 48,969

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

As many as 7,620 patients were discharged across Maharashtra on Wednesday as opposed to 3,913 fresh COVID-19 cases. As per the State Health Department figures, the number of active cases has dipped below 55,000 to reach 54,573 while the total case tally stands at 18,99,352.

As many as 93 fatalities saw the death toll climb to 48,969. The cumulative recoveries now stand at 18,01,700 while the State's recovery rate has risen incrementally to 94.51%.

"Of a total 1,22,78,476 laboratory samples tested thus far, 19,06,371 (case positivity rate of 15.53%) have returned positive with nearly 66,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said, adding that the case fatality stood at 2.57%.

In the backdrop of a new strain in the virus, the State Health Department said that health officers at Mumbai international airport had



Police personnel keeping a vigil during the night curfew at Marine Drive in Mumbai. In the backdrop of a new strain of COVID-19 emerging in the U.K., Maharashtra has decided to impose night curfew till January 5. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

shared a complete list of travellers who arrived in Mumbai from England between November 23 and December 25 in accordance with the Centre's guidelines regarding surveillance of passengers coming from the U.K..

The State has segregated this line list and shared it with districts and municipal corporations across Maharashtra. Respective district administrations and civic bodies will search for these travellers and run a RT-PCR test on them. Samples of positive patients will be re-

ferred to the National Institute of Virology in Pune for genome sequencing. This test will verify whether the virus is matching with the new variant or not," Dr. Awate said.

He said that RT-PCR negative travellers would be followed up for 28 days from their day of arrival inside the country.

Mumbai city recorded 745 new cases to take its total tally to 2,88,561 of whom only 8,094 are active. As many as 14 fatalities saw the city's death toll touch 11,033.

Court dismisses Kangana's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

A civil court has dismissed a plea filed by actor Kangana Ranaut against the Mumbai civic body's 2018 notice for demolition of "unauthorised constructions" at her residential apartment in Khar, according to an order made available on Wednesday.

After the murder, Ms. Nadar, using Sarnaik's phone, changed his ATM pin on the banking app and then used the ATM card at Badlapur to withdraw ₹80,000. Later, the couple went to Bhayander and purchased gold worth ₹60,000 using the victim's credit card.

The couple has a three-year-old daughter who was asked to sit in the bedroom while the duo killed Sarnaik and then chopped the body.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Phone No : Fax No. 0194-2443031/2443032 (Sgr)
0194-2459029/249255(Imu)

Website: www.jkpolice.gov.in
Email: phjk@police.gov.in

(Previous Sector)

e-NIT No. 56 of 2020, Dated: 18.12.2020

E-tenders are invited from reputed and registered Aviation Companies having a minimum fleet of 3 (three) Airworthy Transport Helicopters preferably light weight, Single Engine/ air lift or helicopters of equivalent performance for hiring of a Helicopter on Wet Lease Basis for a term of 01 Year for multi-purpose use of the J&K Police & CAPF as per Eligibility conditions mentioned in (Annexure I) and Draft Wet Lease Agreement (Annexure II) of this e-NIT

The e-NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen / downloaded from the Ut's e-procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in from 18.12.2020 (1400 hours) to 08.01.2021 up to 1800 hours. Bidders submitting their bids on-line shall not be accepted and no document other than those mentioned in the e-NIT shall be accepted manually.

The tenders (technical bids only) will be opened online on 11.01.2021 at 1100 hours at Police Headquarters J&K Gulshan Ground Jammu. In case of unforeseen circumstances, the date of opening will be next working day or as notified separately.

Queries regarding this tender shall be submitted within 10 days of floating of this tender. Any clarification sought thereafter shall not be entertained.

Detailed tender documents (SBD) with terms and conditions are available on J&K e-Procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in.

Sd/-
No. 19/P/Elct-48/2020-21/56620-50
Rayees Mohammad Bhat IPS
Dt:- 18.12.2020
DIP/J-8996/20
For Director General of Police, J&K - Jammu

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P. C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Rashid S/o Israil R/v Vill. Dhantiya, P.S. Fatehganj West Distt. Bareilly UP** has committed (or are suspected to have committed) the offence under case **FIR No. 17/2019 u/s 380/420/120B IPC**, has been registered at **P.S. Lahori Gate, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said **Rashid S/o Israil** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, **Rashid S/o Israil** has absconded (or are concealing themselves to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Rashid S/o Israil**, **FIR No. 17/2019 u/s 380/420/120B IPC**, required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 10.02.2021.

By Order,
Sh. Pranav Joshi Lt. MM,
Room No.286
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
DP/793/N/2020-
Court Matter

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR (UT)

OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, MECHANICAL DIVISION, JAMMU

Tele-fax: +91-191-2453122, Email: xen-mjkmj@j.k.gov.in / mdjenk@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

E-NIT No:MDJ/Tech-e-NIT/2020-21/36 dated: 18/12/2020 Due on: 28/12/2020

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Union Territory of J&K tenders through e-Tendering mode are invited from reputed and functional firms engaged in repair of Trucks/ Heavy Machineries with valid registration for fixing of rates for repairs to departmental trucks as per the scope of work/technical specifications and terms and conditions as envisaged in the standard bidding document.

Administrative Approval/Accorded
Technical Sanction: Accorded
Position of Funds: Available

The critical dates for the tendering process are:

- Date of Publicity on website 18/12/2020 at 04:30 PM
- Downloading of tender documents 19/12/2020 at 11:00 AM
- Machine inspection by prospective bidder.
- Pre bid meeting with bidders
- Uploading of Corrigendum (If any)
- Uploading of tender documents 21/12/2020 at 02:00 PM
- Due date/time 28/12/2020 at 04:30 PM
- Opening of tender 29/12/2020 at 02:00 PM

All other details/eligibility criteria and terms and conditions can be downloaded from the website and www.mechjmj.co.in. Queries if any may be made by email at mdjenk@gmail.com and should be made before 20/12/2020

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Mechanical Division Jammu
DIP/J-8914/20

Government of Jammu and Kashmir
Department of Public Works
Mechanical Division

Government of Jammu and Kashmir
Department of Public Works
Mechanical Division

Government of Jammu and Kashmir
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Government of Jammu and Kashmir
Department of Public Works
Mechanical Division



Vocal for local

Local polls mark restart of political process in J&K, which should soon return to statehood

The first District Development Council polls in Jammu and Kashmir had rivals, National Conference, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Peoples Conference, coming together on one platform, the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration. The six-party platform consolidated votes in nine out of 10 districts in the Kashmir Valley and three districts of the Pir Panjal valley and the Chenab valley in the Jammu region. The alliance has won 110 seats out of a total of 280 seats and the BJP, with 75 seats has emerged as the single largest party. The Gupkar alliance and the Congress are likely to have their chairmen in 12 to 13 districts in J&K, out of a total of 20, and the BJP could be leading five to six. Independent winners, 50 of them, will be able to swing some districts in favour of the BJP or the Alliance. The Alliance sees the poll results as a verdict against the reorganisation of J&K into two Union Territories and revocation of its special constitutional status on August 5, 2019. This was the first electoral process after the Centre ended J&K's special status, and the alliance had pledged to fight for its restoration. The fears of the regional parties that the polls may be rigged were allayed by the final results. However, the withdrawal of security to leaders and candidates of the Gupkar alliance and restrictions on their campaigning had raised concerns about the process.

The sudden moves against Valley-based politicians in the Roshni land 'scam', cricket scam and other cases by the Enforcement Directorate, and the arrest of PDP leader Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra, just days after he filed his nomination, all amounted to undesirable use of the state machinery with a political intent. The polls, however, came to be seen as the restoration of the democratic process in J&K, which saw arrests of most regional leaders last year and the suspension of political activities to a large extent. These polls also stand out for being a rare electoral process in the past 30 years where the militant outfits and the separatist groups did not campaign vigorously for a poll boycott. Frequent encounters and locals joining militancy in the past one year in south Kashmir did impact the turnout, where most segments saw less than 20%. The BJP, which had already made inroads during the previous panchayat and urban local bodies polls in 2018 when the regional parties boycotted, managed a win over three seats in Srinagar, Bandipora and Pulwama. The low turnout notwithstanding, this comes as a shot in the arm for the image of the party. The BJP has also maintained a tight grip in Samba, Udhampur, Jammu and Kathua in the Jammu region. The political process restarted through the DDC election must be given more space. The Centre must appreciate the role of regional parties in moving towards peace and stability in J&K. Restoration of statehood and holding of the Assembly election are vital.

Murder in the convent

Justice looked unlikely in the Abhaya case, and the convictions come as a relief

The verdict of a special CBI court in Thiruvananthapuram sentencing to life a former Catholic vicar, Thomas Kottoor, and a nun, Sister Sephy, upon finding them guilty of murdering a 21-year-old novitiate, Abhaya, at a convent in Kottayam, marks a welcome outcome to a long and tortuous investigation and prosecution process. It spells a modicum of relief to the lone surviving kin of Abhaya, her brother, and to those who kept an unflinching faith in the justice system. It was in 1992 that Sr. Abhaya, a pre-degree student, was found dead in a well at the St. Pius X Convent hostel where she was an inmate. The police and the Crime Branch hurriedly concluded it as a case of suicide. But a people's action council led by activist Jomon Puthenpurackal sought judicial intervention, which resulted in the CBI taking over the investigation in 1993.

Despite a forensic report suggesting the possibility of homicide, the CBI found itself up against a wall for want of material evidence that was originally collected by the police but later destroyed. Between 1996 and 2005, it approached the chief judicial magistrate, Ernakulam, thrice with closure petitions. In the first, it said the investigation was inconclusive; it was concluded as a case of murder in the second instance, but without any evidence to track down the culprits; and in the last, the agency again pleaded helplessness in taking the case to its logical conclusion, but the court would have none of it. In 2007, Fr Kottoor, Sr Sephy and Fr Jose Poorthukayil, another priest, were subjected to narco-analysis following which they were arrested a year later by Nandakumar Nair, Dy SP of CBI, who has pursued the case ever since. But the Kerala High Court found gaping holes in the CBI's contentions and sought to monitor the case for a brief period. There also arose questions, separately, whether the narco-analysis reports and the forensic report of Abhaya's swab examination had been tampered with. While the CBI also arraigned some Crime Branch and police officers as accused, charging them with destroying vital evidence, they were exonerated citing lack of evidence. The CBI court allowed the discharge petition of Fr Poorthukayil and the High Court said that narco-analysis was inadmissible as evidence. During the trial, eight of the 49 prosecution witnesses turned hostile, but a petty thief who had gone to the convent on the night of Abhaya's death, stood his ground. The case, which exposed the faultlines in the criminal justice system, is far from closed. The Church has issued an ambivalent statement, as the convicts are planning to go in appeal. The CBI is also moving court challenging Fr Poorthukayil's discharge without trial. But the conviction brings hope that the powerful and the influential will not be able to get away with murder.

'Free, fair and safe' as the election motto

Polls in a pandemic need to be rescued from the virus so as to save not just one series of balloting, but democracy itself



GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

Tough there is light at the end of the tunnel, the road ahead is still dark and long." — Soumya Swaminathan

Truer words than those of the Chief Scientist, World Health Organization, have not been spoken in a long while. They remind me of Saint Cardinal Newman's great hymn "Lead, Kindly Light" (1833) in which he says: The night is dark and I am far from home,/Lead Thou me on..../O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till/The night is gone;..."

If the novel coronavirus can mutate on the British Isles, it can do so anywhere, any time. In fact it will be a wonder if it does not. And so, whatever we do individually or collectively, we should know that we do so standing on a razor's edge.

The holding of elections is high on the list of that precarious condition.

Essence of democracy

Overlapping with the pandemic, elections have been held across the globe. From the United States to South Korea, straddling India, they have brought massive numbers of people out of lockdowns, isolation and, above all, fear of getting infected and of infecting others, to vote. This calculated risk-taking is part of the 'moor and fen, crag and torrent' of our times. It has made the journey hard both in the fight against the virus and in the battle for saving democracy in a world where autocracy is at ease with restriction, democracy uneasy in 'containment'.

Millions have voted in no less than 34 countries since the pan-

demic broke, to reaffirm their faith in the life-breath of democracy – elections. They have shown that fear of endangering one's health, one's very life, is not going to come in the way of exercising political rights, political choice. In other words, millions have shown on continent after continent that life is to be protected but that a life without liberty is not a life worth protecting. Equally, that a life with liberty will be pure theory if a virus of the kind we are gripped by has placed 'life' itself in peril. One has to be free in order to breathe, one has to breathe in order to be free.

So, it becomes crucial that as and when elections are announced anywhere they are conducted with zeal and – re-doubled care as to the virus's challenge.

Elements that matter

There are three players in an election – we the electors, the grid of candidates and the election-making machinery. The three, together, make an election. So also in a pandemic, there are three players – we the protection-needing public, the grid of health care, and the health-policymaking state. If voters are apathetic or un-vigilant, their will can be hijacked, distorted and even made comatose. So also in a vicious pandemic, if the affected public is callous, inattentive to the hazards involved, it can forfeit its discriminating and decision-making prerogatives. The health-care system can then become the non-consultative prerogative of the state.

When the two – election and infection – coincide, the citizenry has to exercise its franchise with a commitment to political freedom and a compliance with pandemic fetters – an unavoidable contradiction.

But, to adapt a part of Dr. Swaminathan's words, there is a light in the middle of this tunnel. The elections just concluded in Bihar show us that India can handle that con-



tradition. The Election Commission of India (ECI) was faced with an existential issue: Should elections be held in a pandemic? Suggestions were not wanting that the Bihar elections be put off – a democratically regressive idea. Fortunately, the ECI did neither stop its mandate nor lose its perspective.

A former Chief Election Commissioner, S.Y. Quraishi, has pointed out in his article, "Bihar can be a leading example of how to successfully conduct a poll in difficult times" (<https://bit.ly/3mje931>) of November 12, 2020 (*Indian Express*): "To leave nothing to chance, the ECI consulted its counterparts in several countries and asked them to share their experiences before deciding to overrule all objections and go ahead with the elections...." The ECI put in place a protocol in Bihar that kept the ballots moving and the virus held in check.

The forthcoming elections

With the appearance of a variant of the virus in Britain, plans and prognoses have to be reappraised. Who can tell when and how hard the new variant or others of that kind will occur elsewhere and in India? As the ECI begins preparing for the polls to legislatures in Kerala (140 seats), Tamil Nadu (234), Puducherry (30), West Bengal (294) and Assam (126), it does so in a pall of uncertainty. But if elections do take place as per plan it is

imperative that the ECI factors the virus into every step in the preparations and advises everyone concerned, including the voting public to wear masks when not indoors at home from right now.

It will have to pay equal attention to both – the election and the infection.

Our Constitution, no less, requires that. Its Article 21, famously described by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer as 'the procedural magna carta protective of life and liberty' has been elaborated upon in pronouncements of the Supreme Court of India, notably in *Sunil Batra vs. Delhi Administration*, where it held that the "right to life" included the right to lead a healthy life.

Not extra goodwill but a duty

When an individual's participation in a public activity, arranged by the state, supervised and administered by a body set up under the Constitution, is likely to expose that person to a health hazard, it becomes the constitutional duty of the state to reduce the risks of that hazard to as near zero as possible. Steps taken by the state and the ECI to protect voters in the arena of voting are not an 'extra' act of goodwill but a duty performed towards a constitutional entitlement of the people. Just as the state would need to give protection to election personnel and to electors against any threat from miscreants, criminals and terrorists, so it is bound to protect them against an epidemic.

The number of registered voters in the four States and Puducherry totals 177,450,325 or, around 180 million. The number of polling stations involved in the upcoming elections is 186,976. If we were to multiply the number of officials on election duty and security personnel per station, the figure of human beings exposing themselves to the risk of getting and spreading infection through this exercise of franchise would be immense. But, as I said, the ECI in Bihar has

shown the way, reducing the numbers of voters per booth, increasing the number of booths, thermal testing each and every voter. And there has been the salutary step of postal votes being made available to senior voters above the age of 80.

Take these steps

But more steps need to be taken. I will set out three: One, personnel scheduled to be drafted for election duty, and the number of security staff slated to be deployed should be identified as a priority category for access to vaccination. It would be their fundamental right, as much as that of the Defence Forces, to be protected by vaccines on a priority.

Two, every voter entering a booth has to be wearing a mask, not as a desirability but as a desideratum like a voter identity card. If not wearing one, he or she should be asked to go back and return wearing one.

Three, senior voters should be advised and enabled to vote in the first three hours of the voting using a separate queue-lane.

'Free, fair and safe' should be the motto for the forthcoming elections, assuming they will take place – a big and ardent assumption, post the rising of the new variant in Britain.

Elections held in a terror zone are secured against violence. So must elections in a pandemic be rescued from the virus so as to save not just one series of balloting, but democracy itself. The undemocratic temper and emergencies twirl one into the other. Not allowing the virus emergency an 'election surge' would be a victory for democracy as much as for public health.

When the 'long and dark tunnel' ends in a blaze of light we must be voting free and breathing free.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former administrator, diplomat and governor

The tightrope between production, industrial peace

The Wistron incident is an example of how exploitative labour practices could accompany businesses moving to India



P.K. ANAND

Apple's decision to place its Taiwanese supplier, Wistron Corp., on probation by not giving new orders – after an audit of the serious lapses in labour practices that led to violence in its facility in Narasapura in Karnataka – is a step forward in corporate accountability and ethical business operations. Pressured by Apple's response, Wistron has also been forced to apologise to the workers, remove its Vice-President in charge of India operations, and initiate corrective measures to address workers' grievances.

Realities of manufacturing

That it took violence – images of which were further amplified in news and social media – for the workers to be 'seen' and 'heard', and for corrections to be undertaken (measures that needed to be in place at the workplace from the outset), points to the realities of high-tech manufacturing outsourced through supply chains in the global south that is built on precarries of labour involved in them. In fact, many of the suppliers subcontracting in the high-end electronics sector including those for Apple, have been involved in wilful violations of labour standards and practices.

It is pertinent to note that unlike the present case, other cases of violent labour contentions in units manufacturing and assembling high-end technological devices in India in the recent past have re-

ceived scant attention; for instance, two incidents in subcontracting firms assembling smartphones for Chinese brands in the Delhi National Capital Region in 2017 and 2018.

Until recently, the default response of the brands has been evasion of responsibility by either shifting the onus to the subcontracting firms or keeping things in silent mode. The prevailing norms of work arrangements practised by the suppliers themselves downstream, was through hired labour from multiple subcontractors/ third party work supply firms (the workers at the Narasapura facility, a majority of them young, were sourced from supposedly six subcontractors). This process creates ambiguity in identifying the primary employer and thereby, seriously constrains the workers from getting effective redress of their grievances.

The China experience

The labour contention and the resultant violence at the Wistron facility can be comprehended better by taking into cognisance the operations of Taiwanese suppliers/subcontractors over the years in China, manufacturing high-end electronics devices for big brands including Apple.

The foremost in this list is Foxconn. Riding on the global transformation of industrial production and increased outsourcing by corporate giants in the United States, Europe and East Asia, as part of the strategies of maintaining lean workforces, the unlimited supply of rural migrant labour at low wage levels, and the Chinese economic reforms propelled the creation of offshore assembly facilities. Further, the huge potential of the Chinese consumer market along



with increased investment by the Chinese diaspora also played a role in facilitating the decision, which was further solidified by China joining the World Trade Organization in 2001.

Beginning initially from the coast in southern China, these suppliers have gradually expanded across the Mainland, supported by lavish incentives, infrastructural support and preferential policies of local governments, who are eager to showcase development and whose officials' career progression is indexed to the levels of economic progress.

Much trauma for workers

As Apple and other brands churn out 'smart' devices at increased speeds, and with tight timelines 24x7, the burden falls literally on the shoulders of the workers employed in the supplier factories, forcing them to work under harsh conditions, doing overtime, long tiring shifts without much breaks, and under constant disciplinary monitoring by supervisors. The regimented work practices on the assembly line are matched by low pay and little or no social security, leading to strain and traumatic experiences, both physical and mental.

In 2010, Foxconn was faced with a spate of suicides by workers mainstream the region with the rest of India. Reconciliation and enabling a meeting ground for different view points are the steps needed.

DDC elections
The results of the J&K District Development Council polls clearly indicate that the arm-twisting policies of the BJP-led government have not met with any approval from the people and that it is time for course correction and a genuine political process to

across its facilities in China, thus pressuring Apple to diversify its range of suppliers – wire netting to prevent workers from jumping off terraces is a common sight in Chinese factories and industrial facilities even today.

Another prevalent phenomenon is that of unpaid, forced student internships to fill shortages in labour supply and offset costs; students from vocational educational institutions are compulsorily employed, and subjected to the same exploitative conditions as the workers. Since they are not legally classified as workers, there are no obligations to offer social protections.

The supply of student-workers is encouraged by local governments, since they are dependent on the suppliers' support for resources, due to China's skewed tax and revenue structure favouring the central government. Thus, the local governments are constrained and limited in employing any effective supervisory mechanisms or labour law compliance measures (a recent book, *Dying for an iPhone: Apple, Foxconn and the Lives of China's Workers* by Jenny Chan, Mark Selden and Pun Ngai, is a rich, in-depth study of the lived experiences of workers in Foxconn facilities).

Safeguards vs. investments
That many of these exploitative labour practices and violations of safeguards could be carried over when these facilities move into the Indian terrain is illustrated by the occurrence in the Wistron facility. In fact, when they combine with the precarries already embedded in India's manufacturing sector, the consequences are debilitating for labour. This becomes all the more pertinent, in the backdrop of increasing keenness of governments to attract Taiwanese investments. However, given the weak legal-regulatory labour architecture and capacities, comprehensive supervision and control of the foreign invested enterprises looks a bridge too far. The passing of the new labour codes further erodes existing modicum of labour protection. The fear of 'flight of capital', coupled with weak state capacity in supervision make state administrations reluctant to step in unless things escalate.

Prognosis ahead
Increasingly, following pressure from the consumers' side and also being highly conscious of its brand image, Apple has provided a 'Code of Conduct' to all its suppliers, seeking to monitor and audit compliance of labour standards and safeguards. However, as demonstrated through the latest incident, there has been no strict adherence to this effect, thereby pointing to the tough balance that needs to be maintained between fulfilling production targets and ensuring industrial peace.

In the absence of avenues for workers to channelise their grievances – representative associations and unions – and adequate collective bargaining mechanisms as well as social dialogue, frequent labour unrest including to the extent of violent confrontations, could very well be a daily reality in these high-end manufacturing facilities.

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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.

Virus alert
The report on 20 air passengers from the U.K. testing positive for COVID-19, is disturbing (Page 1, December 23). Stating that there is no cause for concern is poor consolation. How were the passengers allowed in the first place to board if mandatory tests and precautions are in place? These are extremely tough times and any relaxation or negligence would lead to a

great setback. That a COVID-19 variant is now on the prowl should ensure that there is greater observance of protocol.

BALASUBRAMANIAM PAVANI,
Secunderabad

- The report is a reminder of the trauma of the past 10 months. Strict monitoring of passengers arriving from all countries is a must and stringent observance of testing protocols must be ensured. People also have

the responsibility of taking care of themselves.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

DDC elections
The results of the J&K District Development Council polls clearly indicate that the arm-twisting policies of the BJP-led government have not met with any approval from the people and that it is time for course correction and a genuine political process to

The ground is shifting below TMC's feet

Why the BJP seems to be the default beneficiary in the coming Assembly election in West Bengal



SAJJAN KUMAR

A recently concluded study following two months of fieldwork in all the 294 Assembly constituencies of West Bengal revealed one interesting feature about the psychology of the electorate. When asked about their electoral choice and the expected outcome, a few spoke out aloud, while the majority either remained silent or whispered what they thought. People speak out when they are pro-incumbent; they are silent when they have made up their mind to vote for change. In a follow-up question, those wanting "paribartan (change)" came out overwhelmingly as ex-Communist Party of India (Marxist) and former Trinamool Congress (TMC) supporters. In fact, a majority of the old Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) supporters on the ground seemed wary and bitter about the saffron party being taken over by the Left and Trinamool elements, allegedly for ulterior motives.

Party to personality

The answer to this conundrum lies in the specificity of West Bengal politics. As West Bengal is a "party society", as Professor Dwaiapayan Bhattacharyya calls it, partisanship has remained a political fact even under TMC's decadent rule, albeit with a difference. While the majority of the Left leaders at the Panchayat level hailed primarily from the teaching community, under the TMC, those who have got prominence are local contractors, businessmen and domineering personalities. They have used the party society mechanism for personal aggrandisement, thereby attempting to change the State's political culture from being party-driven to personality-centric.

This shift from party to personality also signifies disillusionment among the majority of the electorate with the existing political parties. The electoral choices are negative – people want to oust the incumbent rather than reward the new. The alternative is not a positive choice, but rather a default beneficiary. And it is the TMC which is solely responsible for this tectonic shift in the political common sense of the State wherein a majority seem disgruntled with both the institutions of the state and the existing political parties. Three factors account for this state of affairs.



Reign of terror, and corruption

First, across the State, the marker of the beginning of a systematic anti-TMC sentiment was the 2018 panchayat election. From CPI(M) office-bearers to the common people, everyone narrated how candidates of the Opposition parties were not allowed to vote. An overwhelming majority cited horrifying incidents of

physical assault and filing of false police cases against the ones who resisted. Even, Basudeb Acharya, the nine-time MP (Lok Sabha) from Bankura, was not spared when he tried to get his party candidate to file the nomination. The police were reported as acting like they were an extension of the ruling party. Thus, there is a fear psychosis among the opponents, and this has been particularly intense since 2018. This has resulted in a majority, including the Left, to want the election, down to the booth level, to be under the strict supervision of Central paramilitary forces, with no role for the State police.

Another factor which fared quite strongly in responses accounting for a mammoth undercurrent against the TMC is the intensification and monopolisation of corruption. Responding in a comparative sense, people narrated how during the Left rule, corruption was dispersed and even the common man used to get a part of the pie. Under the TMC, the majority of local leaders are contractors, businessmen and other dominant sections. So, corruption, as per the ground narrative, meant not only plundering the state resources meant for the public but also depriving the common man from having a share of the same.

In the past, under the framework of party society, being affiliated to the ruling party also meant a source of income for a majority of the people in Bengal, especially for the subaltern section in the villages. Under the TMC, the local party leaders have the monopoly, thereby giving a decisive blow to the partisan bonding along party lines. For instance, in the

Haroa Assembly constituency, there is reportedly about 55,000 bighas of wasteland which businessmen take for fish cultivation by paying an annual sum of around ₹12,000-₹15,000 per bigha to the local office of the local party rather than the government. Earlier, every family used to get ₹1,000 annually from the money received. As per the report, under the TMC, the local leaders themselves started cultivating the fish, thereby depriving the party of the sum. By extension, the money being given to the people in the area also stopped. A majority of the respondents who complained of this shift happened to be Poundra Khatri Dalits and poor Muslims.

The recent cases of corruption were reported most intensely in areas considered to be strongholds of the TMC where the party held its ground even in the 2019 general election, namely, North 24 Parganas, Kolkata, Howrah, part of Hooghly, South 24 Parganas and East Medinipur in the aftermath of the destruction by Cyclone Amphan. Respondents said that the relief fund was plundered by the local leadership so much that they have started calling it "Amphan durniti" (Amphan corruption).

Subaltern interface with BJP

Finally, the emerging perception that the incumbent is employing the instrument of fear and intensifying everyday corruption has created a scenario of 'ruling party versus the rest' in a majority of the villages. It is primarily the Dalits and Scheduled Tribes, accounting for about 30% of the State population, who are at the receiving end. They feel abandoned and hounded by the self-aggrandising local TMC leadership. The CPI(M) and Congress don't enthuse them, particularly the subaltern youths, due to their dilapidated organisational state and ageing profile of the leadership. Thus, they see the Modi factor as an alternative, even in the countryside. They have minimalist material expectations which in combination with an embryonic charm for Hindutva has created a conducive ambience for the BJP. The saffron party seems to be the default beneficiary in the coming election.

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No sole spokesperson for Muslims

Asaduddin Owaisi has emerged as a prominent Muslim political leader but he is no Jinnah

SHAIKH MUJIBUR REHMAN

The modest success of the Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) in the recent Bihar Assembly elections has provoked a section of India's secular intelligentsia to express deep concerns over India's already tattered secular polity. The AIMIM's future expansion, they argue, will deepen polarisation. One of them described Mr. Owaisi as the new Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Little in common

Mr. Owaisi is no Jinnah nor will he ever be. Historic figures like Jinnah or M.K. Gandhi are products of particular political moments. Such leaders shaped political developments as much as they got shaped by them. If Jinnah were present in the current theatre of Indian politics, he would have to play a different game. Though Jinnah and Mr. Owaisi are London-trained barristers, there is little in common between them. First, Mr. Owaisi is a dynast and the AIMIM is a family-run party. Like India's mainstream politics, its Muslim politics is increasingly becoming dynastic. But Jinnah was a self-made man.



Second, Mr. Owaisi is a practising Muslim and wears his religion on his sleeve; whereas Jinnah was a Westernised man and an atheist like V.D. Savarkar. In 1940, Jinnah argued in his Presidential Address to the Muslim League at Lahore that Muslims are a separate nation, not a minority, and that Hindus and Muslims cannot live together. Little did he realise that even Muslims could not live together in his Pakistan as was made evident in 1971 when Bengali Muslims carved out Bangladesh. Mr. Owaisi has never argued for a separate homeland. Instead, he has argued for Muslim-Dalit unity and even forged an alliance with Prakash Ambedkar's Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi in Maharashtra in 2019. Jinnah never recognised Dalit/Pasmanda Muslims and barely expressed concern for Hindu Dalits.

These are some of the reasons why it would be almost impossible for Mr. Owaisi to become the sole spokesperson for the Indian Muslims.

the Hindu Right has unleashed a systematic campaign against Muslims since the 1920s. Its politics of polarisation has resulted in enormous electoral dividends since the late 1980s, and will continue to do so regardless of the AIMIM or Mr. Owaisi.

Take, for example, Gujarat. Owing to the politics of Gandhi, Gujarat was relatively unaffected during Partition by Hindu-Muslim violence. Muslim migration from Gujarat to Pakistan was insignificant. And yet, the Hindu Right was able to polarise that State vigorously from the late 1960s. Polarisation increased during the 1980s and further deepened from 2002 making Gujarat a model State for the politics of polarisation. The Hindu Right's propaganda machine works tirelessly in its polarisation project by spreading rumours and false information. The law in Uttar Pradesh against forced conversion by marriage is its latest weapon.

Modest success

Without doubt, Mr. Owaisi has emerged as a prominent Muslim political leader in Indian politics, a profile he has built up over the years with scintillating performances in Parliament and in television debates. His modest success in Bihar and Maharashtra only suggests that he has been able to convert the AIMIM into an election machine. In 2017, AIMIM failed to open an account in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election. Even if it manages to open an account in Uttar Pradesh or West Bengal in the near future, the AIMIM is nowhere close to the Muslim League of the 1930s nor will it ever be, owing to the evolving complex interplay of forces of political economy and sociology of Muslims in various regions. The logic of contiguous areas of Muslim habitation in British India that helped Jinnah to use the Muslim League as a handy platform no longer exists.

These are some of the reasons why it would be almost impossible for Mr. Owaisi to become the sole spokesperson for the Indian Muslims.

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An anti-science lawsuit

Instead of pursuing their case against Sci-Hub, publishers should work with the government to make research accessible



RAHUL SIDDHARTHAN

plored, including an (equally problematic) open access, author pays model. Many top universities, and entire countries, have cancelled subscriptions to Elsevier *en masse*.

In 2011, Ms. Elbaky stepped into this mess with Sci-Hub, enabling scientists to search for academic papers from any publisher and freely download them. It is an efficient and easy-to-use site and extensively archives published scientific literature. Sci-Hub violates many copyrights owned by journals. But it is also a vast repository of open access, out-of-copyright, and public domain material, which a blanket injunction would disable. For scientists stuck at home in 2020, Sci-Hub has made literature accessible without navigating institutional VPNs. For journalists and the public, given the obscene per article charges levied by journals, Sci-Hub is the easiest and often only option.

A beneficial site

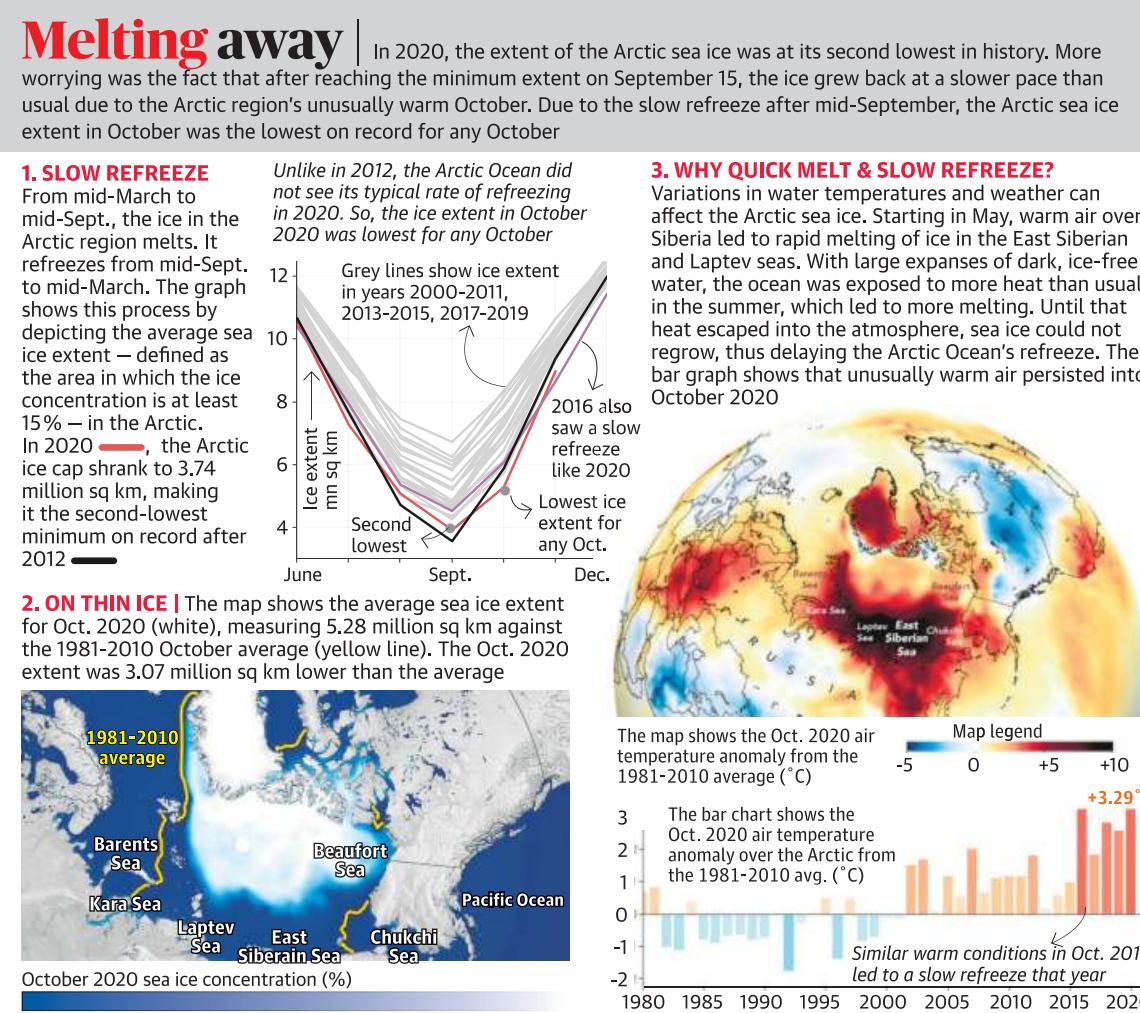
Sci-Hub does not operate in India. Indian Internet service providers named as parties are providing a non-discriminatory common carrier service. The content on Sci-Hub does not harm India's interests and is beneficial to the scientific development of the country. In 2020, leading publishers made COVID-19-related articles free to read. This has resulted in a boom in research and development of dozens of vaccine candidates in a very short time period: a testament to the value of open science. Sci-Hub's "piracy" benefits the very people who create that content. This is the opposite of the situation in the creative arts where "pirating" music or films deprives creators of royalties; scientific authors get no royalties, and they and their funders want their work to be shared freely. But the keys to this largely taxpayer-funded work are held by private corporations overseas which have chosen to pursue a defendant in an Indian court.

Is there an alternative to Sci-Hub? Yes. Publishers should voluntarily reform their policies to obviate the need for Sci-Hub. The Indian government has been discussing a 'one nation, one subscription' system whereby, in exchange for a fixed and reasonable cost paid directly to the government, scientific publishers would make their entire content available to all readers in India. Some publishers (not the plaintiffs) have expressed interest. Elsevier, Wiley and ACS should drop this misguided case, and join the Indian government in working out an equitable system of access to scientific literature that serves both their commercial interests and the Indian public.

Rahul Siddharthan is with the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai



DATA POINT



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 24, 1970

Court order on Tulsi's book

A Full Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court to-day [Jabalpur, Dec. 24] set aside a State Government order forfeiting all copies of the controversial book "Agni Pariksha" written by the Jain Muni Acharya Tulsi. The controversy over the book erupted into a massive campaign against the Acharya in Raipur during his camp there recently launched by Sanatani Hindus who objected to the characterisation of Sita in the book. Holding that the book did not contain any grossly offensive and provocative matter, Mr. Justice P.K. Tare said, "The test that is to be applied to such cases is not that of an abnormal or hyper-sensitive man, but that of an ordinary man of ordinary common-sense and prudence." Referring to the argument of the Advocate-General that the attempt in giving the Jain version of Ramayana was proselytisation and, therefore, the book ought to be considered objectionable, Mr. Justice Tare said, "Even if it were to be assumed that the motive of the Jain version of the Ramayana might be proselytisation that by itself cannot be considered to be objectionable." His Lordship felt that the impugned order of the Government could be said to be justified only if the book came within the mischief under Section 295-A I.P.C. and not otherwise. There had been different versions of Ramayana, His Lordship observed. A propagandist version which did not come within the mischief of the law could in no case be considered objectionable.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DEC. 24, 1920

Throwing sulphuric acid

The case in which E.S. Aratoon, an ex-police sergeant, was charged with causing the death of Mr. J.S. Spalding and grievous hurt to Mrs. Spalding by throwing sulphuric acid on them through a window while the two in bed in their residence at Entally came on for hearing before the Police Magistrate of Sealab [Calcutta, December 23]. Mrs. Spalding said on 1st September last she was lying at bed at 9 P.M. when she felt a smarting sensation on account of some liquid substance being sprinkled on her. Her husband was similarly affected and he got up and shouted for water. Witness noticed the accused disappearing from the ledge outside window. The Magistrate ordered the accused to be released on bail of Rs. 5,000 pending the hearing of the case.

FROM PAGE ONE

Samyukt Kisan Morcha rejects offer for talks

It said the farmer unions had made it clear to the government during several rounds of negotiations that such amendments were not acceptable to them.

Mr. Yadav said the agitating farmers and farmer unions were ready for talks and were waiting for the government to take forward the process of negotiations with an "open heart", "open mind" and "good intentions". "We urge you to send a concrete proposal in writing, instead of repeating the rejected proposals of meaningless amendments, so that it could be made an agenda to resume the process of negotiations at the earliest," he said.

'Bid to derail movement' The letter from the government was an attempt to defame the farmers' movement. The government was dealing with them as political opponents and not a group of distressed citizens. "Besides, the government holding parallel discussions with so-called farmer leaders not existing on the ground is an attempt to derail the movement," he said.

Bharatiya Kisan Union national general secretary Yudhvir Singh said farmers had categorically told the government that anything less than the withdrawal of the laws was not acceptable, but the attitude of the government and this letter were mere attempts to prolong things and break the

Cairn Energy wins arbitration award

In a statement, Cairn Energy said it had been awarded \$1.2 billion damages plus interest and costs. Sources said the total amount payable by the Indian government, including \$200 million of interest and \$22 million of arbitration cost, is \$1.4 billion (about ₹10,500 crore).

This is the second loss the government has suffered in three months over the retrospective levy of taxes. In September, the U.K.'s Vodafone Group won an international arbitration against the demand of ₹22,100 crore.

Confirming the award, Cairn in a statement said: "The tribunal established to rule on its claim against the Government of India has found in Cairn's favour." Cairn had challenged the Indian government seeking taxes over an internal business reorganisation using the 2012 retrospective tax law, under the U.K.-India Bilateral Investment Treaty.

Sources said the government had so far not appealed against the arbitration loss in the Vodafone case and the Cairn arbitration award may hasten a decision on it.

Cairn Energy, which gave the country its biggest oil discovery, was in March 2015 slapped with a tax demand of ₹10,247 crore over alleged capital gains it made by reorganising its India unit into a separate subsidiary for listing on local stock exchanges. Cairn Energy in 2010-11 sold Cairn India to Vedanta but held a small stake in the firm, which was sold by the tax department to recover the tax demand.

Besides Cairn Energy, the government also slapped a similar tax demand on its erstwhile subsidiary Cairn India (which is now part of Vedanta Ltd.). Cairn India too has challenged the demand through a separate arbitration.

In the case of Vodafone, the government took no such action.

In an unrelated case of penalties levied on Reliance Industries for producing less than targeted natural gas from KG-D6 fields, the government stopped issuing

willpower of farmers. He warned the government, saying farmers represented 60% of the population and not listening to their concerns could have disastrous repercussions.

All-India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hannan Mollah reiterated that farmers had come to Delhi and were holding an agitation in extreme cold conditions to talk and find solution.

The Working Group of the All-India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) said in a press statement said that claims made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Aligarh Muslim University on Tuesday were not in harmony with the ground reality.

On the call of the farmer unions and the AIKSCC, the farmers and their supporters observed the birthday of former PM and farmer leader Charan Singh as "Kisan Diwas" by skipping lunch, said the press statement.

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, at a press conference during the day, urged the agitating farmers and the farmer unions to try and understand the intent and the provisions of the three laws. "If the farmers have any objections, the government is ready to discuss it with them with an open mind. I am hopeful that we will soon head towards an amicable solution. Talks are the only way to end stalemate," he said.

notices soon after the Mukesh Ambani-led firm initiated arbitration against such move.

Foreign investors will watch the government's response to both the Cairn and Vodafone awards. The BJP government and its Ministers have, in the past, denounced the introduction of retrospective tax amendment in 2012 by the previous Congress government as tax terrorism.

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Cabinet nod for changes to SC scholarship plan

A campaign for enrolling students from the poorest households would be carried out, he said.

The States would be asked to carry out verification of the students' eligibility and caste status and collect their Aadhaar and bank account details.

"Transfer of financial assistance to the students under the scheme shall be on DBT [direct benefit transfer] mode, and preferably using the Aadhaar Enabled Payment System."

"Starting from 2021-22, the Central share [60%] in the scheme would be re-

leased on DBT mode directly into the bank accounts of the students as per fixed time schedule, after ensuring that the State government concerned has released its share," the statement said.

The Secretary added that community audits of the scheme would be conducted to make sure the benefits were reaching the students. "The Central assistance, which was around ₹1,100 crore annually during 2017-18 to 2019-20, would be increased more than five times to be around ₹6,000 crore annually during 2020-21 to 2025-26," the statement said.

According to the State government's new order, movement would remain strictly prohibited between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. from December 24 till January 1 (till 5 a.m. on January 2, 2021).

Long-distance night bus services, train services, and air services would, however, be permitted. There would be

Priest, nun get life term in Abhaya murder case

Crime Branch suppressed evidence: CBI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Fr. Thomas M. Kottoor and Sister Sephy were sentenced to life imprisonment by a special CBI court here on Wednesday for the murder of 19-year-old novice Sister Abhaya. Sister Abhaya was found dead in a well at Pius X convent of the Knanaya Catholic order in Kottayam, Kerala, in March 1992.

CBI special judge K. Sanal Kumar found the priest and the nun guilty of murder and destruction of evidence under Sections 302 and 201 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Fined ₹5 lakh each

The judge also imposed a second life sentence on Fr. Kottoor for house-trespass to murder under Section 449 of the IPC. The court said both life sentences would run concurrently. The judge also fined the accused ₹5 lakh each.

The CBI case was that the accused killed Sister Abhaya after the novitiate found them in objectionable cir-



Fr. Thomas M. Kottoor and Sister Sephy outside the CBI court in Thiruvananthapuram.

cumstances when she went to collect drinking water from the convent's kitchen on the night of March 27.

The accused were startled by Sister Abhaya's unexpected appearance. To prevent their liaison from being known, Sister Sephy bludgeoned her on the side of her head with the blunt side of an axe. The suspects dumped the victim's body in the convent well to make it appear as suicide, the CBI argued. It had no case that the accused had sexually assaulted Sister Abhaya.

The CBI arraigned another priest, Fr. Jose Poothruthayil, as an accomplice in the crime. However, he was discharged from the case in 2018 for want of evidence. In light of fresh evidence, the CBI moved a review petition in the High Court to put Fr. Poothruthayil on trial for the murder.

The CBI found that the Crime Branch wilfully suppressed evidence. The CBI also arraigned former Crime Branch SP K.T. Michael as the fourth accused in the case on the charge of destruction of evidence.

The Kottayam West police had dismissed the death as suicide initially. The Crime

Branch had seconded it.

The findings caused a public outrage. Locals formed an action council headed by Jomon Puthanpurackal, a public interest litigant, to press for a CBI inquiry. The agitation gained traction across Kerala, prompting the government to recommend a CBI probe in 1995.

The case took another sensational turn in 1996 when then CBI Deputy SP, Varghese P. Thomas, opted for voluntary retirement after allegedly coming under pressure from his superior to write off the death as a suicide.

"Normally, the sexual antecedents of an accused do not matter, they only matter when they have a bearing on the facts of the case," he said.

Here, the "alleged sexual act of A3 and A1 was the cause and the murder was the effect," he concluded.

"The assertion of the prosecution that while both accused were in flagrante delicto [caught in the act], the witness, Sister Abhaya, was attacked by the accused with a blunt weapon is apose here." When the proved circumstances are against the accused persons, it is inevitable to take an inference by applying deductive reasoning, he noted.

The presence of Fr. Kottoor in the St. Pius X Convent Hostel on the night of 26-27 March, 1992, and the presence of Sr. Sephy in her

ground floor room of the hostel on the night was proved, the order said.



Sister Abhaya

hymenoplasty almost on the eve of her arrest by the CBI". She utilised medical intervention to shape her body artificially as that of a virgin, the court noted.

The judge relied on evidence to conclude that Sister Abhaya was "a very smart, pious, honest, simple, persevering and punctilious girl, meticulous in all respects. She was leading a happy and altruistic life," he concluded.

The judge noted that "witnesses connected to the congregation, including the inmates of the St. Pius X Convent Hostel, turned hostile to the prosecution en masse without rhyme or reason."

It is "gleanable that a systematic, organised effort was exerted sub rosa by the powers that be to subvert the prosecution case and prevent it from reaching its logical conclusion," the court noted.

Curtains down on a 28-year-old case

G ANAND
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A little before noon on Wednesday K. Sanal Kumar, CBI special judge, brought the curtains down on the 28-year-old Sister Abhaya case with a terse statement.

"Accused number one (Fr. Thomas M. Kottoor) and three (Sister Sephy) are sentenced to undergo imprisonment for life and a fine of ₹5 lakh for the offence under Section 302 of the IPC (murder)," he pronounced.

Before the verdict, the

judge heard the accused who pleaded for clemency. Fr. Kottoor said he ailed from prostate cancer. Sister Sephy cited ill-health and said she had aged parents.

Outside the court premises, a phalanx of television camerapersons and journalists waited. Soon, Jomon Puthenpurackal, the public interest litigant who championed the "Justice For Abhaya" cause, arrived and broke the news to the media.

The Kerala police had termed Abhaya's death a suicide caused by depression. Multiple CBI officers closed the case as "untraced". Finally, in 2009, DySP, CBI, Nandakumar Nair arrested two priests and the nun for murder. The High Court discharged the second priest.

Sister Abhaya's parents died a few years ago. Her brother Biju Thomas, who is abroad, said he was happy with the verdict. Prime witness "Adakka" Raju, then a petty thief, whose statement turned out to be a crucial evidence, too, expressed his

happiness. Raju, who had gone to the convent on that fateful night to steal, told the court he had seen the priest there. He stuck by his words throughout the trial.

Defence counsel said he

would appeal against the verdict in the High Court.

The Knanaya Catholic Church said the allegations were unbelievable. "The accused have the right to go for an appeal and prove their innocence," the archdiocese said in a statement.

(With PTI inputs)



Online lenders have been accused of high-handed recovery practices. ■ISTOCK

Beware of illegal digital lending apps: RBI

Caution comes amid suicides in Telangana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The Reserve Bank of India has advised public to be wary of unauthorised digital lending platforms and mobile apps.

Taking note of reports about individuals and small businesses falling prey to a growing number of unauthorised digital lending platforms/mobile apps, the central bank on Wednesday said "members of public are cautioned not to fall prey to such unscrupulous activities." It urged them to verify antecedents of the company/firm offering loans online or through mobile apps.

The advisory comes in the backdrop of at least three borrowers in Telangana committing suicide in the recent past, following alleged harassment by personnel of such lenders, and many more complaining of being subjected to coercive methods after defaulting on repayments.

The RBI said the reports

dertaken by banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) registered with RBI and other entities who are regulated by the State governments under statutory provisions, such as the money lending acts of the States concerned."

Online complaint

The central bank also advised consumers never to share copies of KYC documents with unidentified persons or unverified/unauthorised apps. They can report such apps/bank account information associated with the apps to law enforcement agencies concerned or use sachet portal (<https://sachet.rbi.org.in>) to file complaint.

The RBI said it had mandated digital lending platforms used on behalf of banks and NBFCs to disclose name of the bank(s) or NBFC(s) upfront to the customers. Coordinates of NBFCs registered can be accessed on RBI website. The portal for filing complaints against the regulated entities can be accessed through <https://cms.rbi.org.in>, the release said.

Referring to the online call money racket, Mr. Sawang said instructions had been issued to Inspectors General, Range DIGs, Commissioners of Police and Superintendents of Police to take the complaints seriously and book cases against those responsible for harassment of the borrowers.

The police are making efforts to identify such fraudulent online app organisers.

Victims can lodge complaints at their nearest police stations. They can also register their complaints through AP Police Seva app, Dial 100 or '112' helplines," the DGP said.

Referring to the online call money racket, Mr. Sawang released the Standard Operating Procedures prepared by the Crime Investigation Department to tackle the complaints pertaining to online instant loan apps, at the A.P. Police Headquarters.



D.G. Gautam Sawang

releasing the SOP for the probe at Mangalagiri.

them maintain silence on this very special arc of immunity accorded by the BJP to Mr. Yediyurappa, the sitting Chief Minister of Karnataka. It is mysterious, inexplicable and shocking," Mr. Singhvi said at a press conference which he addressed via videoconference.

The Karnataka High Court questioned the Lokayukta police and the State apparatus on how they allowed a person to remain not even under investigation with the probe not proceeding at all for five long years from early 2015 till the end of 2019.

"The Congress, with all the force at our command, calls for the resignation, removal, stepping down of the Chief Minister," he said.

against him in the case.

"Karnataka and corruption seem to go hand in hand and are intertwined, and there is culpable conspiratorial silence of all the powers that be, including our extremely eloquent Prime Minister, BJP president J.P. Nadda and the party's former chief, Amit Shah. All of

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi, citing the High Court order of Tuesday, alleged that Mr. Yediyurappa had been delaying the investigation of graft charges

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Gupkar alliance leads in J&K DDC polls

It wins six councils and has an edge in six others

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

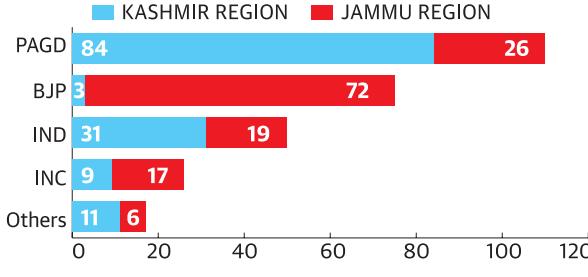
SRINAGAR
The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an amalgam of six parties, on Wednesday managed to sweep six district councils, with an edge in six others, and the BJP managed to secure five councils, with an edge in one district in the maiden District Development Council (DDC) polls held in 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Gupkar alliance, which saw the coming together of rivals, the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), in the polls, has won 110 seats across the Union Territory (UT). The polls were held with 14 seats in each district.

Out of 10 districts in the Kashmir Valley, the alliance has won a majority and will have its district chairmen in Kupwara (nine seats), Budgam (10), Pulwama (nine), Anantnag, Kulgam (12) and

Alliance surges

The Gupkar Alliance (PAGD), comprising the JK National Conference, the People's Democratic Party and four others, won in 110 out of the 278 seats while the BJP won in 75 seats in the Jammu and Kashmir District Development Council election. The BJP won the majority of its seats in the Jammu region while the PAGD bagged a high share of seats in the Kashmir region and also won in a substantial number of seats in the Jammu region. The chart shows the alliance wise wins in the Jammu and Kashmir regions



Success meet:
JK National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, extreme left, and vice-president Omar Abdullah, centre, with workers at the party headquarters on Wednesday.

■ NISSAR AHMAD

Ganderbal (11). It is short of one seat for a clear majority in Baramulla, Shopian and Bandipora districts.

However, Srinagar district, which saw seven seats (50% of total seats) won by Independents, is up for grabs. Fighting elections for the first time, the J&K Apni party has managed to win three seats in Srinagar.

In the Jammu division, the Gupkar alliance is dominat-

ing the Chenab valley's Ramban and Kishtwar districts by winning six seats in each district.

In the Pir Panjal valley, the alliance is dominating in Rajouri with six seats. The Congress, which has won 17 seats in the Jammu division, will play an important role in allowing the Gupkar alliance to achieve a majority to head the districts. In the Pir Panjal's Poonch district, eight In-

dependents have been declared winners, leaving little chance for the BJP or the alliance to choose a chairman.

The BJP has managed to win five councils in the Jammu region, including Kathua (13 seats), Samba (13), Jammu (11) and Udhampur, and Doda (eight). It is likely to win Reasi district with the support of Independents, as the party has managed to get seven seats.

'Khaps' spearhead agitation in Haryana

With community organisations leading from the front, the State has witnessed a late surge in protests

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Though the farmers agitation in Punjab is primarily led by farmer unions with substantial political support, "Khaps", the community organisations representing a clan or a group of related clans, spearhead the movement in Haryana, which has witnessed a late surge in agitation.

Four days after the November 26 farmer unions' call for "Dilli Chalo", hundreds of farmers from across 59 villages in and around Charki Dadri district in Haryana held a "panchayat" under the aegis of "Sangwan



Farm team: Sunil Gulia, head of the Gulia Khap, arriving at Tikri with his supporters on his improvised tractor. ■ PTI

Khap" to express their solidarity with the agitators.

The "Sangwan Khap", one of the first few community organisations in Haryana to resign as the Chairman of

extend support to the agitation, also persuaded its president and Independent Dadri MLA Sombir Sangwan to resign as the Chairman of

BTP withdraws support to Cong. in Rajasthan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Two weeks after severing ties with the Congress, the Bharatiya Tribal Party (BTP) on Wednesday announced withdrawal of support to the ruling party in Rajasthan over the issue of the latter allegedly blocking the election of a BTP-backed Independent candidate to the post of Zila Pramukh in Dungarpur during the recent panchayat body polls.

BTP State president Velaram Ghogra said in Dungarpur that the party would shortly send letters to the

Governor and the Assembly Speaker informing them of the withdrawal of support. The BTP's executive took the decision to snap the alliance with the Congress at a meeting earlier this week.

As an ally of the Congress, the BTP voted for the Congress candidates in the Rajya Sabha election in June and backed Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot during the political turmoil in the next two months. BTP MLAs Rajkumar Roat and Ram Prasad supported the Congress during the confidence vote in the Assembly.

Govt and the Assembly

Tender Notice No.24/2020-21/SDO/Dated : 18.12.2020
For and on behalf of Governor of Tamilnadu Percentage Tender (Two Cover System) will be received by the Superintending Engineer (H) NABARD & Rural Roads, Circle, Trichy for Upgradation of Palaiyur - Nagambadi Road at Km.0/0-1/8 including reconstruction of bridge at Km.0/2 across Nattar River under Upgradation of Panchayat / Panchayat Union Roads - 2020-21 in respect of Nagapattinam (H) NABARD & Rural Roads Division upto 14.00 hours on 28.01.2021 through online only.

Details of work, approximate value of work, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 30.12.2020 onwards in the Government website <http://tntenders.gov.in>. If any changes / corrections etc in the tender, it will be published on the above website only.

Superintending Engineer (H),
NABARD and Rural Roads Circle, Trichy.

DPR/4914/TENDER/2020

THE ODISHA MINING CORPORATION LIMITED

OMC House, Bhubaneswar-751001, Odisha
CIN: U13100OR1956SGC000313, www.omcltd.in



ODISHA
NEW OPPORTUNITIES

NOTICE

No. 15379/OMC/Persnl./2020
Date: 23/12/2020

Pursuant to the Advertisement No. 46/OMC dated 26.02.2020, the Online Computer Based Test (CBT) was held for 128 Non-Executive posts on 09.12.2020 to 11.12.2020, 14.12.2020 & 21.12.2020 in multiple shifts.

As per clause 21 under "Important Instructions to Candidates" of the e - Admit Card, the Question / Answer Keys to the questions of CBT for the above posts will be available in the online portal from 6:00 P.M. of 24.12.2020 till 11.59 P.M. of 27.12.2020.

The Candidates, who appeared the CBT can view their individual answers /online response (own answers and answer keys) by logging into online portal through OMC website (<https://omcltd.in>) with their registered credentials (User ID & Password).

Communication regarding the above is also being sent to the registered e-mail id & mobile number of the candidates.

Sd/-
General Manager (P&A)

OIFR-30005/11/0133/2020

CAD-970:

Vote against Centre's steps, says Farooq

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday alleged that her colleagues, friends and family members were being targeted by Central investigating agencies as the BJP had failed to "fight her political-ly", while National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah said, "No coercive tactics will dilute or dent our collective resolve."

Ms. Mufti alleged that PDP youth president Waheed Parra, who won the DDC polls, was interrogated by the NIA and asked "to depose against" her. "Parra was tortured to accept militant links," she said. NC leaders met in Srinagar and addressed the workers. Dr. Abdullah said the people had made known their rejection of the August 5 measures.

A tight slap to terrorism and separatism, says BJP

Party says people have asserted faith in democracy



This is a victory for India, for India's democracy, of the people of J&K...

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD
Union Law Minister

bank accounts of the panchayats and the works to be done with those funds clearly written on boards at the panchayat offices. People have realised that democracy can lead to development and we saw, despite a propaganda against the removal of Article 370 and 35A as well as calls for boycott by terror groups, that people participated in large numbers," he said.

"This is a recognition by the people of what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been saying all along – that the culture of 'rulers' is gone and only those who wish to serve the people will prevail," he said.

The BJP emerged as the single largest party among non-alliance parties, while the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) has the largest number of seats. The DDC polls were conducted in eight phases and results were declared on Tuesday.

Akali Dal chief calls for united fight

Sukhbir alleges autocratic tendencies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday called for a united nationwide initiative for fighting autocratic tendencies and for the setting up of a genuinely federal structure in the country.



In a letter to West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee on the eve of the Trinamool's Kisan rally, Mr. Badal said Punjab and West Bengal had always led the nation's fight for a genuine fiscal, executive

and political autonomy to the States for making India a strong federal country. He said like-minded parties must be invited to take a stand for a genuine federal structure in the country.

भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA अंतरिक्ष विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPACE

उत्तरपूर्वी अंतरिक्ष उपयोग केन्द्र (उ.पू. सैक.) उमियम - 793103, मेहालय (अंतरिक्ष विभाग, भारत सरकार के अधीनस्थ स्वायत्त निकाय) में निवेशक के पद के लिए भर्ती।

RECRUITMENT FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR, NORTH EASTERN SPACE APPLICATIONS CENTRE (NE-SAC), UMIAM-793103, MEGHALAYA

(AN AUTONOMOUS BODY UNDER DEPARTMENT OF SPACE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)

विक्रम साराभाई अंतरिक्ष केन्द्र (वी.एस.एस.सी.), तिरुवनंतपुरम, अंतरिक्ष विभाग, भारत सरकार में मुख्य नियंत्रक के पद के लिए भर्ती।

RECRUITMENT FOR THE POST OF CHIEF CONTROLLER, VIKRAM SARABHAI SPACE CENTRE (VSSC), THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEPARTMENT OF SPACE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

दिनांक 14.12.2020 का विज्ञापन सं. ए.पी. 1201/2020 - अ.वी.निवेशक, उ.पू. सैक अधिकारी नं. 802-2280655, फॉक्स: 080-2225714, ई-मेल: vssc@isro.gov.in, वेबसाइट: www.vssc.gov.in

दिनांक 14.12.2020 का विज्ञापन सं. ए.पी. 1202/2020 - डिप्री. नेसी.एस.एस.सी. एडीजी.एस.एस.सी. विभाग, भारत सरकार के अधीनस्थ स्वायत्त निकाय, दिनांक 14.12.2020 का विज्ञापन सं. ए.पी. 13011/2014-ि (वी.एस.एस.सी.) में भर्ती। विक्रम साराभाई अंतरिक्ष उपयोग केन्द्र (उ.पू. सैक.) में स्टर - 14 में तत्वाकाल आधार पर निवेशक के पद के लिए भर्ती।

Applications are invited to fill one post of Director in the North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NE-SAC), in Level-14 on immediate absorption basis

आवेदन प्राप्त करने हेतु अंतिम दिनांक 25.02.2021 है।

The last date for receipt of application is 25.02.2021.

शुद्धित प्राप्त करने हेतु अंतिम दिनांक 25.02.2021 है।

Corrigendum/Addendum, if any will be published in the above website only

ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED (A Government of Odisha Undertaking) Regd Office: Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022 CIN:U40102OR2004SGC07553

e-TENDER NOTICE NO:21/2020-21

Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL), Bhubaneswar invites bids (in e-Tendering mode only) under two part bidding system from the reputed EPC / Turnkey Contractors for Engineering, Supply, Erection and Commissioning of 132 KV two phase DC line from existing 132/33 KV Grid S/S, Bangliriposi to Proposed Railway traction S/S at Bhanjapur and 2 Nos.132KV bay extension at 132/33KV Grid S/S, Bangliriposi (Approx. Line Length-40KM) for power supply to proposed RTSS at Bhanjapur at an Estimated Cost of the Package for Rs.29.69 Crore in Mayurbhanji district on "Turnkey CONTRACT BASIS". Interested Bidders are required to enrol themselves in the tender portal www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL. Complete set of bidding documents are available on www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL portal from Dt. 24.12.2020/ 11.00 AM up to DL.27.01.2021/12.45 PM. Interested bidders may visit OPTCL's official website www.optcl.co.in and www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL for further detail.

Note:- Bidders are requested to regularly visit Official Website of OPTCL/Tender Portal only for amendment / errata / corrigendum (if any) and any other information regarding these tenders, as the same shall be published only on the OPTCL website/ Tender portal.

HIPR-24/2020-21 CAD-855 DIPR-040111/00742021

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E-TENDER NOTICE : TANGEDCO/SHORT/PP-12/2020

IN BRIEF



When will India get a vaccine, asks Rahul

NEW DELHI
Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday asked when India would get a COVID-19 vaccine. "23 lakh people in the world have already received Covid vaccinations. China, US, UK, Russia have started...when will India's turn come?" he tweeted.

Cong. team meets EC on Manipur MLAs case

NEW DELHI
Congress leaders have appealed to the Election Commission to decide the matter of disqualification of 12 Manipur legislators in the office of profit case at the earliest. A delegation from the State unit recently met the Election Commission.

West Bengal moves Class X, XII exams to June

KOLKATA
Class X and XII State board examinations in West Bengal have been postponed to June 2021. Usually, the examinations are held in February–March. There is no announcement on when school classes will resume. Education Minister Partha Chatterjee said the government had made it clear that the examinations could not be held in the present circumstances.

Maharashtra okays EWS quota for Marathas

MUMBAI
The Maharashtra Cabinet on Wednesday decided to extend jobs and academic admissions to Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC) applicants under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category. The SEBC category was created by the previous Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government in the State to provide reservation in jobs and education to Maratha community.

Maiden test of MRSAM for Army successful

NEW DELHI
The maiden test of the Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) for the Indian Army, being jointly developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), was successfully conducted on Wednesday. The launch was from the test range at Chandipur in Odisha.

CBI chargesheet against ex-NDA principal

NEW DELHI
The Central Bureau of Investigation has filed a charge sheet against a former principal of the National Defence Academy (NDA) in Maharashtra's Khadakwasla in connection with fraudulent appointments to various posts of the institution's civilian faculties. The agency had registered the case against Om Prakash Shukla and others on May 8, 2018.

Permission for another 'Elgar Parishad' sought

Retired judge applies for police nod

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Retired Bombay High Court judge B.G. Kolsé-Patil, who was among the chief organisers of the controversial 'Elgar Parishad' in December 2017, has submitted an application to the Pune Police to hold a similar event on December 31.

In his application submitted to the Swargate Police Station, Mr. Kolsé-Patil has sought permission to hold this new 'Elgar Parishad' at the city's Ganesh Kala Krida Manch.

"We expect 700-800 people to attend including speakers. We have already booked the premises and have applied permission to local police authorities. They said they would be forwarding it to their superiors," said Justice Kolsé-Patil (Retd).

Speaking to *The Hindu*, he further said that if the

Close watch on visitors from U.K.

Samples of those who test positive for COVID-19 to be sent for gene sequencing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Rajesh Bhushan, Union Health Secretary, reviewed the status of passengers coming from the U.K. to India and found positive in the States/UTs of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Goa, Punjab, Gujarat and Kerala, and the States' response measures, in a meeting held through video conference on Wednesday.

The States were advised to co-ordinate with the respective Airport Health Offices (AHO) and surveillance officials in their State in order to ensure adherence to the SOPs for Epidemiological Surveillance and Response in the context of new variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus detected in United Kingdom.

States/UTs were also advised to access the details of passengers from U.K. to India from the online portal AIR-SUVIDHA and the Bureau of Immigration, and send the samples of those



Safety protocol: Passengers who arrived in Mumbai on Tuesday getting directions from municipal health workers. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

found positive to the laboratories identified for genome sequencing.

Six labs

The list of six identified labs along with the contact details of their nodal officers was also shared with the States/UTs.

The labs identified for genome sequencing are CSIR - Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi; CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad; DBT- Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar; DBT-InStem - NCBS, Bangalore; DBT - National Institute

of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG), Kalyani, West Bengal; ICMR - National Institute of Virology, Pune.

The Ministry in its release noted that the number of such designated labs would increase over time and their details would be shared with the States/UTs.

Aero India to be held for three days only

Air display can be viewed virtually

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Minister Rajnath Singh. "The event has witnessed tremendous interest, with the space being sold out and 500-plus registered exhibitors. In view of the challenges due to COVID-19, Defence Minister directed that the event be held for business days only, February 3 to 5, 2021, with the essence being to achieve traction for the Aerospace and Defence industry, which has faced numerous challenges in the year 2020," the Defence Ministry said on Wednesday.

This was decided at a review meeting for Aero India-21, chaired by Defence

Republic Bharat gets fined in U.K.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Republic Bharat, the Hindi news channel of Republic TV, was on Tuesday fined £20,000 – approximately ₹19 lakh – by the United Kingdom's communications regulator Office of Communications (Ofcom) for broadcasting content that involved "hate speech". The sanctions were imposed on Worldview Media Network Limited, which holds the licence for airing Republic Bharat in the U.K.

The Hindu Group won two golds and two silvers at WAN-IFRA's South Asian Digital Media Awards. The awards are presented in recognition of outstanding work done by news publishers in digital media.

The Hindu #KeepTheHabit campaign won a gold and silver in Best Native Advertising/ Branded Content Campaign and Best in Audience Engagement, respectively.

Sportstar's website (sportstar.thehindu.com) won a

gold in Best in Lifestyle, Sports, Entertainment Website or Mobile Services and *The Hindu*'s website (thehindu.com) won a silver in Best Paid Content Strategy (including pay wall, membership or crowd funding models).

BBC News, *Malaya Manorama*, *Mathrubhumi*, ABP, NDTV Convergence, TV18, and *The Quint* also won awards.

Commenting on the recognition, L.V. Navaneeth, Chief Executive Officer, The Hindu Group, said, "The en-

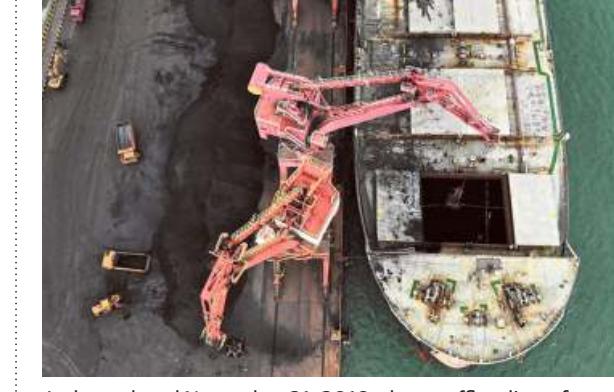
dorsement of our efforts by an eminent jury is very encouraging. This is a result of our focus on a reader-centric approach across all our products including digital and our commitment to the communities we serve. This recognition from WAN-IFRA's eminent jury is heartening and we are grateful for the awards in the four categories."

Innovation and content
The awards recognise news publishers who have adopted digital media and mobile

strategies as part of their total product offering to meet the major challenges in how people consume news and information today.

"When it comes to success in digital news publishing, innovation, on top of quality content, is the key. This was what was reflected in the winning entries," said Magdoom Mohamed, managing director, WAN-IFRA South Asia.

The World Association of News Publishers, or WAN-IFRA, is the global organisation of the world's press.



A photo dated November 21, 2019, shows offloading of imported coal at the Chinese port of Rizhao. ■ XINHUA/AP

Sailors still stranded off Chinese ports

Australian coal remains unloaded

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China on Wednesday said it had been in touch with the Indian authorities over the plight of Indian sailors stranded in ships off its ports, but offered no immediate way out amid a continuing stalemate that has left Indian seafarers stranded for months.

Ships carrying Australian coal have been unable to offload their cargo after China essentially banned coal imports amid deteriorating relations with Australia. China has said the ships are free to leave and has placed the responsibility on freight forwarding companies for resolving the impasse.

The companies do not want the ships to return as they stand to incur huge costs having already taken the coal off the hands of Australian exporters, and have appeared unable to find other buyers to offload their cargo. Chinese officials said last month the freight forwarders "do not want to adjust the plans for the vessel due to commercial interests which is the real cause of the impasse".

Captured in the stalemate are around 1,500 seafarers, according to Australian estimates, who have been unable to leave their ships. China hasn't allowed the crews to be replaced and prevent

ed them from disembarking citing COVID-19 protocols, preferring the ships to leave.

There are 23 Indian sailors on bulk carrier *MV Jag Anand*, which has been stuck off the Jingtang port on the cold waters of the Bohai Sea in northern China since June, and 16 others on *MV Anastasia*, which has been off the port of Caoefidian, since September.

MEA statement

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said last week it was in touch with the Chinese authorities to address the humanitarian needs of the crew and that the vessels were not allowed to change crew because of COVID-19 restrictions. "The owner of these shipping companies as well as the receivers of the cargo had been made aware of the reasons for the delay in unloading the cargo," MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said.

Asked why China wasn't allowing the crew to leave on humanitarian grounds, the Chinese Foreign Minister said there were "clear requirements on epidemic prevention and control at ports and on quarantine of crew members". "Local authorities been in close communication with the Indian side," its spokesperson Zhao Lijian said.

Cabinet approves merger of four film and media units

I&B Ministry says it will reduce duplication of activities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Cabinet on Wednesday approved the merger of four government-run film and media units – the Films Division, the Directorate of Film Festivals, the National Film Archives of India and the autonomous body Children's Film Society – with the National Film Development Corporation.

A statement from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said that the merger of Film Media Units under one corporation will lead to convergence of activities and resources and better coordination, thereby ensuring synergy and efficiency in achieving the mandate of each media unit. "This will lead to reduction in duplication of activities and direct savings to the exchequer," it added.



A mascot of the Children's Film Society. It will be merged with the NFDC.

The National Film Archives of India was established in 1964 with the primary objective of acquiring and preserving Indian cinematic heritage. The Directorate of Film Festivals was set up in 1973 to promote Indian films and cultural exchange.

The merger also brings into the fold an autonomous organisation, the Children's Film Society, which was founded in 1955 with the specific objective of providing children and young people value-based entertainment through the medium of films.

"While undertaking this exercise of convergence, the interests of employees of all the concerned Media Units will be fully taken care and no employee will be re-trenched," the Ministry's statement said.

NIA arrests man for alleged bid to revive Sikh militancy

Gurjeet Singh Nijjar was living in Cyprus since 2017



Gurjeet Singh Nijjar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday arrested a Punjab resident at the Delhi airport on his arrival from Cyprus for allegedly "hatching a criminal conspiracy to revive Sikh militancy for ultimate aim of formation of a separate state of Khalistan".

The accused, identified as Gurjeet Singh Nijjar, has been living in Cyprus since 2017. The NIA had registered a case in January 2019 under various Sections of the Arms Act and the anti-terror Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

"Investigation has revealed that the absconding accused Gurjeet Singh Nijjar (convicted for the assassination of Beant Singh, former Chief Minister of Punjab), Operation Blue Star of 1984 and pro-Khalistani posts related to proscribed organisation Babbar Khalsa International (BK) with the sole

intention to motivate like-minded Sikhs youths and others to join the Khalistan movement."

The NIA said Khan came in contact with Jagtar Singh Hawara when he was lodged in Tihar Jail from 2013-2016. "Subsequently, as planned, accused Moin Khan sent friend request to Facebook ID, Khalistani Jindabad Khalistan, from his Facebook account. By joining this Facebook account, Moin Khan came in contact with Harpal Singh and Gurjeet Singh Nijjar. Accused Gurjeet Singh Nijjar motivated Moin Khan by discussing about atrocities committed against the Muslims and Sikhs in India and convinced him to work for separate Khalistan state. Gurjeet Singh Nijjar directed Moin Khan to purchase a pistol and ammunition in 2018 to carry out their nefarious designs," the NIA said.

Lions maul girl to death in Gujarat village

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

AHMEDABAD

A pair of lions mauled a 17-year-old girl to death in a village near Junagadh late on Monday, as a growing population of wild cats is increasingly venturing out of their traditional habitat.

The lions pounced on Bhavna who, accompanied by her cousin, ventured out around 10 p.m. to answer nature's call. The lions dragged her for nearly 100 m and ate parts of her body.

The victim was from a family of migrant agricultural labourers from the tribal district of Panchmahal and had shifted to the village near Junagadh.

In another incident, a pride of 10 lions entered a cowshed and killed around eight cows in a village near the Junagadh forest range. Recently, a group of lions was seen roaming in villages of Rajkot district.

The companies do not want the ships to return as they stand to incur huge costs having already taken the coal off the hands of Australian exporters, and have appeared unable to find other buyers to offload their cargo. Chinese officials said last month the freight forwarders "do not want to adjust the plans for the vessel due to commercial interests which is the real cause of the impasse".

Captured in the stalemate are around 1,500 seafarers, according to Australian estimates, who have been unable to leave their ships. China hasn't allowed the crews to be replaced and prevent



B.G. Kolsé-Patil

State Home Department denied permission, he would seek recourse to the Bombay High Court for permission and was even willing to petition the Supreme Court to hold a similar event on December 31.

In his application submitted to the Swargate Police Station, Mr. Kolsé-Patil has sought permission to hold this new 'Elgar Parishad' at the city's Ganesh Kala Krida Manch.

"We expect 700-800 people to attend including speakers. We have already booked the premises and have applied permission to local police authorities. They said they would be forwarding it to their superiors," said Justice Kolsé-Patil (Retd).

Speaking to *The Hindu*, he further said that if the

CMYK

Over the years, the bird has been moving centrestage at Christmas feasts thanks to social media. Now homecooks lend a unique, indigenous spin to the classic roast

SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

Sunu Mathew is not sure when the plump turkey roast – stuffed with potatoes, sausages, bacon and bread – became part of the Christmas feast at her home in Kochi. It probably began after two of her sisters moved abroad, she says. "When all of us gathered for Christmas or Easter, my mother had substituted the traditional duck roast with turkey roast. Then it became a family tradition whenever us sisters and our families got together," Sunu adds.

Manju Jose, however, says that no Christmas lunch at her ancestral home in Palala, Kottayam, was ever complete without her maternal grandmother Annakutty Kayalakkadom's turkey roast. "It was her piece-de-resistance. She was a renowned home cook of her time, and she reared a free ranging country turkey specially for Christmas," recalls Manju.

Flying off the shelf
Nevertheless, until a few years ago, turkey was a rarity in most Malayali homes. In the last few years, however, the bird has found pride of place in the Christmas or Easter spread in many hotels and homes.

"Globalisation, frequent travellers, non-resident Indians who vacation in India during Christmas, social media and television images have made the turkey roast a familiar dish for many in India," explains Chef Mahesh Kumar of Madison Street, a restaurant

in Thiruvananthapuram that has been serving turkey roast as a season special for the last two years.

Turkey roast or sliced turkey is served from December 1 to January 1 at Madison Street. Mathew says that about 68 to 70 orders of roast turkey (at ₹1,650 for a full turkey) is sold during the season. Each one weighs about four to five kilograms. "It is on our menu but once Christmas season is over, it has to be pre-booked," says Varun Krishnan, one of the partners of Madison Street, who operates his own turkey farm near Karyavattom in Thiruvananthapuram.

YouTube throws up interesting, indigenous recipes for turkey that are not necessarily served in the traditional Continental style, with cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes. Innovative cooks have come up with turkey *peralan*, turkey stew and marinated turkey deep fried in coconut oil. Each household and restaurant has its own recipe for turkey roast to cater to local tastes.

Usha Mathew, a YouTuber (Samanwayam) from Palakkad, says she took her mother's recipe for chicken roast, and added a little twist to come up with her recipe



Stuffed delight
(left) Turkey roast at Madison Street, a restaurant in Thiruvananthapuram, (below) Usha Mathew

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Let's talk turkey



CHEF MAHESH KUMAR'S TURKEY ROAST RECIPE

Apply salt all over the turkey and keep it refrigerated overnight. The next day, wash it off and apply butter mixture of thyme, parsley, garlic paste and salt between the skin and flesh, and inside the turkey too. Keep refrigerated overnight. Fill it with your choice of vegetables and roast in the oven between 160 degrees and 170. For one kilogram of turkey, it takes 60 minutes, likewise three kilograms of turkey takes three hours to roast. Every 20 minutes, make sure to keep it moist by pouring the melted butter from the tray on the turkey.

Christmas feast, turkey farms too have multiplied across Kerala. "The bird is much in demand during Easter and Christmas, and even during Onam. During lockdown, we had customers from Neyyattinkara in the south of Kerala to Malappuram and Kannur in the north. At present, we are overbooked and all the birds (about a month-old) have been sold to farms and families all over Kerala," says veterinary surgeon Dr Josephine Francis, who is in charge of Kerala Government's Regional Poultry Farm (RPF) at Kureepuzha, Kollam.

Between April and November this year, RPF sold as many as 15,824 birds including one day, one month and a few two-month-old birds. The increased demand has forced RPF to stop supply of day-old chicks recently; only one-month-old chicks are sold now (at ₹150 per chick), mainly for farms and households. Buyers who pur-

YouTuber Usha Mathew's Kerala style turkey roast

INGREDIENTS

Brine solution process

Add some shallots, ginger, garlic, pepper, chilli, whole spices, salt and brown sugar to lukewarm brine (water to which salt has been added). Dip the turkey in the solution and refrigerate for 24 hours. The more you soak the turkey, the more its meat will become tender. Take the turkey from the brine solution and wipe it dry. Then apply butter, nutmeg powder and pepper above and under the skin. Then add chilli powder, coriander powder, turmeric powder, garam masala, pepper, ginger-garlic paste, salt and coconut oil. Marinate with these ingredients for one hour. I use whole spices and grind them into a paste.

FOR COOKING

- 8-10 onions: sliced fine
- 4 tomatoes
- 1 cup of shallot-ginger-garlic paste
- 2 tbs bird eye chilly, curry leaves and crushed ginger

METHOD

Pour enough coconut oil. Put in the sliced onions, shallot-ginger-paste and tomatoes into the *uruli*. Put in the whole turkey, cover it with the onions and paste. Then, cover it with a big banana leaf and leave it to cook in its own juice on medium heat. After about half an hour, remove the leaf and turn the turkey over. Add the crushed paste of chilly, curry leaves and ginger. Then every ten minutes, turn the turkey over and keep covering it with the gravy till the turkey is golden brown.

Now it is ready for serving.



Pupper on my table

To welcome 2021, animal welfare organisations release calendars that feature photographs and illustrations of their furry superheroes

SUSAN JOE PHILIP

Nila is hard to miss for anyone visiting Humane Animal Society in Coimbatore. One can either find her lazing around under the shade of a bougainvillea plant in the compound or playing with volunteers. "Nila was found in a ditch in the city six months ago. She was weak, dirty and in severe pain. But now she has recovered and is a happy soul," says Mini Vasudevan, co-founder. Nila is one of the animals featured in EveryLife 2021, the annual fundraiser calendar brought out by the NGO. "We have been bringing out calendars since 2013. It helps us find money to maintain the shelter," she explains.

The tabletop calendar also features 19 other dogs and cats that are ready for adoption. "The number of animals abandoned has increased by around 10% after lockdown," says Mini. All photographs have been clicked by volunteers of the organisation.

A portrait with your pet

Another calendar is by Chennai-based pet photographer Eshita Prasanna who runs Tailshots. "My calendar features dogs, cats and birds that belong to people in the city. It is difficult to choose from the photographs I have. I kept going back and changing them till the last minute," she says. Eshita also does customised calendars for pet parents. "It is always fun to photograph animals. Some are great posers. All you need is a little patience," she says.

In addition to photographs, animal illustrations are also a common feature in many calendars. The one by Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary (BMAD) in Chen-



For the love of animals

(Clockwise from top) Vellayan featured in the Blue Cross of India calendar, photograph by Tailshots and Nila from the Humane Animal Society calendar

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



nai features digital drawings of cows, horses and donkeys rescued from the city.

Most of the animals featured have already been adopted. Mambarazham and Valapazham, also featured in the calendar, are two ponies who were found in Chennai's streets eating mango and banana peels, respectively. "Valapazham's hoof was in bad shape and she was limping. It was cracked and infested with maggots. He took three months to recover and now loves nothing more than being around people," says Dr Josika Navukkara-su, veterinarian at BMAD.

Resident models

Permanent residents of animal shelters also find a place in the calendars of organisations. Bengaluru-based Charlie's Animal Rescue Centre (CARE) and Chennai-based The Blue Cross of India have in-house residents as their models.

"They have been through severe trauma and so we like to keep them with us," explains Sudha Narayan, founder trustee of CARE. The theme for the calendar is Super Heroes and it features carica-

tures of the animals done by artist Bindu Desetty.

"We started work last month. The animals are given superhero tags for the different qualities they have. For example, we have Sniffles, a piglet who loves vanilla ice cream and belly rubs. She was attacked by street dogs and was wounded when we rescued her. Five-and-a-half-year-old Roo is a happy dog that loves to run around despite having a deformed leg." The proceeds from the sales go towards maintaining the shelter.

The Blue Cross of India's tabletop calendar with space to mark important dates also has illustrations of animals done by Alamelu Annamalai, who is a volunteer with the organisation. "One of the animals is a two-month-old piglet called Vellayan. He was rescued with wounds all over his body after being attacked by animals and humans. Now, he is learning to trust people again. He is one of the most huggable animals in the shelter and loves to munch on fruits and slurp his health drink," says Vivek Venkatraman, coordinator.

Shakespeare slam

Madurai boy wins junior category of the first international online edition of Shakespeare's plays by Helen O'Grady Drama Academy

SOMA BASU

Till four months ago, eight-year-old R Vishakan barely knew who William Shakespeare was. Then, Saturday night changed it all for the class II student of Mahatma CBSE School in Madurai. "I want to read and perform the Bard's works," he says playfully, after winning second prize in the junior mono act competition of Shakespeare's plays conducted by the India chapter of Helen O'Grady International, an organisation that has been globally promoting personal development through drama for 40 years.

What made the flagship annual event – The Battle of the Bard – more challenging this year was its online format due to the pandemic. However, that did not lessen the enthusiasm of contestants, says Arpita Mittal, CEO of the Perth (Australia)-based organisation's India chapter.

Vishakan's delighted parents say, but for the online competition (posters of which they came across accidentally), their son would not have been exposed to the works of the celebrated playwright at this impressionable age. "He does not have stage fright and can memorise things fast, so we made him participate to keep him off gadgets," says M Renganathan of his son, who enrolled in Helen O'Grady's workshop on dramatics for a week. From his school days memories of studying Shakespeare, Renganathan chose Shylock's role in *Merchant of Venice* for his son to enact. The three-minute video clip was filmed on his phone.

"We saw Vishakan enjoy his rehearsals. The instinct that the big announcement could be in his favour strengthened when the international panel of judges expressed their awe at an eight-year-old's memory and acting skills during the virtual prize ceremony.

ny," he adds.

More than 750 entries from 22 States were submitted and the panel of eight Indian judges short listed 10 best in each category: mono act and monologues/soleiloquy for juniors (eight to 12 years), seniors (13 to 20 years) and open category (for those above 20 years). Helen O'Grady's international directors from Malta, Morocco, Ireland and South Africa further shortlisted five nominations in each category and announced the final winners.

Vishakan was the youngest contestant and Achuthan Kumar, at 70, was the oldest awardee. The first two years of Shakespeare slam were held as inter-school competition across multiple cities. Tamil Nadu with 52 submissions debuted at the competition this year and gave three winners in a list of 15.

"So many people with a joy and wonder for Shakespeare found a place of connection," says Arpita, who established the India chapter in Mumbai in 2003. "The brilliant performances by the participants reflect that the appetite for literature and understanding of Shakespeare has not diminished," she says.

Adds Archana Dange, TN operations head, "Shakespeare is an integral part of our school learning, yet our students are put off by his works largely because the way it is taught in schools."

Winners are entitled to participate in the Shakespeare School Festival held annually in Cape Town every September. This year's winners will have to wait and count on their luck depending on the COVID-19 situation.



Theatre beckons
Eight-year-old R Vishakan

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Where to buy?

- Charlie's Animal Rescue Centre's calendar is priced at ₹300. Visit www.charlies-care.com to make a purchase
- Humane Animal Society's costs ₹250 exclusive of postage. Call 9366127215 or email has.cbe@gmail.com to order
- Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary's will be available at the dispensary for ₹500. Online orders can be made through their Instagram handle, [@besantmemorialanimaldispensary](https://www.instagram.com/besantmemorialanimaldispensary)
- The Blue Cross of India's will be available at No 72, Velachery Main Road, Guindy, Chennai or through their Instagram handle, [@blue_cross_rescues](https://www.instagram.com/blue_cross_rescues) for ₹550. Call 8220460054 for details.
- Tailshots' tabletop calendar is for ₹750 and wall hanging at ₹950. Call 9940070163 or visit https://www.instagram.com/tailshots_petphotography/ to order

Weight training is not only a young man's game. Meet the seniors over 70 who turn heads for their approach to fitness, having taken on a pandemic while bench pressing 80 kilograms



Granny strong (Clockwise from top) Kiran Bai with her coach and grandson Chirag Chordia; Tripat Singh; Ambika Nair • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Age is just the number THEY DEADLIFT



SWEET AKUNDI

Deadlifting in a Marwari-drape sari sure looks cool, but the reason why octogenarian Kiran Bai from Chennai took up weight training at this age was for a simple, yet integral purpose. For the first time in five years, the 82-year-old could sit down on the floor and get back up by herself.

This need for physical independence is driving a small section of India's senior citizens to take up weight training; a deadly pandemic putting them in the vulnerable category has only reinforced the need. Tired of her sedentary life, remaining constrained to her home and unable to meet her loved ones, Kiran Bai was not in a great place psychologically until she found a coach in her grandson, Chirag Chordia, partner at Chennai's Strength System.

Defying expectations

"In the beginning of lockdown, my grandmother was saying things like her end was near. She felt she couldn't do anything

but sit with her phone," narrates Chirag, who is also based in Chennai but lives separately. "At that point, my mother reached out to me asking if I could talk to her, not as a coach but just as a grandson." What started as conversations over phone calls, turned into a virtual, and, before long, in-person training programme between grandson and grandmother. Less than four months later, Kiran is now doing full body workouts thrice a week: lifting five kilograms on each hand, doing seated inchworms, resistance band training and squats. But what makes her happiest is that she can now walk four to five lengths of the hall without catching her breath.

In Chandigarh, 76-year-old Tripat Singh is somewhat of a local hero to the fitness community. His workout buddies are 18- to 20-year-old men at Ozi Gym, of which he has been made the brand ambassador after he did 584 push-ups in one go. They spot him as he bench presses 80 kilograms in the mornings from 6 am to 9 am.

Weight training was not something Tripat got into until he was 64. Still, he had learnt the importance of fitness much earlier in life looking at how diabetes affected his father. "I was with him in his last days. It's tough when the body is losing the battle at the end. I resolved then to drive this condition out from my family," he says.

Tripat lives with his two sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. However, he sounds miffed that none of them share his passion for fitness.

Three thousand kilometres down South in Thiruvananthapuram, 70-year-old Ambika Nair has a similar complaint. "Chet-tan oru madiyan aau (My husband is a lazy fellow)," she says,

teasingly. "There is no point sitting at home thinking you are old. Follow whatever form of movement you like. It doesn't have to be heavy weights, but keep at it," says Ambika. Before the pandemic, she was a regular at Belaire Health Club, a fitness centre in the city, doing 70 kilograms leg press.

Her fitness journey is entwined with that of her daughter's, starting when she gave birth to her and re-starting it over two decades later, when her daughter gave birth to her child. "I first started yoga classes to lose weight after my pregnancy," says Ambika, explaining that "in those days (1969), it wasn't common for women to

go to gyms" and that yoga was more acceptable. "Then, 18 years ago, after my daughter gave birth, I went with her to the gym to support her as she tried losing the pregnancy weight. My daughter eventually stopped going, but I continued," she says.

When Tripat started lifting in the gym, his family wasn't too happy: "They told me this isn't the right age. They asked 'What if something happens to your joints?' But thankfully I had always been active, so there were no major problems."

His story is true of many senior citizens in this country since lifting weights is considered a young person's game.

Gentler cardio routines such as jogging, aerobic exercises, chair yoga and pilates are more common among seniors. "I took up running 12 years ago and that did make me fitter. But still, my paunch remained until I started lifting," Tripat says.

Working within limits
Chirag has been a strong advocate of progressive resistance training for seniors. "No matter how old you are, your bones and muscles are still living tissue. By progressively challenging it, in a way that works for you, resistance training can get you strong enough and truly be functional," he writes in an Instagram post. In November, he announced 'GrannyGang', a one-week free trial of at-home workouts for older adults.

"Train at an intensity that feels right for you rather than doing too much too soon. Consistency is most important. Train so that you at least have the base strength to do your daily activities," he says. In his initial conversations with his clients, if Chirag finds out that they need medical attention, he makes sure that they have a clearance to train from their doctors. "You have to find out what everyone's starting point is, and then build a training programme around that, not the other way around," he says.

The movement Kiran Bai undertakes now reminds her of her youth: milking cows, pulling water from the well and grinding flour. In most cases, a tendency towards movement and fitness in your 20s helps in getting back in shape later in life as well.

Ambika, too, says she has always been fairly active; one of her favourite sports was playing basketball with her family. "Most of my peers complain of knee or arm pain which I never had because of the workouts. I have also never felt the need for household help," she says.

It doesn't matter how sedentary your career has been, points out Tripat. "Even ten minutes of workout is important in opening up your body. Our bodies were not made for just sitting idle. If you do, they will degrade eventually."



Special bond Sharada Ganapathy (left) with her dolls • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Cherished companions

During lockdown Sharada Ganapathy got more hooked to knitting dolls. Now the 78-year-old is looking forward to taking up orders

NAHLA NAINAR

When the lockdown left 78-year-old homemaker Sharada Ganapathy from Chennai with an abundance of leisure time, she decided to knit dolls instead of spending it watching movies or plays, as was the norm for her. Sharada decided to take up doll-making after seeing her friend make small figurines for *golu* display and reading a book on the craft two years ago.

She sources her yarns (synthetic wool blends like acrylic and cashmilon) online and

prefers to wind two together for a more sturdy doll. "As I gift most of my dolls to young children, they should be able to withstand constant handling, which is why having a double-strength yarn is necessary. I stuff the body with nylon filling so that the doll can be washed often," she says.

Sharada has created over 60 woollen dolls of various shapes and sizes in the past two years with at least 20 dolls made

during lockdown. Several of them have found a place in her *golu* collection at her home in Nandanam. The toys are suitable both for infants and slightly older children, and have a detailed wardrobe. "Some patterns require the head and limbs to be made separately. Knitting various accessories can be time-consuming."

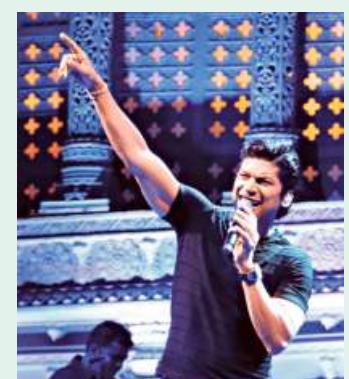
While a palm-held toy can be made in one or two days, the bigger dolls require up to a week. "Getting the fa-

cial features right is essential to giving life to a doll, so I need to concentrate on that part first," she adds. Knitting dolls can be a source of employment for many women and Sharada says she is willing to help anyone learn the basics. "I hope to sell some dolls and perhaps undertake small orders for birthdays and festive décor items in the coming months, but at a scale that I can manage without too much pressure," says Sharada.

Sharada can be reached on 9840443341.

Shaan

The latest episode of Paytm Insider presents Jim Beam Originals is up this Friday with Bollywood playback singer Shaan going live with his personal twist on popular tracks by Bryan Adams. Shaan's original take comes on the heels of Benny Dayal, Colonial Cousins and other much-loved Indian voices, each belting out their own renditions of some equally loved classics from overseas. Independent talents like Raghu Dixit, Karsh Kale and Shor Police are set to follow suit over the next few months. The digital event will go live at 9 pm on December 26 at www.insider.in; visit the website for one-time and season passes for the rest of the series.



TIGER



POOCH CAFE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



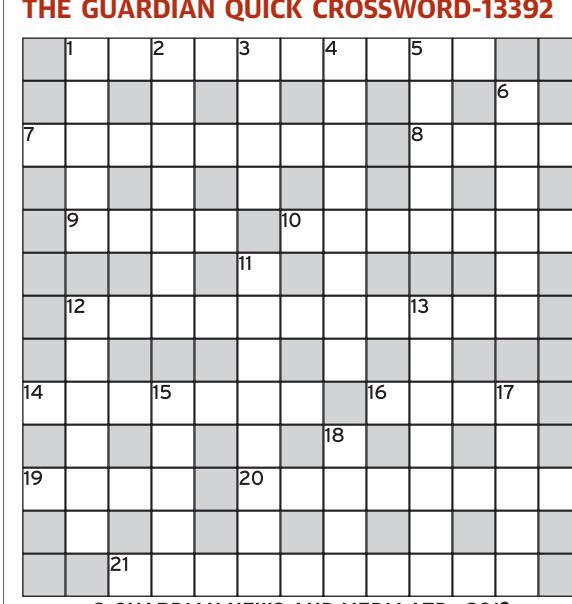
GRAFFITI

© 2020 UFS Dist. By Andrews McMeel for UFS
DETROIT
SOLD SIX MORE CARS LAST MONTH THAN IT RECALLED

HEALTH CAPSULES by Brian Smith

IS IT OKAY TO EAT THE SEEDS WHEN YOU EAT AN APPLE?
JUST DON'T EAT ME!
FEEL FREE TO EAT AN APPLE A DAY, BUT DON'T EAT THE SEEDS, AT LEAST IN LARGE QUANTITIES. APPLE SEEDS CONTAIN AMYGDALIN, A COMPOUND THAT IS CONVERTED TO CYANIDE IN YOUR BODY. CYANIDE IS A DEADLY POISON. A SEED OR TWO IS FINE NOW AND THEN WON'T HURT, BUT DON'T MAKE IT A HABIT TO EAT THE SEEDS WHEN YOU EAT AN APPLE.
Illustration by Brian Smith

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13392



Across
1 Coming together (10)
2 Small pile of soil blighting a lawn (4,4)
3 Legislative assembly (4)
4 Flat-bottomed boat propelled by pole (4)
5 Jockey's foot support (7)
6 Seamstress (11)
7 Person put up for a post (7)
Down
8 One attaching importance to social position (4)
9 Overabundance (4)
10 Inclined to believe (8)
11 All things considered (2,3,5)
12 Munch noisily (5)
13 Sandwich (5)
14 Human head (informal) (5)
15 Knitting stitch (4)

To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

3 Ages (4)
4 Splash out (2,2,4)
5 Rock bottom (5)
6 Homecoming (6)
11 Whale food (8)
12 Almost (6)
13 Huge (7)
15 Sandwich (5)
17 Human head (informal) (5)
18 Knitting stitch (4)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated December 31, 2020
Solution No. 13391

M	A	S	K	T	E	E	N	A	G	E
I	O	R	L	E	G	G	W	H	I	T
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Trump rejects 'wasteful' COVID-19 aid Bill

U.S. President seeks changes to \$900 billion Bill

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON
President Donald Trump on Tuesday rejected a massive COVID-19 economic relief package passed by Congress, branding it "a disgrace" in an act of political brinkmanship less than a month before he must leave office and when millions of Americans are suffering fallout from the pandemic.

Mr. Trump dropped the bombshell via a pre-recorded statement made in the White House and sent out on Twitter. It came just a day after his Republicans and the Democrats finally agreed to a \$900 billion Bill meant to throw a lifeline to businesses and people struggling to keep heads above water.

In his address, Mr. Trump said he would refuse to accept the Bill as it is and demanded changes, notably a big increase in the proposed \$600 direct payments to less well-off Americans. "I am asking Congress to amend this Bill and increase the ridiculously low \$600 to \$2,000, or \$4,000 for a couple," he said.

Tapping into his "America First" brand, Mr. Trump also castigated measures added



Stern statement: Donald Trump demanded an increase in the proposed \$600 direct payments to less well-off Americans. •AP

onto the Bill during complex negotiations that would provide funding for projects benefiting U.S. partners abroad and other non-COVID-19 related items such as the environment. "It really is a disgrace," he said. "I'm also asking Congress to immediately get rid of the wasteful and unnecessary items from this legislation, and just send me a suitable Bill."

Mr. Trump has not yet received the Bill and he did not explicitly say he would not sign. If he actually vetoed the package, Congress would almost certainly quickly override that, given the bipartisan support.

The COVID-19 package is wrapped into a \$2.3 trillion, almost 5,600-page "coronavirus" Bill that includes a so-called omnibus Bill to fund the government for the coming year. A congressional

override of a veto would mark an embarrassing defeat for Mr. Trump.

In a bind
Mr. Trump's motives in picking the fight with Congress are intertwined with his ongoing struggle to overturn the November 3 poll. Despite courts across the country rejecting his baseless claims of fraud, he has enough allies on the right of the Republican party, and loyal voters, to keep trying to derail the traditionally smooth presidential transition. He claimed again on Tuesday that he won in a "landslide".

His challenge now puts the Republican Party in a bind, forcing lawmakers who angered him by declaring Mr. Biden the true winner to choose whether they dare defy him further and risk wrecking COVID-19 relief.

Two linked to Russia probe among 15 pardoned

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump granted pardons on Tuesday to two people linked to a probe into alleged collusion between his campaign and Russia along with a list of others. They add to pardons already issued to political allies of Mr. Trump.

The White House said in a statement that Mr. Trump had granted full pardons to 15 people and commuted all or part of the sentences for five others.

A full pardon was given to George Papadopoulos, a former Trump campaign adviser who admitted lying to federal investigators about his contacts with Russians.

Papadopoulos cooperated with investigators led by Robert Mueller, the special prosecutor who conducted a two-year probe into alleged collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

The guards were convicted of opening fire in Bagdad's crowded Nisur Square, killing 14 civilians and injuring 17.

The guards said they acted in self-defense in response to insurgent fire.

The White House statement said the four men, former members of the military, "have a long history of service to the nation".



George Papadopoulos

Another full pardon was granted to Alex van der Zwaan, a Dutch lawyer who was also convicted in connection with Mr. Mueller's probe.

Blackwater guards

Full pardons were also granted to four guards of the Blackwater security firm convicted over the 2007 killing of Iraqis.

The guards were convicted of opening fire in Bagdad's crowded Nisur Square, killing 14 civilians and injuring 17.

The guards said they acted in self-defense in response to insurgent fire.

The White House statement said the four men, former members of the military, "have a long history of service to the nation".

'U.K. strain unlikely to affect efficacy of vaccines'

Scientists warn against more mutations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
The faster spreading coronavirus strain first detected in the U.K. is unlikely to make vaccines less effective as of now but the preventives may need to be appropriately altered if more mutations occur over time, say scientists.

According to Jeremy Farrar, director of the London-based research charity Wellcome Trust UK, there is no indication at the moment that the new strain, VUI-202012/0, which was detected on September 21, would evade treatments and



Virus scare: A pedestrian walking past Christmas decorations on an unusually quiet London street. •AP

vaccines. "However, the mutation is a reminder of the power of the virus to adapt, and that cannot be ruled out in the future," he said.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said on Sunday that the rapid increase of a

U.K. identifies new virus variant from South Africa

LONDON

Two cases of another new strain of SARS-CoV-2 linked to South Africa have been identified in the U.K., Health Secretary Matt Hancock said. "This new variant is highly concerning because it is yet more transmissible and it appears to have mutated further than the new variant discovered in the U.K."

in reproductive number (R) by 0.4 or greater with an estimated increased transmissibility of up to 70%," it said.

The ECDC, however, said there is no indication of increased infection severity.

"The new strain of the virus is known to have 13 muta-

tions in the spike protein of which the N501Y mutation is responsible for it spreading 70% faster than earlier versions of the virus," said Deepak Sehgal, Professor and head of department of Life Sciences, Shiv Nadar University.

He said the new variant has mutations to the spike protein that the three leading vaccines are targeting. The vaccines are Moderna, Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca. "However, vaccines produce antibodies against many regions in the spike protein, so it's unlikely that a single change would make the vaccine less effective," he said. Over time, as more mutations occur, the vaccine may need to be altered.

Britain, France reopen cross-Channel travel

Virus curbs threatened supply of food

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

France and Britain reopened cross-Channel travel on Wednesday after a 48-hour ban to curb the spread of a new coronavirus variant but London has warned it could take days for thousands of trucks blocked around the port of Dover to get moving.

The major transit hub reopened following an agreement between London and Paris to allow hauliers stranded in the U.K. to leave the country if they could produce a negative coronavirus test that was less than 72 hours old.

"It will take a few days to work our way through," Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick told Sky News. "There's going to be quite a lot of work to do."

Much of Europe had

swiftly banned British travellers following the emergence of a more transmissible variant of COVID-19 in Britain, and France's decision to block freight movements sparked fears of food shortages.

As dramatic images showed masses of lorries backed up in Dover, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was under intense pressure to resolve the deadlock – even as 11th-hour talks with Brussels on a post-Brexit trade deal were at a stalemate.

Mr. Jenrick said around 4,000 trucks were stranded in southern Kent county. Between 700 and 800 were parked alongside the motorway heading out of London via Kent and some 3,000 were at the nearby disused airport where drivers are to be tested.

Situation in seized C. African town under control, says UN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BANGUI

The Central African Republic's fourth-largest town, which was seized by rebels on Tuesday ahead of elections this weekend, is back in the hands of United Nations peacekeepers and national security forces, the UN said.

residential and legislative elections on next Sunday.

"The situation in Bambouri is under control," Abdou-laziz Fall, spokesman for the UN's peacekeeping force in the CAR, told a press conference in the capital Bangui on Wednesday. "The civilians are starting to return. The armed groups have been pushed back into the bush." At the request of the CAR, Russia and Rwanda have sent military personnel to support the troubled country.

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road

Bengaluru – 560 001. Phone No. 080-22265383

website : www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-40/9777/2020-21 Date: 23.12.2020

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

(Through GOK e – Procurement Portal Only)

KIADB is inviting Item rate Tender under two cover system are invited as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from Class-I Contractors (Civil) registered in KPWD who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the work of: Formation of 24M & 18M Wide Cement Concrete Roads Including Construction of RCC Side Drains, Culverts & Providing & Laying of HDPE Water supply pipeline at Kochanahalli Industrial Area, Mysuru Taluk & District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **21.01.2021 upto 04:00 pm**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal

<https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>

DIPR/DDU/Zen/R:0215/2020-21

Date: 23.12.2020

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.

Wear Mask Follow Physical Distancing Maintain Hand Hygiene



Hiring of Project Management Consultant (PMC) for Kerala Solid Waste Management Project (KSWMP)

Reference No.: IN-SUCM -210897-CS-QCBS

Request for Expression of Interest (REOI)

International Competitive Procurement (ICP) Funding: The World Bank

Date: 23 December 2020

Suchitwa Mission (under Local Self Government Department, Government of Kerala) invites Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) from Consultants for the aforesaid project. The complete REOI documents are available for download from our website <http://www.sanitation.kerala.gov.in> from 23 December 2020. EOIs (Soft Copy) shall be received up to 1700 hrs on 11 January 2021.

This REOI is issued in conjunction with the REOI issued earlier (Reference No.: IN-SUCM -183681-CS-QCBS). The detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) including the scope of work and other relevant information is given in the REOI document and is available at the website. Any updates to the REOI shall be hosted on our website.

The interested Firms are requested to ensure that all the updates are considered while submitting the EoI. All correspondence/communication shall be made to:

The Project Director-KSWMP, Suchitwa Mission, Basement Floor (-1), Swaraj Bhavan, Nanthancode, Kowdiar, Thiruvananthapuram-695003, Kerala, India.

Telephone: 0471-2319831, 2316730

E-Mail: tenderkswmp@gmail.com

Website: www.sanitation.kerala.gov.in

Nepal SC forwards petitions to Constitutional Bench

It will hear pleas against Parliament dissolution from Friday

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of Nepal on Wednesday started hearing writ petitions filed against the dissolution of the House of Representatives by President Bidhya Devi Bhandari. The court then forwarded the petitions to a Constitutional Bench.

The Constitutional Bench, headed by Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher J.B. Rana, will start hearing the petitions from Friday.

Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli recommended President Bhandari dissolve Parliament after he briefed his Cabinet colleagues during an emergency meeting on December 20.

The judiciary's intervention, however, is unlikely to repair the broken affairs of the NCP, which is now clearly divided between the factions led by Mr. Oli and his challengers Mr. Prachanda and former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal.



Strong opposition: A December 20 photo of students protesting against Prime Minister Oli in Kathmandu. •AP

declare the expulsion of Mr. Oli.

The warring factions have adopted different tactics until now with the one led by Mr. Oli already preparing for general election and the Prachanda-Nepal-led faction focussing on the judicial and constitutional route to restore the dissolved Parliament. NCP general secretary Bishnu Prasad Poudel on Wednesday blamed Mr. Prachanda of triggering the current round of crisis and asked the Mr. Oli-led faction to prepare for elections.

Putin expects ties with U.S. to remain same under Biden

Aides, however, sound less optimistic, warn of 'Russophobia'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOSCOW

With less than a month before Joe Biden moves into the White House, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday he was not expecting much change in Moscow's ties with Washington, while his aides said they were less optimistic.

Mr. Biden is expected to take a tougher stance against Russia than Donald Trump.

Mr. Putin was one of the last leaders to congratulate Mr. Biden on his election victory, sending his congratula-

tory message six weeks after the November 3 vote and saying he was ready for "collaboration".

Mr. Putin told senior Russian officials he was not expecting any change in relations with the U.S. after Mr. Biden takes office, speaking after the President-elect promised to punish Russia for a major cyberattack.

Mr. Biden is expected to be more difficult for us. I don't think so. It will be business as usual," he said.

Senior officials had earlier

in the day said they did not expect anything "good" from the Biden administration. Mr. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Kremlin was expecting "nothing positive" in ties with Washington.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov struck a similar note. "We are definitely not expecting anything good," he said. "And it would be strange to expect good things from people, many of whom made their careers on Russophobia and throwing mud at my country."

उत्तर-पूर्वी अंतरिक्ष उपयोग केंद्र / North Eastern Space Applications Centre		
भारत सरकार / Government of India, अंतरिक्ष विभाग / Department of Space		
उमियम / Umiam - 793103, मेघालय / Meghalaya, Tel: 0364 - 2570140		

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MARKET WATCH

	23-12-2000	% CHANGE
Sensex	46444	0.95
US Dollar	73.76	0.10
Gold	49506	-0.29
Brent oil	50.69	0.63

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	470.75	2.10
Asian Paints	2642.55	41.75
Axist Bank	592.45	2.70
Bajaj Auto	3309.65	44.35
Bajaj Finserv	9013.25	74.40
Bajaj Finance	5088.90	77.50
Bharti Airtel	507.20	6.90
BPCL	374.40	1.90
Britannia Ind	3625.35	-5.05
Cipla	824.65	29.65
Coal India	135.05	-0.45
Divis Lab	3688.60	-32.35
D Dr Reddy's Lab	5224.10	62.30
Eicher Motors	2446.70	0.00
GAIL (India)	118.25	-0.25
Grasim Ind	902.00	16.80
HCL Tech	922.60	8.80
HDFC	2403.05	-0.60
HDFC Bank	1375.65	2.55
HDFC Life	648.60	7.35
Hero MotoCorp	3040.05	-9.05
Hindalco	236.20	4.30
Hind Unilever	2370.35	59.35
ICICI Bank	503.60	3.30
IndusInd Bank	855.35	14.65
Infosys	1253.05	32.55
Indian Oil Corp	88.15	0.20
ITC	207.75	4.35
JSW Steel	366.85	4.90
Kotak Bank	1920.75	17.80
L&T	1264.80	2.10
M&M	711.50	16.45
Maruti Suzuki	7449.95	54.55
Nestle India Ltd.	18732.70	179.15
NTPC	98.55	-0.35
ONGC	90.80	0.25
PowerGrid Corp	189.95	-0.35
Reliance Ind	1943.85	7.15
SBI Life	854.95	1.00
State Bank	263.00	5.55
Shree Cement	23894.40	-22.30
Sun Pharma	574.60	6.30
Tata Motors	169.20	4.25
Tata Steel	621.40	20.05
TCS	2908.75	36.25
Tech Mahindra	948.15	3.50
Titan	1490.85	-7.95
UltraTech Cement	5033.95	12.65
UPL	451.95	7.30
Wipro	385.55	21.35

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 23		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar.....	73.57	73.89
Euro.....	89.72	90.12
British Pound.....	98.81	99.25
Japanese Yen (100).....	71.14	71.45
Chinese Yuan.....	11.26	11.31
Swiss Franc.....	82.77	83.14
Singapore Dollar.....	55.17	55.42
Canadian Dollar.....	57.15	57.40
Malaysian Ringgit.....	18.10	18.19
Australian Dollar.....	55.67	55.92

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



NIPFP pegs best-case GST revenue gap at ₹1.95 lakh crore

Institute says shortfall may go up to ₹2.45 lakh cr., exceeding Council's forecast

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

The revenue shortfall for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation payable to States in 2020-21 could be about ₹1.95 lakh crore in the best-case scenario, significantly lower than the ₹2.35 lakh crore estimated by the GST Council, as per a new research paper by the National Institute for Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP).

In a paper titled 'The Pandemic and GST Revenue: An Assessment for Union and States', Sacchidananda Mukherjee, an associate professor at NIPFP, estimated that even in the worst-case scenario, the revenue shortfall for



Offering hope: GST is showing the brightest sign of recovery among all revenue streams, says the paper. ■ K. PICHUMANI

GST compensation to States won't exceed ₹2.45 lakh crore. "Though the spread of COVID-19 is an apparent decline in India, the economic impact of the pandemic is still evolving, as new waves of COVID-19 in-

fection are striking locally. Any estimate on revenue impact, thus, may not be free from shortcoming and constraints. However, as GDP data of the last two quarters is now available, and as GST shows the brightest sign of

recovery among all revenue streams, an attempt is made in this paper to project GST revenue for 2020-21," it said. The maximum GST revenue gaps this year are expected for Goa, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Chhattisgarh, the exercise suggested.

"The GST Council Secretariat said that the move, aimed at controlling the menace of GST fake invoice frauds, was recommended by the Council's law committee.

"Now there must be in-person verification before registration is granted to an applicant. Further, in case an applicant opts for Aadhaar authentication, he will undergo biometric-based Aadhaar authentication at one of the facilitation

Loan collections by NBFCs improve, near Jan. levels'

Ratios for CVs jump, SMEs not out of the woods: Crisil

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI



Extensive recovery efforts by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), coupled with the recent uptick in economic activity, has lifted the median collection efficiency ratios to their highest levels in FY21, and near pre-Covid-19 pandemic levels for most asset classes, Crisil Ratings said.

Its conclusions were based on the performance of its rated securitised pools for November 2020 payouts (October 2020 collections).

Collection of loan instalments had substantially reduced in the immediate aftermath of the stringent lockdown announced in late March 2020, and subsequently too, due to the extension of moratorium on loan repayment to borrowers, it said. Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director, Crisil Ratings, said, "Economic activity has been gathering steam in recent months, and

agricultural activity, which was less impacted, has steadily picked up, too. As cash flows improved, borrowers have started repaying their loan instalments."

Median collection ratios for November payouts for commercial vehicle loan pools jumped to 93% from a paltry 24% in May, compared with 98.99% in January-March. Collection efficiency for mortgage-backed loans were about 96% in October-November versus 99% in March and about 71% in June. However, pools backed by loans to SMEs saw a slight drop in November, as underlying businesses and borrower cash flows were yet to achieve stability, it said.

'PE investment in realty to bounce back to \$6 bn'

Policy reforms, sectoral growth to help'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU



Private equity investment in real estate is expected to bounce back to \$6 billion, registering a 30% year-on-year growth in 2021 on the back of an improving economic sentiment supported by policy reforms and growth in key emerging sectors, Savills India, a global property consultancy firm, said in a report.

The next wave of investments will be driven by growth in warehousing, affordable housing and data centres, apart from the commercial office segment which will continue to see steady improvement, the report 'Beyond The '20: Private Equity in Indian Real Estate' said.

Savills India's estimates for private equity investment in the sector are based on factors like overall economic and infrastructure growth, growth in sectors

'Housing sales to grow 51% in October-Dec.'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Sales of residential properties are estimated to grow 51% across seven major cities during October-December compared with the previous quarter driven by festive demand, property consultant JLL India said.

However, demand is likely to fall 48% in 2020 due to the impact of the pandemic, it added.

According to the data, housing sales are estimated to rise at 21,832 units during the December quarter as against 14,415 units in July-September.

"GDP in July-September quarter of 2020 showed higher than expected recovery. During the same quarter, the housing market showed some initial signs of recovery as well, with sales increasing by 34% on a sequential basis," JLL India CEO and Country Head Ramesh Nair said in a statement.

Bharti pips Jio again in mobile user addition, Oct. figures show

Airtel adds 3.67 mn versus Jio's 2.22 mn; telecom base rises

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI



India's telecom subscriber base grew to more than 1.17 billion in October with Bharti Airtel maintaining its leadership in mobile subscriber addition, according to the monthly report released by sector regulator TRAI on Wednesday.

This is the second consecutive month in which Airtel added the highest number of subscribers. In September, it had regained the leadership position in subscriber addition after a gap of four years. The company added 3.67 million new customers in October, taking its total wireless customer base to 330.28 million, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) report said.

Airtel was followed by Reliance Jio, which added 2.22 million new mobile customers, taking its total subscriber base, however, rose to 1,171.8 million from 1,168.66 million in September.

during the reported month. The other four mobile service providers — Vodafone Idea Ltd. (VIL), BSNL, MTNL and Reliance Communications — reported loss of subscriber base.

VIL lost the maximum mobile customers in the month at 2.65 million subscribers, with its wireless subscriber base dipping to 292.83 million. BSNL lost 10,208 customers, MTNL 7,307 and Reliance Communications lost 1,488 mobile customers. India's overall telecom subscriber base, however, rose to 1,171.8 million from 1,168.66 million in September.

GST: physical verification of premises is now mandatory

Aim is to check fake invoice fraud, says Council Secretariat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government has introduced mandatory physical verification of business premises for the purposes of obtaining GST registration.

The GST Council Secretariat said that the move, aimed at controlling the menace of GST fake invoice frauds, was recommended by the Council's law committee.

"The revenue gap in State GST collections is expected to vary between ₹2.85 lakh crore and ₹3.27 lakh crore.



Centres notified by the Commissioner," the secretariat said in a statement.

'Pay 1% in cash'

Separately, a new rule has been introduced by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs that mandates businesses with monthly turnover of over ₹50 lakh to

pay at least 1% of their GST liability in cash instead of using input tax credits to discharge their entire liability.

The validity of e-way bills has also been tweaked, doubling the distance to be covered for each day of validity, effective January 1.

Till now, an e-way bill for transporting goods under GST allowed transporters to cover 100 km in one day. Now, the distance for each day of validity has been increased to 200 km.

"While four days were granted in terms of e-way bill validity to cover 400 km, going forward, only two days will be granted for the same distance," explained Abhishek Jain, tax partner at EY.

'Amazon bid to control Future violates FEMA FDI' FRL puts out its analysis of judgment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI



Retail credit has experienced an increase in serious delinquencies, with loans against property and credit cards being the most affected segments, a report said on Wednesday.

As of August-end, the loans overdue for over 90 days in the credit card segment were 0.51% up from the year earlier period at 2.32%, while the same for the loans against property was 0.34% up at 3.96%, Transunion Cibil said on Wednesday.

Giving out its analysis of the Delhi High Court's December 21 judgment, Future Retail Ltd. (FRL) in a filing with stock exchanges said its board approving a ₹24,713 crore deal to sell assets to Reliance Retail was held "valid in law" by the court. It said the entire legal basis of the emergency resolution award that Amazon

secured to halt the ₹24,713 crore deal, "stands vitiated". The High Court had on Monday upheld Amazon's right to make representations to statutory authorities against the Future Group-Reliance Retail deal.

It, however, made several observations could potentially upset the U.S. giant's 2019 investment in Future Coupons Pvt. Ltd.

Das tells banks to raise capital, step up lending

SPECIAL COR

QUICK SINGLES



Lyon expects India to fight back in next Test

Sydney
Australia off-spinner Nathan Lyon expects India to "come out firing" in the Boxing Day Test, predicting that the visiting batsmen will attack his bowling. "There's no doubt that they're training the house down now. We're expecting them to come out firing," he said. AFP



MELBOURNE
Former Australia coach Darren Lehmann felt India has quality players in its ranks to effect a turnaround. "They've some quality players if they can get on a roll," said Lehmann. "They can certainly cause some trouble with the ball, the batsmen need to cope with the bounce." PTI

India shifts focus to the red ball

Begins preparation for Boxing Day Test; Gill, Rahul have long stints at the nets

INDIA IN AUS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Determined to leave behind the embarrassing defeat in the series-opener, the Indian team, under stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane, switched its focus to red-ball cricket on Wednesday with Shubman Gill and others grinding it out during a net session ahead of the Boxing Day Test.

Gill, who was not considered for the opening Test despite scoring 43 and 65 in the pink-ball warm-up match, looked in good nick as he honed his skills along with Mayank Agarwal at the nets, indicating that the duo could be the opening combination for the second Test.

The 21-year-old could be favoured over struggling Prithvi Shaw, who returned with scores of 0 and 4 in the two innings at Adelaide.

K.L. Rahul, who received the backing of Sunil Gavaskar for the opening slot, had a long stint at the nets as well.



Slow and steady: Jadeja, who missed the first Test due to a concussion, is back at work. •AFP

Also back at the nets was spin all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who had missed the first Test due to concussion.

Jadeja went for an hour-long spell at the nets during which he bowled to his Saurashtra teammate Cheteshwar Pujara. He again returned for a second stint later, an indication that he could be included in the

playing XI for the Boxing Day Test.

The practice session began with head coach Ravi Shastri giving a pep talk to the team members at the MCG.

Shastri also had a chat with Rishabh Pant, who came out to bat at the nets ahead of Wriddhiman Saha. Pant, who had smashed a

73-ball 103 in the warm-up, may replace Saha in the second Test.

With Mohammed Shami ruled out of the remainder of the series with a fractured forearm, Mohammad Siraj and Navdeep Saini were seen bowling to Rahane alongside Shardul Thakur as the trio look to stake claim for the third pacer's slot.

Warner, Abbott to miss second Test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Star opener David Warner and pacer Sean Abbott were on Wednesday ruled out of the second Test against India, beginning here Saturday, because of a mix of injuries and COVID-19 protocols.

Both Warner and Abbott were outside the team's bio-secure hub to get treatment for their respective groin and calf injuries.

The duo was flown out to

Melbourne ahead of schedule on Saturday due to concern's over the recent outbreak of coronavirus in Sydney's northern beaches.

"While neither player has been in a specific 'hotspot' on Sydney's northern beaches as outlined by NSW Health, Cricket Australia's biosecurity protocols do not allow them to rejoin the squad in time for the Boxing Day test," Cricket Australia said in a statement.



Warner. •FILE PHOTO

Ashwin is world class, says Lyon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Ace Australian spinner Nathan Lyon said he and India's R. Ashwin were similar yet different type of bowlers and that comparisons should not made between the two.

Lyon spoke highly of Ashwin who, he said, stood out with his variations.

"Ashwin is a world-class bowler. I have watched him a lot, especially when I went to India and the subcontinent to try and

learn about him. He is a cagey bowler, he has got all the variations," said Lyon at a virtual press conference ahead of the second Test beginning here on Saturday.

"He's very cagey with the way he changes his pace and is a very talented bowler. We are similar in a way, but we are very different as well. So I can't really compare myself to him. I think his records speak for him, so hats off to Ashwin," said Lyon.

Ganguly endorsement issue unlikely to crop up

Despite murmurs over his alleged conflict of interest, no discussion sought

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Despite whispers in some sections about Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly's seemingly questionable conduct of endorsing products of the Board's sponsors, the issue is unlikely to crop up during Thursday's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Ahmedabad.

Ganguly's alleged conflict of interest or ethical misconduct has neither been listed in the agenda nor has any member representative sought a discussion about it in writing.

A few representatives were discussing the possibility of one of the six office-bearers questioning Ganguly over his list of endorsements

— sometimes even of brands that are direct competitors of the BCCI's sponsors — since taking over the reins in October 2019.

However, not many are optimistic about any action on the matter. Multiple member representatives stated to *The Hindu* that had there been a revolt brewing, Wednesday's exhibition match between President XI and Secretary XI wouldn't have been played cordially at the refurbished Sardar Patel Gujarat Stadium in Motera, on the outskirts of the city.

Selectors' interviews

The Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) and BCCI office-bearers, along with cricket development professionals, have scheduled interviews



Ganguly. •FILE PHOTO

with shortlisted candidates for vacant posts in the junior and senior selection committees.

While the CAC, headed by Madan Lal, will interview 11 former players for the three posts, the others will inter-

view those who have applied for the four slots in the junior committee.

Prominent candidates invited for the senior selectors' interviews include Ajit Agarkar, Abey Kuruvila, Nayan Mongia (West Zone), Chetan Sharma, Maninder Singh, Vijay Dahiya, Ajay Ratna, Nikhil Chopra (North), Shiv Sundar Das, Debasis Mohanty and Ranadeb Bose (East).

It is expected that the AGM will ratify the new selection committee members.

While the AGM is set to approve the addition of two new teams to the Indian Premier League (IPL), it is also likely to authorise office-bearers to decide the BCCI's stance on pushing for cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Olympic Games.

Remove my name from Kotla stand: Bedi

Quits DDCA membership over plan to install Arun Jaitley's statue at stadium

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Former Test captain Bishan Singh Bedi has asked that his name be taken off one of the spectator stands here at the Ferozshah Kotla in response to the idea of erecting a statue of the late Arun Jaitley at the stadium.

Not known to mince words, Bedi expressed his anguish by renouncing his Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) membership in a hard-hitting letter,

spanning over 850 words, to the association's newly elected president Rohan Jaitley.

Unsavoury past

He recalled the "DDCA's unsavoury past" besides the "corrupt durbar of sycophants Arun Jaitley must



Bedi. •FILE PHOTO

tered at the Kotla during his stewardship" and much more.

Making his point, Bedi stated, "A mere Google search would have helped to know that Late Arun Jaitley's tenure at DDCA was riddled with corruption. You being a

lawyer should also know the cases of massive misappropriation of funds are still pending in courts. Late Arun Jaitley, I'm told, was an able politician. So it's Parliament, and not a cricket stadium, which needs to remember him for posterity.

"You need to be educated that sports administrators don't need to be self-serving. People who surround you presently will never inform you that it's W.G. Grace at the place of the administrators is in their glass cabins. Since DDCA doesn't understand this Universal cricket culture, I need to walk out of it."

Lord's..., Sir Jack Hobbs at the Oval..., Sir Donald Bradman at the SCG..., Sir Garfield Sobers at Barbados & Shane Warne of recent vintage at the MCG, who adorn their cricket stadia, with the Spirit of Cricket never out of place.

Sporting role models
"So when the kids walk into these stadiums these majestic statues/busts enhance & enliven the inspiring stories of these past heroes that their elders tell them. Sporting arenas need sporting role models.

"The place of the administrators is in their glass cabins. Since DDCA doesn't understand this Universal cricket culture, I need to walk out of it."

Ojha to be included in IPL Governing Council

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Former India left-arm spinner Pragyan Ojha will be included in the IPL Governing Council on Thursday. He has been nominated as the Indian Cricketers' Association (ICA) representative in the council. The BCCI AGM will ratify Ojha's inclusion in Ahmedabad.

Ojha, who retired from competitive cricket in February, has won the IPL with Deccan Chargers and Mumbai Indians. He will replace Surinder Khanna,



Pragyan Ojha

who last year became the first ICA nominee to the GC as per the rejigged BCCI rulebook.

Nihal, Rakshitta and Gukesh emerge world champions

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Underlining the growing superiority of Indian youngsters in global age-group competitions, the trio of Nihal Sarin (under-18), Rakshitta Ravi (girls' u-16), and D. Gukesh (u-14) claimed gold medals and Mrinmoy Rajkhowa (u-10) added a bronze from the FIDE Online World cadets and youth rapid chess championship on Tuesday.

Nihal, seeded two, claimed his fourth title in three months to end the year on a high note. Having won the Junior Speed Chess, Capuches Online Karpov Tro-

phy and the Super Juniors Cup recently, Nihal was expected to add another title but eventually needed a slice of luck in both games to emerge as the worthy champion.

After winning his rescheduled semifinal earlier in the day, Nihal drew the first game against Armenia's Shant Sargsyan after defending accurately with black.

In the second game, Nihal attained winning position by the 40th move but three moves later, committed a serious blunder to slip into a grossly inferior position. But Sargsyan's 49th move turned

the tide back in Nihal's favour and he went on to seal the gold in 54 moves with a 1.5-0.5 scoreline.

Gukesh battled all the way against Russian lad Volodar Murzin before emerging stronger in the Armageddon game. After two drawn rapid games, Gukesh needed to win with white in the Armageddon game. He produced



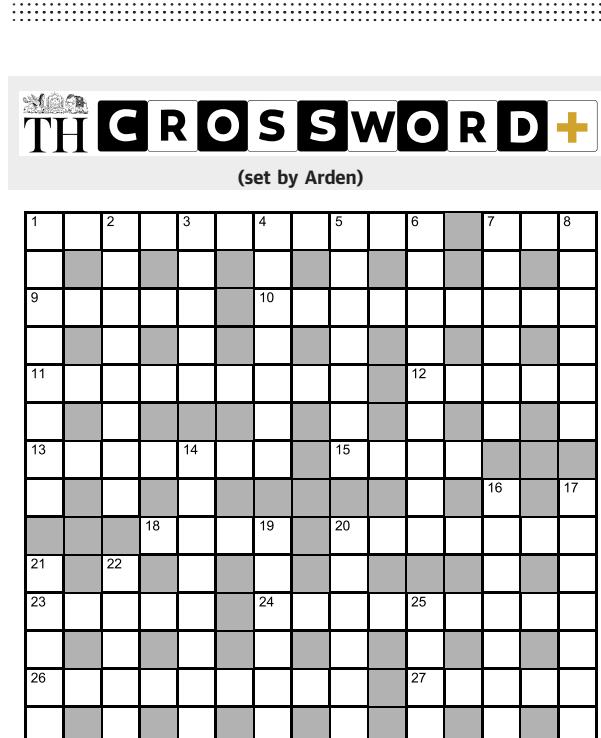
Rakshitta.

a dominating performance and sealed it when Murzin ran out of time.

Earlier, sixth seed Rakshitta was the first to ensure a gold for India. After a draw

against fourth seeded Chinese Yuxin Song, Rakshitta won the second following a tactical blow on the 15th turn that earned her a knight and eventually a 1.5-0.5 verdict.

In the din of the gold rush, nine-year-old Mrinmoy Rajkhowa's brilliant victory in the Armageddon game was pushed to the background. The youngster won the first game against higher-rated American Andy Woodward but lost the marathon second in 107 moves. In the Armageddon game, Mrinmoy played white and toyed with his rival for 57 moves for a 2-1 triumph.



ACROSS
1 Passing comments – final notice before a direct broadcast (6,5)
7 Starts counting only dead fish (3)
9 Quiet listener, is trin (5)
10 Love and leave, perhaps new money is invested (9)
11 Dropped down a cliff – having committed a crime, hide inside (9)
12 Muck around in Emrit's place (5)
13 Regularly seen before defeat, last one on the way (2,5)

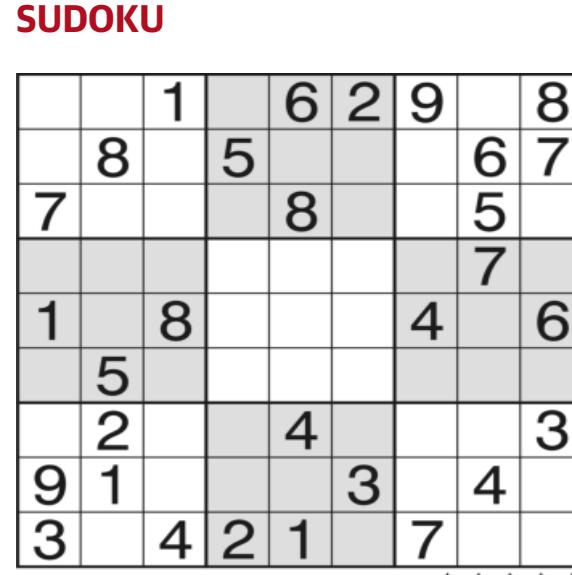
The clues for 23A and 25A in The Hindu Crossword 13126 (Arden, 23/12/2020) were omitted the print edition. Visit crossword.thehindu.com to play the updated grid.

CM YK

Never go off the grid.
We are digital now. Come solve online.
at <https://rgo.page.link/jjpTn>



SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13126



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Mother of the Universe

The Devi Bhagavata Purana describes the Trimurtis' arrival in the aerial car at the entrance to the abode of Goddess Devi in the island of Mani Dweepa. Filled with wonder and amazement, they try to figure out their whereabouts and then Vishnu intuitively recognises Devi and begins to explain Her greatness to Brahma and Siva, said Sri K. Srinivasan in a discourse. He begins to extol the infinite grace, glory and graciousness of Devi. He sees Her as Devi, Bhagavati, Maha Vidya, Maha Maya and so on, the very essence of the Eternal Principle. Her profound greatness cannot be known by those with dull intellect; but yogis steeped in their yogic powers can recognise Her.

He describes Her as both Brahman and Maya. She is the very force or the Sankalpa Shakti of the Supreme Self. She is the First Creator of this universe. She has produced the Vedas. She is worshipped by those who remain devoted to Her. During Pralaya, She draws the entire creation within Her as if in play. Vishnu tells Brahma and Siva that since it is Pralaya state then, she is residing in the form of the seed of the universe. Her excellencies being endless, She confers the specific gunas and duties on all including the Trimurtis.

Vishnu acknowledges that it is only Her grace that has made them behold Her in Her glory. This darshan is the fruit of all their penance. She is the Moola Prakrti always united with Chit and Ananda. She creates this Brahmanda and exhibits it to the Supreme Self. The entire universe with all its components in various forms and names exist because of Her. She is the sole cause. As the Maya Shakti, She assumes all forms. She is the Goddess of all. Neither the Trimurtis nor the other celestial beings can claim to possess even a one hundred thousandth part of Her glory.

AN-ND-NDE