



Hong Kong caught in a dilemma about its 'zero COVID' policy
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IN BRIEF



Opposition plans to take protest outside

NEW DELHI
Ten days into the protest over the suspension of 12 Rajya Sabha MPs, a section of the Opposition feels there should be a parallel agitation outside Parliament.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Crackdown on tandoors singes vendors

NEW DELHI
The crackdown by civic bodies on coal-based clay ovens (tandoors) in Delhi has left small-scale food vendors unhappy.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Salute to CDS



Last journey: People participating in the funeral procession of General Bipin Rawat, India's first Chief of Defence Staff, in New Delhi on Friday. General Rawat, wife Madhulika Rawat and 11 defence personnel died in a helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday. ■ PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 9)

Centre says no proposal to scrap sedition law

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday told the Lok Sabha that the Ministry of Home Affairs had no proposal under consideration to scrap Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code that deals with sedition.

Mr. Rijiju also informed the House that "the question of law" regarding Section 124A was pending for adjudication before the Supreme Court.

The Minister was res-

ponding to a question from Assam MP and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Badruddin Ajmal on whether the Supreme Court had recently termed the sedition law as colonial and made an observation that it was being misused. He also asked whether the apex court had directed the Central Government to submit its response on the necessity and validity of the law.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Omicron tally rises to 32, symptoms mild: Centre

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

With the detection of seven new cases of the Omicron variant of novel coronavirus in Maharashtra and two in Gujarat, the total number of cases in the country touched 32 on Friday.

Maharashtra now has 17 cases, followed by nine in Rajasthan, three in Gujarat, two in Karnataka, and one in Delhi. In Maharashtra, three new cases, including a three-and-a-half-year-old child, were reported from

Mumbai, and four from Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation in Pune.

Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry, said, "Mainly mild symptoms have been seen in the cases of Omicron variant detected so far."

"Clinically, Omicron so far hasn't posed burden to the healthcare system but we have to be vigilant," cautioned ICMR Director-General Balram Bhargava.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

‘Namaz in the open cannot be tolerated’

All designated places for Friday prayers withdrawn, says Haryana CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM
Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Friday said that the offering of namaz in the open could not be tolerated and a fresh approach would be taken to work out an amicable solution to the matter. He added that all designated places for namaz in Gurugram have been withdrawn.

"The tradition of offering namaz in the open cannot be tolerated, but an amicable solution will be found to it. We will try to find how they can get back the encroached Waqf Board land, or they can offer namaz at their homes. We will not allow any confrontation. Some decision was reached after the talks, but the designated places have been withdrawn. We will approach the matter in a fresh manner," said Mr. Lal, speaking to media persons after a meeting of the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority.

On December 6, a group of imams aided by the "RSS-



Haryana CM Manohar Lal.

inspired" Muslim Rashtriya Manch in a joint meeting with the district administration and right-wing groups had agreed not to hold Friday prayers at 20 designated open places and instead sought half-a-dozen new places on rent. A day later, the Gurgaon Muslim Council rejected the proposal as "fraudulent" and said Muslims would continue to offer Juma Namaz at all the 37 sites agreed upon in 2018.

Mr. Lal said he had directed the Deputy Commissioner and the Police Commissioner to resolve the matter. The Chief Minister added that all religious activities

should be confined to religious places only.

Allocate us land'

Responding to the CM's statement, Gurgaon Muslim Council member Altaf Ahmed said the Muslims of the city were forced to offer Juma Namaz in the open as the Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSV) had not allocated land to them and all their applications were rejected and earnest money refunded, including the latest application submitted in October this year.

"The Waqf Board and administration have not been able to get Waqf properties back from encroachers for a very long time. Now the Chief Minister has said that 37 approved sites in the open need to be reworked between the administration and the Muslim community. We request him to instruct HSV to allocate us land in multiple sectors to build multi-storey mosques and that shall be the end of the Juma Na-

maz row," said Mr. Ahmed, in a statement to the media.

Earlier, the protests against the offering of Friday prayers in the open continued for the third successive week in Sector 37. The Council decided in the morning not to offer Juma Namaz in Sector 37 in view of the right-wing groups' plan to hold a programme of devotional songs at the site. The protesters parked several trucks and cars at the namaz site in the sector and also held a condolence meet paying tributes to Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, his wife and others who died in a helicopter crash on Wednesday.

Though the Council had urged Muslims to stay away from Sector 37 until the situation defuses, a few reached the site to offer prayers, leading to a verbal confrontation between the two groups.

Mr. Ahmed said Friday prayers were offered at 15 odd places in the city.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

SC now open to easing of Delhi pollution curbs

With air quality improving, Commission asked to decide on relaxations for industries in a week

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Noting that the pollution levels in Delhi have "started improving", the Supreme Court on Friday asked the Centre's Air Quality Commission to take a decision on relaxation of the restrictions imposed by the court on pollution sources, including industries, constructions and factories, in the Capital.

A Special Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana asked the Commission to look into the issue within a week's time.

The court left it to the Commission to consider requests made by industry owners and others affected by the restrictions for a personal hearing and take their



An anti-smog gun sprays nebulised water droplets into the air to curb pollution at Civil Lines in Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

inputs. This factum was mentioned in the court order after various affected commercial and construction enterprises, with projects under way, urged the court to allow them to make representations before the Commission.

"All we want is a quick decision from the Commission... Paddy season is on. The restriction on rice manufacturers has to be relaxed... Sugar manufacturers had got relaxation," senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for rice manufacturers, submitted.

"Mr. Sibal, we are all in Delhi... We know the condition... Just now things have started improving. They (Commission) will take decision," Chief Justice Ramana observed orally.

The court had ordered the regulation of construction and the operation of factories using unclean fuels. It had banned the entry of polluting trucks not carrying essential goods into Delhi. The Delhi Government had also closed educational institutions.

The Commission had in a previous hearing said thermal plants within 300 km radius of Delhi would continue to be regulated. Only five of 11 plants were functional. The rest would remain inoperative till December 15.

THE HINDU

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State force should not be used to browbeat political opinion: SC
page 9

Carlsen crushes Nepo, clinches fifth World title
page 13



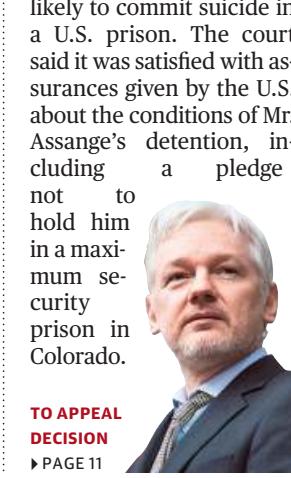
Assange can be extradited to U.S., rules U.K. court

REUTERS
LONDON

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on Friday moved a step closer to facing criminal charges in the U.S. for one of the biggest ever leaks of classified information after Washington won an appeal over his extradition in an English court.

U.S. authorities accuse the Australian-born Mr. Assange of 18 counts relating to WikiLeaks' release of vast troves of confidential U.S. military records and diplomatic cables, which they said had put lives in danger.

At the Royal Courts of Justice in London, the United States won an appeal against a ruling by a London District Judge that Mr. Assange, 50, should not be extradited because he was likely to commit suicide in a U.S. prison. The court said it was satisfied with assurances given by the U.S. about the conditions of Mr. Assange's detention, including a pledge not to hold him in a maximum security prison in Colorado.



TO APPEAL DECISION
▶ PAGE 11

PM moots social media, cryptocurrency norms

Modi addresses Summit for Democracy convened by Biden

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Democracies should jointly deal with social media and cryptocurrencies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a virtual address at the Summit for Democracy, hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden, on Friday.

Mr. Modi said India is the largest democracy in the world and has 2,500-year-old democratic traditions. He proposed to share India's democratic experience through digital solutions.

"We must also jointly shape global norms for emerging technologies like social media and cryptocurrencies, so that they are used to empower democracy, not undermine it," Mr. Modi said.

The summit was convened by Mr. Biden to strengthen democracies around the world. Opening the summit on Thursday, he announced the establishment of the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, under which the administration plans to provide \$424.4 million for supporting free and independent media, fighting corruption, strengthening democratic reforms, advancing technology for democracy, and defending free and fair elections.

Mr. Modi referred to the civilisational tradition of democracy in India, citing the ancient city states under the Lichhavis and others that flourished in India during the late Vedic and Buddhist periods and continued till the early medieval period.

Mr. Modi said democracy had taken various shapes across the world, and there was a need to work on the democratic practices.

Mutual learning

"Different parts of the world have followed different paths of democratic development. There is much we can learn from each other. We all need to constantly improve our democratic practices and systems

NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

Mr. Modi said democratic traditions had made ancient India the "most prosperous".

"Centuries of colonial rule could not suppress the democratic spirit of the Indian people. It again found full expression with India's Independence and led to an unparalleled story in democratic nation building over the past 75 years," Mr. Modi said.

The Prime Minister said India would be happy to share "expertise" in organising "free and fair elections" and in increasing "transparency in all areas of governance through innovative digital solutions".

"Democracy is not only of the people, by the people, for the people, but also with the people, within the people," he added.

CHINA CLAIMS IT'S THE 'LARGEST DEMOCRACY' ▶ PAGE 11

DU to have common entrance test

University's Academic Council passes proposal with 16 members dissenting



Seeking seats: Students at Delhi University. ■ FILE PHOTO

how students who want to shift streams would be assessed by a central examination.

Question over 'merit'
Criticising the report that mentions "merit and only merit of a prospective applicant..." will be the benchmark of undergraduate admissions", the members in their dissent note said, "Does this mean that students who were admitted are not meritorious? Does this mean that the report is alleging that the admission system that the university has been following since many generations was not based on merit?"

"CET for undergraduate admissions will lead to mushrooming of coaching institutes that will be particularly bad for socially and economically disadvantaged students and girl students," said Mithuraaj Dhusiya, an Academic Council member who was among the signatories to the dissent note.

The members added that the report was silent on the total expenditure by the university on conducting such an examination, its mode and format, number of centres required as well as

tions, sometimes significant, can be avoided to maintain equity".

The committee suggested that the university conduct a central admission test through a well-devised internal arrangement or through any external agency so that it may impart "substantial objectivity" to the process of admission. It added that the test could be followed by declaration of a list of eligible candidates for admission under various current cut-off system, said that "as long as undergraduate admissions in the university are cut-off based, there is no way that fluctua-

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tion, sometimes significant, can be avoided to maintain equity".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the Commission, said long-term anti-pollution measures were already "under contemplation".

Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, for the Delhi Government, highlighted that the dip in pollution levels has been considerable. "It shows very good figures for Delhi," he submitted.

The court found that Ms. Dhar had sufficient documents to prove her citizenship. She said, "I could have been saved the harassment had the FT examined the documents like the court."

The court also found the order of a 2016 FT in south-

ern Assam's Hailakandi district to be incomplete. The order had declared Sukdev Ree, a tea garden worker and resident of the district's Mohanpur village, a foreigner, and he served imprisonment for three years.

The court directed the FT to reopen Mr. Ree's case on December 3, days after he died of cardiac arrest.

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IN BRIEF



Delhi's records 'very poor' air quality

NEW DELHI
The city recorded "very poor" air quality on Friday with the AQI at 314 at 4 p.m., officials said. Shallow fog has been forecast for the coming days and Saturday's maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 23 and 9 degrees Celsius.

Police bust gambling racket, arrest 16

NEW DELHI
The Delhi police on Friday said they have arrested 16 people involved in a gambling racket from South Extension. They recovered 1,000 playing chips, 37 playing bricks and stake money to the tune of ₹1,95,000. DCP (South) Benita Mary Jaiker said they received a tip-off and conducted a raid.

Two arrested for credit card fraud

NEW DELHI
The police arrested two men who allegedly duped people on the pretext of increasing their credit card limit, an officer said on Friday. Anant alias Aman, 23, a resident of Uttam Nagar, and Rahul 22, a resident of Nafajgarh, allegedly impersonated bank representatives to con people.

Crackdown on tandoors singes vendors

Experts say coal-based ovens 'contribute heavily' to local emissions, but alternatives not cost-effective

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The crackdown by municipal corporations on coal-based clay ovens (tandoors) in the city, as part of their measures to curb air pollution, has left small-scale food vendors unhappy but the move is in sync with the findings of experts who say "tandoors contribute heavily" towards local emissions.

"As per my calculations, 1 kg of coal used in a tandoor emits equivalent particulate matter as 300 BS IV diesel vehicles running for 1 km," said Polash Mukerjee, head for air pollution at the India Programme of the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental advocacy group.

Need for cleaner fuels

Mr. Mukerjee added that coal or wood-fuelled tandoors represent a significant part of area emissions and need to transition to cleaner fuels, especially in densely populated areas with poor ventilation.

A senior South Delhi Municipal Corporation official said after the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) eliminated the use of coal and firewood for clay ovens in 2018, a total of "95%" of



eateries under the civic body switched to either gas-based or a wood charcoal-based tandoors.

The SDMC said a total of 208 tandoors have been dismantled by the civic body over the last two months while "152 conversions" to LPG-based alternative have been "ensured" as part of its pollution prevention plan.

However, for more than one and a half years, Sunita Trikha's LPG-based tandoor has been lying unused at her roadside dhaba in the Jor Bagh area after the 62-year-old parted ways with her traditional coal-based clay oven

during the pandemic.

"We used to have a coal-based tandoor. About two years ago, (civic) officers came and said we will have to pay a fine of ₹20,000. We said we can't pay that much. They asked us to switch quickly to LPG and we did so. But since the pandemic, we get fewer customers and heating the tandoor for only a handful of customers is not economically viable. So, we have closed it," she said, pointing to the dust covered tandoor lying in a corner of the dhaba.

Ms. Trikha is one among the many small-scale food



(Left) A civic body worker dismantling a tandoor at a roadside eatery in south Delhi; rotis being prepared in a tandoor. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

for commercial use costs ₹2,100 and it does not power the tandoor for even a day. Coal costs close to ₹1,000 and it lasts much longer and adds to the taste. Using an LPG cylinder is getting expensive because you cannot operate it for long and wood charcoal is cheap but does not last long," said a dhaba owner based in the city's Arrobindo Marg area.

However, bigger establishments, such as Essex Farms, are content with the shift. Its director Ashish Goyle said the gas-based tandoors "make no difference to the food preparation or the cost" and he was "happy" with the alternative, which they first adopted close to four years ago.

"Unlike the bigger establishments, the problem is that the roadside vendors hesitate to convert their tandoor. About 5% of the eateries are still using the traditional tandoor, in secrecy. During winters, we pay extra attention to this because of the weather and the increase in pollution levels. However, the larger goal is to move towards electric tandoors and step away from gas-based options as well to reduce emissions completely," the senior SDMC official said.

Street vendors protest over pending surveys

They also cite discrepancies in CoVs

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Association of Street Vendors of Delhi (NASVI) held protests in several parts of the city on Friday over the issues of pending street vendor surveys and discrepancies in the certificates issued to vendors.

Richa Sinha, NASVI's advocacy manager, said the certificate of vending (CoV) issued by Delhi's three municipal corporations - North, South and East - "does not clearly state the site of vending".

Increased harassment

"The MCDs went back on their word and said that the CoVs were temporary. There are other problems such as no clear mentioning of the vending category and the vending type that is permitted. This has led to increased harassment of the vendors by authorities as the certificates are unclear," said Ms. Sinha, adding that the protests were held outside the offices of six Zonal Deputy Commissioners.

NASVI, in a press note, said the Town Vending Committee (TVC) - which oversees the survey of street ven-

dors - had not conducted the surveys for Lajpat Nagar, Nehru Place and other areas despite crossing the deadline.

As per the data provided by Delhi Street Hawkers Survey as of December 12, conducted by the Government, 76,301 hawkers have been identified across the city and 61,444 have been approved.

The Delhi Government had decided to extend the survey period till December 7 to identify more street vendors after multiple appeals by municipal councillors and street vendors' associations.

Responding to the claims of the vending certificates remaining unclear, a senior civic body official said that a "subsequent TVC" will be constituted "in the coming year after which the site of vending will be identified".

"The BJP-led MCD conducted surveys and issued vending certificates, due to the pressure from the Delhi Government, but they did not allot the site of vending because the certificate exercise was an eyewash," said South Delhi Municipal Corporation Leader of Opposition Prem Chauhan of the Aam Aadmi Party.

HC asks police chief to review courts' security

It orders 'round-the-clock monitoring'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Police Commissioner to undertake a periodical review of security arrangements in courts, for deploying adequate personnel and installation of gadgets. The order dated November 24 was released on Friday.

The High Court had on September 30 initiated on its own a petition concerning security at courts in the national capital following the September 24 shoot-out at Rohini court.

On December 9, a man was injured in a low-intensity explosion that took place inside a courtroom in Rohini district court, raising questions about security arrangements there.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice D.N. Patel, in its order passed in matters concerning the security at court complexes, stated that while Delhi police shall be responsible for regular security audit, deployment of adequate personnel, monitoring through CCTV cameras etc., the Delhi Government shall look after the required budget allocation.

The Bench, also comprising Justice Jyoti Singh, further directed "round-the-clock monitoring" of court

buildings through CCTV cameras having high resolution, adequate storage capacity and the technology to cover large areas, particularly the court lock-ups.

Security audit

"Commissioner of Police, Delhi, shall constitute a team of experts to undertake the exercise of security audit of Delhi High Court Complex as well as all the District Court Complexes," the court said in its order.

The court ordered that all persons entering court complexes as well as the buildings housing the courtooms should be checked by the security personnel. It directed the Bar Council of Delhi and the city bar associations to issue non-transferrable ID Cards with QR codes or smart chips to all member advocates for securing their entry inside court complexes.

HC dismisses plea seeking Police Medal for Gallantry

'Court doesn't confer gallantry awards'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has said that no person has a legal right to any award or medal and dismissed a CRPF personnel's petition seeking Police Medal for Gallantry (PMG) for an encounter with Maoists.

A Bench headed by Justice Manmohan stated that the court does not confer gallantry awards on persons and held that since the petitioner's name for award was considered and declined by the CRPF at the highest level, there was no merit in the petition.

The Bench, also comprising Justice Navin Chawla, clarified that its power was limited to examining the decision-making process and said that there was no illegality in the process in the present case.

"The petitioner has only

a right for consideration of his name for the PMG award but he has no legal right to an award/medal. Further this court in writ jurisdiction does not confer a gallantry award but it examines only the decision-making process and at the highest can only direct the respondents to consider the petitioner's request for an award," the court said in its order passed on December 8.

No illegality

"In the present instance, the petitioner's name for PMG had been considered and declined by the CRPF at the highest level. Accordingly, this court does not find any illegality in the decision-making process by the respondents," it added.

The petitioner challenged the authorities' decision denying the award to him.

Office of The Chief Executive Officer 4th and 5th Floor Ganna Kisan Sanshodh, New Berry Road, Lucknow, U.P. Ph.: 0522-3510803, 2209450, 4058416, Fax: 0522-2207988, E-mail: up-cxo@nic.in

Letter No: 5978/T-252/UPRDA/PMGSY-3-Batch-1/Tender-2021-22
Dated- 10.12.2021

PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA

e-Procurement Notice (1st Call)

The Chief Executive Officer, UPRDA, Lucknow on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids in electronic tendering system for Construction and Maintenance of roads of following groups, as mentioned in column-3, using New Technology "Full Depth Reclamation with Cement Stabilization and Additive" under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana with construction cost including maintenance cost as in column 9 from the eligible contractors registered with the UP PWD/UP RED, in appropriate class-A or equivalent category in CPWD/MES/Railways and other State Govt. and Central Govt. Departments. Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

Time of completion of construction work is 12 months including rainy season.

Sl. No	Concerned Superintending Engineer	Group No.	District Name	Name of Packages	Length in Km	Estimated Cost in Rs. Lakh		
						Construction cost excluding GST in Rs. lakh	Maintenance Cost excluding GST in Rs. Lakh	Total Cost excluding GST in Rs. Lakh
1	S.E. RED, Aligarh	UP-FDR04	Etah	UP21148	17.000	1704.77	140.03	1844.80
2	S.E. RED, Ayodhya	UP-FDR05	Barabanki	UP31174	32.700	3310.64	269.35	3579.99
		UP-FDR06	Barabanki	UP31169	32.650	2980.96	243.25	3224.21
3	S.E. RED, Azamgarh	UP-FDR07	Azamgarh	UP06126	26.430	2553.95	217.70	2771.65
		UP-FDR08	Azamgarh	UP06138	26.350	2529.29	217.04	2746.33
		UP-FDR09	Azamgarh	UP06139	24.000	2401.90	197.69	2599.59
4	S.E. RED, Bareilly	UP-FDR10	Shahjahanpur	UP63154	46.100	3066.93	284.21	3351.14
		UP-FDR11	Basti	UP1596	33.810	3016.86	257.67	3274.53
		UP-FDR12	S.K. Nagar	UP6068	30.300	3023.84	249.58	3273.42
		UP-FDR13	Siddharathnagar	UP65109	41.300	3148.74	289.22	3437.96
		UP-FDR14	Siddharathnagar	UP65103	35.300	3163.83	277.09	3440.92
		UP-FDR15	Siddharathnagar	UP65114	30.600	3252.64	252.05	3504.69
6	S.E. RED, Devipatan, Gonda	UP-FDR16	Brahraich	UP09122	34.681	3698.90	274.30	3973.20
7	S.E. RED, Gorakhpur	UP-FDR17	Maharajganj	UP4792	33.300	3690.50	274.29	3964.79
		UP-FDR18	Maharajganj	UP4731	30.200	3196.34	248.75	3445.09
8	S.E. RED, Kanpur	UP-FDR19	Auraia	UP0566	26.050	2600.29	192.61	2792.90
		UP-FDR20	Elawah	UP2298	26.831	2563.73	210.65	2774.38
		UP-FDR21	Kannauj	UP3979	27.676	2665.23	227.96	2893.19
		UP-FDR22	Kannauj	UP3974	26.943	2776.65	221.93	2998.58
		UP-FDR23	Kannauj	UP3986	26.953	2544.81	209.58	2754.39

1. Date of publishing of e-procurement notice in News paper: 11.12.2021

2. Start Date and Time of Availability of Bid Document for download on web site: 17.12.2021 from 12.00 Noon onwards

3. Date and Time of prebid meeting: 21.12.2021 at 11:00 A.M. at UPRDA Office (either physically or virtually) link will be provided in the NIT.

4. Start Date and Time of submission of B

Lame driving



No time for rules: In what is becoming a familiar sight on Delhi roads, DTC buses can be seen waiting in different lanes at a traffic signal on Vikas Marg in New Delhi around 1 p.m. on Friday. These buses are not only violating the traffic rules but also posing a threat to commuters. According to the police, buses are supposed to ply only in the far left lane of the road. A senior traffic police officer said that buses not plying in the designated lane are issued challans, which can be settled only in court. The officer said bus drivers are regularly counselled about traffic laws and how to follow designated lanes in order to ensure road safety. ■ PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Court pulls up police after SPPs fail to appear in Delhi riots case

Absence of prosecutors lead to adjournment of cases and delay in disposal: ASJ

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court pulled up the police for the "sorry state of affairs" after it noted that no prosecutors were present during the hearing in a Delhi riots case on Wednesday and said that such instances led to cases being adjourned without any proceedings.

Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Virender Bhatt made the remarks while hearing the murder case of a person named Alok Tiwari, registered at Karawal Nagar police station, in which six persons were accused. The case was at the stage of prosecution evidence.

During the hearing, the court was informed by the naib court that he had called up Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad, who stated that

This is the state of affairs with regard to these riot cases which are very sensitive in nature and for which this special court was set up. These cases were assigned to a panel of SPPs so as to ensure effective prosecution.

VIRENDER BHATT
Additional Sessions Judge

he was busy in some matter in the Delhi High Court. Thereafter, he called up another prosecutor but he too expressed his inability to appear in the case, following which another Special Public Prosecutor Madhukar Pandey was contacted. He too did not respond positively.

In response to this, the court noted: "This is the state of affairs with regard to these riot cases which are very sensitive in nature and for which this special court was set up. These cases were assigned to a panel of Special Public Prosecutors formed by the police so as to ensure proper and effective prosecution of these cases."

Prolonged incarceration
ASJ Bhatt said that it has been noticed that in several cases, the SPPs to whom the cases are assigned do not appear in the court on account of which the cases have to be adjourned without conducting any proceedings. It results in delay of their disposal.

The defence counsels also objected to the conduct of

the prosecutors. They stated that the matters are being adjourned unnecessarily because of the absence of SPPs "due to which the incarceration of the accused gets prolonged for no fault of theirs".

The court noted that earlier also, it had communicated this to DCP (North-East) Sanjay Kumar Sain, with instructions to take corrective measures. The court directed the copy of the order to be sent to the DCP and asked him to look into the aspect seriously and appoint more SPPs to represent the State in Delhi riots cases.

In September, a Delhi court had pulled up the police for its lackadaisical approach in dealing with the Delhi riots cases and directed the Delhi Commissioner of Police to look into the matter.

Gen. Rawat's death huge loss for entire country: Kejriwal

Chief Minister and Delhi Congress chief pay last respects

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Calling him one of the bravest soldiers in the country, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday paid his last respects to General Bipin Rawat at the latter's residence in Kamraj Marg.

After paying floral tributes to him, the Delhi Chief Minister said the General's death was a huge loss for the entire country.

"Paid floral tributes and last respects to CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat Ji. He was a brave son of Bharat Maa. May [the]



Arvind Kejriwal

Almighty bless his soul. I pray to God to give his family [the] strength to recover from the huge loss. Om Shanti (Sic.)," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted.

The Delhi Congress paid tributes to General Rawat at the DPCC office, Rajiv Bhawan. Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar visited Gen. Rawat's residence to pay his last respects.

Mr. Kumar urged the Central Government to bestow the Bharat Ratna upon Gen. Rawat for his invaluable service to the country. "Gen. Rawat's role in strengthening the defence forces and boosting the confidence and morale of the soldiers will be written in golden letters," Mr. Kumar said.

41 new COVID cases reported in the city

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The city reported no new COVID-19-related deaths over 24 hours and the toll stood at 25,100, according to a bulletin released by the Delhi Government on Friday. Forty-one new cases were reported, taking the total number of cases to 14,41,610.

A total of 59,763 tests – 53,174 RT-PCR and 6,589 rapid antigen tests – were conducted in a day and the test positivity rate was 0.07%, the bulletin said. Of the total cases, 14,16,140 people have recovered and there are 370 active cases.

Over 20 detained for staging stir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

More than 20 people were detained for staging a protest against the laying of a foundation stone for waste-to-energy plant by Chief Minister Manohar Lal at a programme in Sector 14 here on Friday.

"People had gathered outside the Vyapar Bhawan to stage protest. But they did not have prior permission. Also, they violated COVID-appropriate behaviour. They were briefly detained and later let off," said Deepak Saharan, DCP (West).

Several citizen groups have been opposing the proposed WTE plant at Bandhwari landfill site, arguing that it would lead to increased pollution.

IPS officer facing illegal gratification charges in a theft case suspended

Dheeraj Kumar is absconding, says STF probing the matter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Facing charges of illegal gratification in a ₹30-crore theft case, a senior IPS officer posted in Rohtak was placed under suspension by the Haryana Government on Friday. The Special Task Force (STF) investigating the matter said the officer was absconding.

Dheeraj Kumar, IPS, Commandant of 3rd Indian Reserve Battalion in Sunaria, was placed under suspension, said an order by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajeev Arora.

Mr. Kumar has been facing charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act for allegedly accepting kickbacks in a theft case registered at Gurugram's Kherki Daula police station on August 21. The case pertains to theft of cash from the office of a private firm in Sector 84.

He was booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act almost two weeks ago. A couple of notices were served to him to join the investigation, but he did not turn up. He is absconding," said Sateesh Balan, Deputy Inspector General of Police, STF.

Mr. Balan said the officer had allegedly received illegal gratification. "Though he returned a major portion of the bribe back, he kept a few dollars. This is the allegation. We have to verify it,"

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Odisha failed to retrieve ₹456 crore: CAG
Excess iron ore excavation was found in the year 2018-19

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government failed to retrieve ₹456.46 crore towards the cost of excess iron ore excavated in different mining circles, according to a Comptroller and Auditor General of India report.

The CAG report on re-

venue sector for the year ended March 2020, which was tabled in Odisha Assembly on Friday, says excess iron ore excavation was found to the tune of 8,20,797 metric tonne.

"The production limit capped in the mining plan is among other stipulations which need to be ad-

hered to by the mining lease holders. As per Rule 22 (5) (v) of the Mineral Concession Rules, 1960, the mining plan shall incorporate a tentative scheme of mining and annual programme and plan for excavation from year to year for five years," the CAG report points out.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court on Friday rejected the bail application of jailed self-styled godman Asaram in a rape case filed against him by a woman in 2013.

While rejecting his bail plea following objections raised by the prosecution, Justice A.J. Desai also directed the Gandhinagar sessions court to wind up the trial in four months.

In his bail plea, filed through advocate Dipak Patel, Asaram sought relief on the ground that he is already above 80 years of age and that his health was deteriorating. Mr. Patel sought bail for his client claiming there were no signs of the trial concluding anytime soon as Gandhinagar sessions court is yet to examine 22 to 24 witnesses, and cited Supreme Court judgments of the past to claim the court cannot keep an accused behind bars forever.

Public Prosecutor R.C. Kodekar objected and told court the facts of Asaram's case was different from the cases cited by his lawyer.

AAP announces second list of 30 candidates for Punjab polls

Names include former IGP Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh, singer Anmol Gagan Mann

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday announced names of 30 candidates in their second list for next year's Punjab Assembly election.

AAP had earlier announced 10 candidates in their first list on November 12, which included sitting party MLAs.

Friday's list includes former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh, who was a member of the Special Investigating Team (SIT) probing the 2015 Kotkapura-and-Behbal Kalan police firing incidents. He would be contesting from Amritsar North seat.

Mr. Singh had in April this year taken premature retirement after the Punjab and Haryana High Court



Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh.

quashed a report by the SIT of Punjab Police into the firing incident.

Key candidates

The other key candidates include Vibhuti Sharma from Pathankot, Raman Behl from Gurdaspur, Shamsher Singh from Dina Nagar, Jagroop Singh Sekhwan from Qadian, Sherry Kalsi from Batala, Balbir Singh Pannu from Fatehgarh Churian, Dr.

Inderbir Singh Nijjar from Amritsar (South), and Lalit Singh Bhullar from Patti Assembly segment.

Balkar Singh, Dr. Ravjot Singh and Lalit Mohan Pathak will be AAP candidates from Kartarpur, Sham Chaurasi and Nawanshehri seat respectively. Punjabi singer Anmol Gagan Mann will be fighting from Kharar constituency.

Chadha hits out

Meanwhile, AAP co-charge for Punjab Raghab Chadha hit out at the ruling Congress Government, accusing it of "patronising the sand mafia".

Terming the announcement of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi to give a reward of ₹25,000 if proof is provided in video or any other form about illegal sand mining as a gimmick,

Mr. Chadda alleged that illegal sand mining was continuing in Chief Minister's Assembly constituency.

"Punjab CM Charanjit Channi Sahab has made an announcement saying that anyone who contacts the Punjab Government with proof or information regarding illegal sand mining in the State will be rewarded with ₹25,000. But I would like to point out to Channi Sahab, that illegal sand mining practices are taking place at various sites within his own Assembly constituency Chamkaur Sahib. Till date, you have not taken any action against these illegitimate practices taking place under your own nose."

"And now you are asking people for proof, for information about the presence of the sand mafia?" said Mr. Chadha.

Gangs from Gujarat behind recent robberies in A.P.

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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

2nd Death Anniversary of Jacob John Chellaraj S.



"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

- Revelation 21:4

Unnoticed by others as they do not see. How encapsulating this grief can be! Yet it feels like you are still here, Alive in all who found you dear.

The sunsets will pass and very soon. We will be together in that heavenly room.

- C.J.

Fondly remembered by Crystal, Crystaline, and the extended families.

+ DOD: 11/12/2019 +

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

IN FOND MEMORY OF Dr.N.C. KRISHNAN, F.C.A. On the Occasion of the TWENTY NINTH ANNIVERSARY



Birth : 29.3.1928 Death : 11.12.1992

Inscribed by Staff & Partners of Mrs. S.VISWANATHAN LLP, Chennai.

OBITUARY

KALAVATHI SWAMINATHAN

Reid, Deputy Accountant General (A&E) Chennai, Tamilnadu.

Died on 30.11.2021

Deeply Mourned by M. Swaminathan (Husband)

S. Sriram (Son)

54, Rameswaram Rd., T.Nagar, Ch-17

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A ND-NDE

Gujarat HC rejects Asaram's bail plea in 2013 rape case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court on Friday rejected the bail application of jailed self-styled godman Asaram in a rape case filed against him by a woman in 2013.

While rejecting his bail plea following objections raised by the prosecution, Justice A.J. Desai also directed the Gandhinagar sessions court to wind up the trial in four months.

In his bail plea, filed through advocate Dipak Patel, Asaram sought relief on the ground that he is already above 80 years of age and that his health was deteriorating. Mr. Patel sought bail for his client claiming there were no signs of the trial concluding anytime soon as Gandhinagar sessions court is yet to examine 22 to 24 witnesses, and cited Supreme Court judgments of the past to claim the court cannot keep an accused behind bars forever.

Public Prosecutor R.C. Kodekar objected and told court the facts of Asaram's case was different from the cases cited by his lawyer.

The Chief Executive Officer Itanagar Smart City Development Corporation Ltd. (ISCDCL) invited Expression of Interest from interested eligible firm/ agency for appointment as operator for the setting-up and operation of the Public E-Scooter Sharing System in Itanagar and Naharlagun. For details please log on to https://arunachaltenders.gov.in Last Date : 28/12/2021.

Chief Executive Officer Itanagar Smart City Development Corporation Ltd. DIPR/ARN/2401/03/21 Zoo Road, Itanagar - 791113

Ref. No. 2391/11/02(xii) ITCO/URRDA/21 Dated : 10.12.2021

PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY)

e-Procurement Notice-20/2021-22

The Chief Engineer, Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency, First Floor, Directorate of Panchayat, Opp-IT Park, Sahastrada Road, Dehradun.

Ref. No. 2391/11/02(xii) ITCO/URRDA/21 Dated : 10.12.2021

PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY)

e-Procurement Notice-20/2021-22

The Chief Engineer, URRDA on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of Bridges under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the Districts of Almora, Champoli, Pauri & Tehri for 10 number of packages with estimated cost totaling to Rs. 24.19 Crore. including their maintenance for Five years from the eligible contractors registered with PWD/CPWD or equivalent*.

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 11.12.2021.

Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission: The bid documents are available online and should be submitted online in www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities.

The bidders are required to submit original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with the CONCERNED CIRCLE OFFICES, mentioned in SBD/MBD, only up to or before the time and date of the submission of the Bids (for World Bank funded works) and on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid (for Regular PMGSY Works), either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. No Physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids.

Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-Procurement: 18.12.2021 01:00 PM

For further details please log on to www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in.

Chief Engineer, URRDA, Dehradun

* Non Registered bidders may submit bids, however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

Note : For e-Procurement for any sort of queries 0135-2608125 number may be contacted 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL

General Public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo) namely Pooja D/o Mohan Lal R/o H.No. 2/83, H Block, Jahangirpuri, Delhi Aged-15 Years has been reported missing/kidnapped since 25.11.2021 at 10:00 AM from 4th Floor, D Block, GB Pant Hospital, Delhi from the area of P.S. IP Estate, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 359/21 u/s 363 IPC Dated 26.11.2021 lodged at Police Station IP Estate, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

Complexion: Fair, Height: 5'0", Face: Round, Built: Normal, Eyes: Big, ID: Tattoo mark of "P" on her right hand, Wearing: Chocolate coloured suit-salwar, red coloured sweater, red coloured plastic slipper in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, IP Estate, Delhi at E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in or website : http://cbi.nic.in

Sd/- SHO, IP Estate, Delhi

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FAX: 011-24368639

DP/1107/CD/2021

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<p

IN BRIEF



Crash victim's body may be handed over today

THRISSUR
The body of A. Pradeep, junior warrant officer, who was killed in the Coonor copter crash may be brought to his house at Ponnukkara in Kerala's Thrissur district on Saturday. The body will be handed over to his family after a DNA test.

Five students, teacher drown in the Krishna

GUNTUR
Five students and a teacher of the Shweta Srungachalam Veda Patasala drowned in Krishna river at Atchampeta village here in Andhra Pradesh on Friday. The students, aged between 13 and 15, were from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. They had gone for a dip in the river near the school during their evening prayers.

SC to hear Mullaperiyar case on Dec. 15

Case adjourned as Tamil Nadu seeks time to respond to new issues raised by Kerala Government

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday adjourned to December 15 a hearing on safety concerns about the Mullaperiyar dam after Tamil Nadu sought time to respond to new issues raised by Kerala.

The 126-year-old dam in Idukki district of Kerala is under the control of Tamil Nadu.

A Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar initially posted the case to December 11, but senior advocate Shekhar Naphade informed the court that fresh applications have been filed in the case and Tamil Nadu would like to have time to file its reply.

Recently, the Kerala Government moved the court complaining that Tamil Nadu was not giving prior information to it before opening the spillway shutters of the dam. It submitted that heavy flow



Crucial link: Pipelines that carry water from the Mullaperiyar dam in Kerala to Tamil Nadu. ■ G. KARTHIKEYAN

from the dam was a source of unease for those living downstream. It sought the formation of a technical committee comprising representatives of both States to ensure that water is released from the dam on its recommendation and after giving due warning to the disaster management authorities in Kerala. It said heavy rainfall in the area has increased the water level in the dam.

The court had fixed the case on December 10 to hear comprehensively and pass directions on the diverse petitions filed on the various aspects of safety, maintenance of the dam and security of those living near it.

The Tamil Nadu Govern-

ment has so far stood firm by its position in the court that the dam is "hydrologically, structurally and seismically safe". It had blamed a "social media campaign" triggered in Kerala against the dam.

It said the steady flow of petitions to the court from Kerala, questioning the dam's safety, even calling for its decommissioning, was a bid to harass it. It accused Kerala of trying "somehow to prevent Tamil Nadu from raising the dam level to 142 ft on one pretext or the other by raising issues which have been fully addressed by experts from Central Water Commission".

Tamil Nadu, in an affidavit, said the safety of the dam had been supported by reports of the expert committee and the empowered committee after extensive study. The height of storage level at 142 ft. was endorsed by the

court in 2014 in a judgment. The dam's safety aspects are being constantly monitored by the Supervisory Committee set up seven years ago.

Issues 'thrashed out'

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, for the Supervisory Committee, had maintained that the issues were "thrashed out" between Kerala and Tamil Nadu in several meetings.

Kerala, in turn, had been demanding a reconsideration of the rule curve as the dam is situated in a seismic zone. The court is hearing a petition filed by Dr. Joe Joseph and office-bearers of the Kothamangalam block panchayat in Kerala expressing their apprehensions about the lack of proper supervision of water levels in the dam located along the Periyar tiger reserve.

Interim stay on felling of trees in Auroville

'Status quo be maintained till Dec. 17'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered an interim stay on felling of trees by the Auroville Foundation. It has also directed that *status quo* be maintained till December 17, in the interest of protecting the environment.



Earthmovers clearing trees in Dharkali forest in Auroville. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ted that though certain objections were raised before the authorities, no action was being taken.

"Considering the urgency of the matter, we feel that an ex parte interim order will have to be passed, as, if no interim order is passed then it is likely to cause greater damage to the environment," the Bench said.

The Tamil Nadu government submitted that it had no interest in the matter and though part of the area was within Tamil Nadu, the area where activities were going on was exclusively in the possession of Auroville Foundation.

The Bench ordered notice to Auroville Foundation to file its response or objection to the allegations during the next hearing.

A copy of the application was also directed to be provided to the Department of Environment, Tamil Nadu, for its information and getting its stand on the matter.

Meanwhile, 12 individuals and activists, including Vasanthi Devi, former Chairperson, State Commission for Women, retired Justice D. Hariparanthanam, retired IAS officer M.G. Devasahayam, have written to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, Chief Secretary V. Irai Anbu and Tamil Nadu Director General of Police C. Sylendra Babu.

Veda Nilayam handed over to legal heirs of Jayalalithaa

Collector gives keys to nephew and niece following court order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa's niece and nephew, J. Deepa and J. Deepak, received the keys of Veda Nilayam, her Poos Garden residence, from the Chennai District Collector J. Vijaya Rani on Friday, following a court order.

Ms. Deepa and her husband visited Veda Nilayam on Friday.

She later spoke to press persons about the house needing repair and renovation. Revealing her desire to live in the house, she also mentioned that they had to



Honour: Jayalalithaa's niece Deepa paying her respects to the former Chief Minister on her visit to Veda Nilayam in Chennai on Friday. ■ R. RAGU

clear all the income tax cases first.

"This is the first time I am visiting the house in the absence of my aunt. I was not allowed to visit the house after my aunt died," Ms. Deepa said, and added that she was surprised by the condition of the house.

Coal production hit for second day in Singareni

23,425 workers protest against auction plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PEDDAPALLI

Coal production remained paralysed across the underground coal mines and the open cast projects of Singareni Collieries Company Ltd. (SCCL) in Telangana as the 72-hour strike called by the workers of the State-owned coal company entered the second day on Friday.

The second day of the protest saw an overwhelming number of workers, except for essential staff, abstaining from duties in

ed in the strike and only 3,492 workers tasked with essential services attended duties during the first shift in 11 areas of the company across six districts on Friday.

3.5 lakh tonne loss
The 72-hour strike called by the Joint Action Committee of the five central trade unions and the Telangana Bogu Ghani Karimka Sangha (TBGKS) has resulted in an estimated production loss of a little over 3.50 lakh tonnes since Thursday.

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president A. Revanth Reddy has extended support to the employees.

Sources said that as many as 23,425 workers participat-

Vehicles parked outside a Singareni Collieries mine in Bhadrak Kothagudem.

pursuit of their charter of demands, mainly removal of the four coal blocks in Telangana from the Union Coal Ministry's auction list and allocation of the four coal blocks to the SCCL.

Sources said that as many as 23,425 workers participat-

DELHI POLLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE (DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT)

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PUBLIC NOTICE - E-WASTE MANAGEMENT

E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016 came into force w.e.f 1st October 2016. These Rules mandates various responsibilities on manufacturers, producers, collection centres, dealers, refurbishers, consumers, bulk consumers, dismantlers, and recyclers. Major responsibilities of each of these stakeholders are listed as under. For more details, these stakeholders may visit <https://www.dpcc.delhigovt.nic.in/uploads/pdf/E-Waste-guidelines-2016pdf-8c8800919a1a1148a66ff83a2257061.pdf>, and <https://www.dpcc.delhigovt.nic.in/uploads/pdf/EWMRulespdf-fdab6f4b3b088efb1c981b6ba97705.pdf>, for compliance.

MANUFACTURERS

Apply for authorisation in Form 1 (a) to Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC). Maintain record of e-waste generated, handled and disposed in Form-2 and make such records available for scrutiny by DPCC. File annual returns in Form-3, to DPCC on or before 30th June following the financial year to which that return relates.

PRODUCERS

Every producer of electrical and electronic equipment listed in Schedule I, shall apply application for Extended Producer Responsibility Authorisation to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in Form 1. Maintain records in Form-2 of the e-waste handled and make such records available for scrutiny by the CPCB and DPCC. File annual returns in Form-3, to CPCB on or before 30th June following the financial year to which that return relates.

Create awareness through media, publications, advertisements, posters, or by any other means of communication and product user documentation accompanying the equipment.

COLLECTION CENTRES

Ensure that the facilities are in accordance with the standards or guidelines issued by CPCB time to time and store the e-waste collected by them in a secured manner till it is sent to authorised dismantler or recycler as the case may be.



caused to the environment during storage and transportation of e-waste to authorised dismantlers or recyclers.

REFURBISHERS

Apply for authorization by submitting an online application in Form-1 (a) to DPCC. Shall ensure compliance with the guidelines issued by CPCB available as shown above.

Maintain records of e-waste handled in Form-2 and make such records available for scrutiny by the DPCC.

File annual returns in Form-3, to DPCC on or before 30th June following the financial year to which that return relates.

DISMANTLER AND RECYCLERS

Obtain authorization by submitting

online application in Form-4 to DPCC. Maintain record of e-waste collected, dismantled, recycled and sent to authorised recyclers in Form-2 and make such records available for scrutiny by the CPCB and DPCC.

DEALERS

Shall collect the e-waste by providing the consumer a box, bin or a demarcated area to deposit e-waste, or through take back system and send the e-waste so collected to collection centre or dismantler or recycler as designated by producer.

Shall ensure that no damage is

CONSUMERS/BULK CONSUMERS

Shall ensure that e-waste generated by them is channelised through collection centre or dealer of authorised producer or

ELECTRICAL WORKS

Tender Notice No.: Dy.CEE/CON/RE/MLG/17/2021, Dated: 07-12-2021. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work. Tender No.: ELC-HO-14-2021-22-NBO-AGT; Name of Work: Rewiring and re-cabling for 30% and 70% lighting system at Bongaigaon, Chaprakala, Bijni, Patildahad, Sorbhog & Barpetla Road stations in between section Bongaigaon & Barpetla Road for provision of energy conservation system of platform lighting in connection with New Bongaigaon-Aghora via Rangiyapatch Doubling project. Tender Value: ₹ 3,56,68,472/-, Earnest Money: ₹ 3,28,400/-, Date and time of submission of Tenders at 14:30 hrs. on 04-01-2022. Date and time of Opening of Tender at 15:30 hrs. on 04-01-2022. For details please visit in website www.reps.gov.in.

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- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person Namely : Unknown, S/o : Unknown, R/o : Unknown, Age : About 35 years, Height : 5'6", Face : Long, Complexion : Shallow, Built : Thin, Identification : A tattoo mark of 'Q' on right hand, Wearing : Brown Colour Checkdar Shirt & Dark Brown Colour Pant was found in unconscious condition at footpath Sulabh Shauchalay, Near Gate No. 06, LHMCH Hospital, Panchkuiyan Road, New Delhi on 07.12.2021. He was shifted at LHMCH Hospital, New Delhi, where doctors declared him brought dead. In this regard a case vide DD No. 64 dated 07.12.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Mandir Marg, New Delhi. The dead body has been preserved at Lady Hardinge Mortuary, New Delhi for 72 hours.

Any person having any information or clue about this dead person may kindly inform to the following:-

SHO : P.S. Mandir Marg, New Delhi
New Delhi Distt., Delhi
Tel. No. 011-23968730

झारखण्ड सरकार
सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क निवेशालय
आदि-अल्पकालीन निविदा
सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क निवेशालय, झारखण्ड, राँची द्वारा गिपट पैक (पॉक्स), टेबल केलेण्डर, ऐपर वेट, ग्रिटरेस कार्ड, नोट बुक, ब्रासर, दोगाल केलेण्डर आदि का मुद्रण एवं आपूर्ति हेतु निवेशित एवं अनुभवी फर्मों से मुहरबंद लिफाके में तकनीकी एवं वित्ती विभिन्न विभागों द्वारा दिनांक 13.12.2021 अपराह्न 04.00 बजे निवेशक प्रकाशन के कक्ष में जायेगी। निविदाएँ कार्यालय के द्वारा दिनांक 17.12.2021 को अपराह्न 03.00 बजे तक स्थेय शाखा होंगी। प्राप्त सभी निविदाओं को दिनांक 17.12.2021 को अपराह्न 04.00 बजे निविदा निष्पादन समिति (क्रय समिति) के सम्मेलन में खोली जायेगी। निविदाओं को अलग-अलग तारीखों पर निविदा निष्पादन समिति (क्रय समिति) द्वारा स्वीकृत किया जायेगा, उन्हीं निविदाओं को वित्ती विभिन्न विभागों द्वारा स्वीकृत किया जायेगा, उन्हीं निविदाओं



Green shoots

The Government should build political consensus on plans for reform in farm sector

The repeal of three controversial farm laws by the Narendra Modi government through a parliamentary resolution has defused the conflict over them, but the underlying questions regarding the sector remain unresolved. Farmers who had stayed put at sites around the national capital for a year are now dispersing, but not with much clarity on the road ahead. The defeatism of the Government, and the triumphalism of the farm unions and the Opposition over the repeal of the laws have created a hostile environment for a long-term resolution to the agricultural practices that are economically and environmentally unsustainable. No reform can be possible without building sufficient political support for it, unless unlimited state force is used to suppress the opposition. In this instance, the Government went ahead without adequate consultations and landed in a stalemate with entrenched farming communities. Any aggravation of the situation would have been dangerous for the stability of the country, but what forced the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) into retreat was its immediate political calculations for Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. But farmers remain ambiguous in their approach to the party. A section of them in western Uttar Pradesh might consider voting for the BJP, but for many, the wounds are still fresh, and they distrust the BJP. In Punjab, the BJP has managed to be a part of the conversation, but the road to any political reward over the repeal appears long at the moment.

Farmers have resolved to review the progress of their agreement with the Government in mid-January. Their key remaining demand is a legal guarantee of minimum support prices for all crops. While the Government has promised that the existing minimum support price regime will not be diluted, the questions on extending its coverage and backing it up legally have been left to a committee constituted by the Prime Minister. The committee includes representatives of farmers too. The Indian agriculture sector requires a balance between national development priorities and market linkages, and ensure long-term economic sustainability for those employed by it. Wider coverage of minimum support prices could encourage farmers in Punjab and Haryana to switch from irrigation intensive, and expensive rice to a diverse crop pattern without compromising on the food staple. Water abundant areas could adopt appropriate crops. To achieve an ecologically appropriate geographical spread of crops, the existing regional disparity in the sector needs to be addressed, by giving more state attention to regions and crops that are now in a shadow. Enhancing agriculture incomes is a shared objective of all political parties, and it is most unfortunate that they are unable to put their heads together to achieve this. The calm achieved by rightly repealing the three laws should be wisely used by the Centre to build a political consensus on the country's agriculture sector.

Captaincy unlimited

India could not have allowed two different captains to be in charge for the T20Is, ODIs

It was an expected coronation but the manner in which it transpired seemed like an exercise in smoke and mirrors. Late on Wednesday evening, an email popped up in the inboxes of Indian cricket writers. It was a press release from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and almost its entire part was devoted to the naming of the Test squad under Virat Kohli, set for the tour of South Africa. But the breaking-news bit was reserved for the last line, which stated that Rohit Sharma would be the captain of the ODI and T20I teams. After Kohli relinquished the T20I captaincy, Rohit had already taken over the reins in the shortest format and it was a matter of time before he was given charge of the One Day International squad too. Split-captaincy involves one leader for Tests and another at the helm for white-ball cricket, both for ODIs and T20s. There are enough overseas examples – Pat Cummins and Aaron Finch; Joe Root and Eoin Morgan – and closer home there was the duality between M.S. Dhoni and Kohli before the latter led across formats. Kohli's resignation from T20 leadership while still nursing his ambitions in ODIs, was never ideal. Rohit was left with the crumbs, Kohli refused to blink and the selectors wielded the axe while grace went missing.

Captaincy shifts usually favour the younger player but in the latest musical chairs between Kohli and Rohit, the Mumbaikar at 34, is a year older. With the wily Kohli, a splendid batter but of late he has not scored as much and leadership does take a toll. In the past Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid, the present coach, gave up captaincy to focus on their batting. Kohli will remain at the helm in Tests but with Rohit replacing Ajinkya Rahane as the Test vice-captain, perhaps there is a sign there too. India has had a splendid run in Tests but its inability to win ICC silverware, be it the Test Championship or limited-overs' titles, remains an issue. Rohit and Dravid are expected to plug that gap. Next year the ICC T20 World Cup will be held in Australia, and in 2023 the conventional World Cup would return to India. For Rohit, who was not picked for the 2011 edition which Dhoni and Co., won, that omission still rankles. If results and his fitness do not desert him, Rohit could lead India in the 2023 edition. But first up in his leadership endeavour would be the three ODIs in South Africa after the Test series. As captain, Rohit was magnificent with the Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League. He needs to replicate that success with India in the next few years.

Goods and Services Tax as an unfinished agenda

Seen purely from a revenue point of view and as a fiscal policy tool, India's GST is still on a rocky road



M.A. OOMMEN & K.J. JOSEPH

GST, or Goods and Services Tax, an institutional tax innovation intensively marketed in many countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, was wrapped in a "one nation one tax" package, and was accepted by India on the midnight of July 1, 2017. Despite the alleged haste in its launching by the central government, there were adaptations to make it to suit the Indian context.

Hailed as a landmark reform in India's tax history, it was expected to improve tax-GDP ratio, end tax cascading, enhance efficiency, competitiveness, growth, and ensure lower prices. It was also projected as a watershed in India's fiscal federalism. While the States have forgone a substantial part of their own tax revenue, they were in turn guaranteed a GST compensation assuring 14% growth in their GST revenue during the initial five years. Many exemptions, along with different tax rates, as against the single rate in many countries, have been accommodated to protect the interests of different stakeholders.

Unresolved issues

Even after 50 months in existence, a number of relevant issues, both for policy and action, remain unresolved. A recently held international seminar on GST, organised by the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation that brought together experts from India and select countries (Malaysia, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Brazil,

Mexico and Canada), was the venue for a *sui generis* policy debate focusing on India's GST experience. We, as participant observers, cherry-pick some of the observations that were made for reflection by policymakers and the wider public.

The base and pillars

India's GST architecture is built on the firm foundations of a GST Council and the GST Network (GSTN). The first is the key decision-making body, chaired by the Union Finance Minister with a Minister of State in charge of Finance and the Finance Ministers of States as members. This is envisaged as a due federal process to protect the interests of the States. GSTN generates high frequency data and subjects them to analytics for informed policy making. Built on this foundation, India's GST paradigm stands on two key pillars: revenue neutrality and GST compensation for the States. Designed on the principle of destination-based consumption taxation, with seamless provision for input tax credit with CGST levied by the Centre, SGST by the States, UTGST by the Union Territories, and IGST levied on inter-State supply including imports, GST is applicable to all goods and services except alcohol for human consumption and five specified petroleum products with a common threshold exemption applicable to both CGST and SGST.

The assured revenue neutrality remains a mirage and many States have experienced a declining tax-GDP ratio. Studies show that in the case of major 18 States, the ratio of own tax revenue to GDP has declined. While the share of the Centre in total GST increased by 6%, that of States put together lagged behind with only a 4.5% increase. Stark differences between



the Revenue Neutral Rates (RNR) for the producing States and consumption State have been observed. States producing exempted food grains also lost out.

Since the rates were lower under GST vis-à-vis the VAT regime, revenue neutrality was not adhered *ab initio*. The problems were compounded with massive evasion following the dismantling of check posts, and later on fake invoices, that grew by leaps and bounds. Exemptions and subventions complicated and worsened the situation. The South African experience illustrates how zero rating and large exemptions have defeated revenue goals. In Mexico, although the country relied more on income tax, with a standard rate of 16% they could raise over 4% of GDP from GST.

Reviewing 30 years of the Canadian experience with GST, it is shown that GST could be improved by limiting zero rating, tax-exemptions and harmonising tax rates. The Brazilian experience indicates that transfers through social security or subsidies tend to be more progressive than subventions or exemptions because reduced rates or zero rating do not usually get passed on to target groups or industries as happening in India. The resilience of the economy at the time of rolling out of

GST is critical for its wider reception as the Australian experience shows. However, India was in the reverse gear given the downturn following demonetisation.

GST in India was possible only because the States surrendered much of their constitutionally inherited indirect taxes. While the States collectively forewent 51.8% of their total tax revenue, the Centre surrendered only 28.8%. Yet, GST is shared equally between the Centre and States despite two expert committees recommended for a higher share for the States. Given the revenue neutrality failure and the host of other issues, many of the States are left with no option except to depend on GST compensation. While compensation legitimately has to coexist with GST, even the constitutionally guaranteed compensation for five years has not been implemented in letter and spirit, forcing the States to beg for their entitlement. This is not conducive to sustainable co-operative federalism.

IGST woes, other points

Although IGST is a key source of revenue for many of the States, the clearing house mechanism and the process therein remains *terra incognita*. It was pointed out that GST is discriminatory to manufacturing States, indicating the need for a revenue sharing formula that duly incentivises exporting States by sharing IGST revenue among three parties instead of two. The Malaysian experience demonstrates the need for swift and transparent functioning of the input tax credit system through a flawless IT infrastructure. Malaysia ended up abandoning GST owing to these woes. We operate in an almost information vacuum especially with respect to IGST along with several glitches in the digital architecture. GSTN is now in the

doldrums. It neither makes effective use of the massive and invaluable data being generated nor shares them to enable others to make use of them. Such practice in "data monopoly" was a fact of history in India's statistical system and has to go sooner rather than later.

Australia, having several similarities with India, in terms of Centre and the subnational units, and destination-based, multi-stage tax with input credit provisions, has not been revenue-buoyant. The GST revenue of Australia has fallen relative to GDP from 3.85% in 2003-04 to 3.28% in 2018-19. It is a matter for consideration whether such adventures such as widening exemptions and the replacing of income-tax by GST in the case of small and medium enterprises are advisable measures in the Indian context.

GST should be seen purely from a revenue point of view and as a fiscal policy tool for efficiency, competitiveness and growth. Even by this standard, India's GST is still on a rocky road, with several of the assumptions falling flat while expectations stand belied. Neither the States nor the consumers seem to have benefited since the rate reductions are not translated into prices due to profiteering and cascading. Despite many years of efforts in evolving an Indianised GST system and over 50 months of adjustments with over a thousand notifications, with accompanying uncertainties in the first year and the novel coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown still in the saddle, GST continues to be an unfinished agenda. But how far and how long?

M.A. Oommen is Distinguished Fellow, and K.J. Joseph is Director, Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT), Thiruvananthapuram

Make the mental well-being of teachers a priority

It is a very important first step in addressing the mental health and well-being of children scarred by the pandemic



KISHORE DARAK & TASNEEM RAJA

It is now clear that COVID-19 caught us all by surprise. The school education sector in India too struggled during the novel coronavirus pandemic. While online learning for children has had its fair share of challenges, including learning loss, fatigue from online learning to mental stress, there is another group that faced severe adversity – a group that has not been adequately considered in the general discourse – our teachers, who too struggled with meaningful pedagogies embedded in digital platforms. The pandemic-induced conditions posed several challenges which largely remained unnoticed.

The two sides

India has an estimated nine million teachers, but they are not a homogeneous group in India. There are extremes: those working in schools under the Union government with better qualifications, working conditions, salaries and systemic protection to those in low-fee private schools with abysmally low salaries, poor working conditions and no systemic

protection. Those in medium range, urban private schools faced a new type of 'bullying' by being under constant 'watch' of parents who pointed out even the tiniest mistakes, including variety in pronunciation in online classes. In addition to this, under COVID-19 duty, their deployment in undertaking door-to-door COVID-19 survey, distributing immunity booster tablets, policing inter- and intra-district check-posts, managing queues outside fair price shops, keeping records in COVID-19 care facilities and, at times, disciplining queues outside liquor shops led them to a sense of 'loss of identity'.

This peculiar situation, juxtaposed with media reports suggesting that 'teachers drew salary without any work' led to much mental turmoil, a lowering of the self-image and self-respect. Teachers were also under constant pressure to submit records of efforts made to keep learning 'alive'. These efforts could neither be fully verified nor could their effectiveness be gauged. One of the main pain-points for teachers during the pandemic was a total cutoff from contact with children during the initial months and during and after the second wave.

Not just a profession

For many teachers, teaching is not just a profession but also the most rewarding work as interacting with young children and adoles-

cents brings with it great pleasure and joy. Mental stress due to being cut-off from children fuelled by societal perception of the salary of teachers being a great burden led to some innovative responses from teachers to mitigate their own stress and pressure. For example, at Akole (Ahmednagar, Maharashtra), teachers started a COVID-19 care facility which is operational till date, with more than 650 patients cured and returning home. Such work, according to Bhausaheb Chaskar, a Zilla Parishad teacher and Convener of Active Teachers' Forum Maharashtra, is helping teachers rebuild their image under assault by vested interests and is also bringing a lot of solace, mental peace and meaningfulness to the community of teachers.

But, it is now increasingly clear that our children face a crisis in terms of their mental health and well-being. The silent pandemic of mental ill-health in adolescents and young people was brought to the fore globally by the pandemic. Teachers, as primary caregivers to children, influence the emotional

environment of a classroom as well as the emotional and behavioural well-being of those in their care. The teacher's ability to navigate this responsibility is significantly shaped by their own mental health and well-being.

Need for destigmatisation

Teachers, especially those working in high poverty environments and with marginalised groups, face an inordinate amount of job stress, it is very important to recognise and validate their stress, bring it out and discuss it openly. School environments often embody the larger cultural milieu and discussing mental health and well-being might be stigmatised; recognising and addressing this stigma through a cogent set of policies at a systemic level will help schools create an environment where mental health can be discussed openly. Some steps that might be helpful include –

Creating a space where teachers can talk about their daily stressors and their well-being with their peers in a supportive environment. Community of Practice of teachers and teacher unions can take this up as an agenda of priority.

Including mental health, well-being and burnout management in teacher training programmes and refresher training will go a long way in prioritising mental health.

Systemic investments in school

mental health allow for a creation of an environment focused on well-being, addressed through clearly defined policies on anti-bullying, redress of harassment and grievances, creating a support system of psychosocial services that teachers can access.

An objective recognition programme focused on the small achievements of teachers also goes a long way in building a culture focused on strengths.

If we want to be a thinking, forward-looking, advanced society sensitive of challenges, a society in which children are safe, secure and protected with professionally well-trained teachers who know the ways of mitigating newer challenges (including mental health and the well-being of children), then there is no alternative to making the mental health of our educators a priority. It is a very important first step in addressing the mental health and well-being of our children. Our acknowledgement of systemic challenges created for teachers and our focus on teachers' well-being and mental health would perhaps ensure a safe and secure 'future of our future'.

Kishore Darak works with the Education team of the Tata Trusts. Tasneem Raja has over 22 years of experience in the health-care sector and has worked on a range of issues including non-communicable diseases, infectious diseases and maternal and child health

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.

The CDS

The next Chief of Defence Staff must be appointed without further delay so that reforms initiated by the first Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, can continue in conjunction with tackling challenges on India's northern, eastern and western fronts. Any further delay will disrupt the ongoing process of transformation and modernisation of all wings of the armed forces. It would also boost national security and the morale of our armed forces personnel.

RAVI BHUSHAN,
Kurukshetra, Haryana

■ In the passing of India's first CDS, the country has lost an inspirational general. A soldier's utmost dedication and love for the motherland is why India is safe. From the

tributes that the people of the Nilgiris and Coimbatore paid to the departed souls, to the great respect and recognition at Delhi, there was only one expression – of collective thought. One only hopes that the detailed inquiry is completed soon. Also, as our nation faces deep threats, the appointment of his successor must not be delayed.

JAYASEKHARAN V.P.,
Payyanur, Kannur, Kerala

The road to Ooty I write this letter as a former Deputy Director General, Geological Survey of India, Government of India. An issue that has been raised after the tragic passing of the first CDS, Mrs Rawat and the other defence personnel in the helicopter crash in the Nilgiris, is why the CDS and his entourage preferred to travel

by road. The answer possibly lies in the cumbersome road journey. It is pertinent to mention that the Nilgiri mountain road from the Mettupalayam foothills (from Kallar) to Coonoor and Udhagamandalam is in dire need of being made safer. It also needs to be upgraded to ensure a faster journey which can be done by road widening and tunnelling through sections of the mountains. The ghat road is narrow at many stretches and is landslide prone in the rainy season.

The road is also accident-prone with thousands travelling every day on this two-way road. Considering the huge tourist inflow to the Nilgiris, the presence of a number of hydropower projects and a major military establishment in the form of the Defence Services Staff College, this

issue can no longer be ignored. A scientific and engineering study must be undertaken from the point of view of landslides, tunnelling, and hill slope widening in forested stretches.

R. SRINIVASAN,
Chennai

No teacher, no class It is slowly but certainly dawning on all those who care that children's education has been the worst affected in the pandemic onslaught; yet it is a peripheral concern. Online classes are of course a necessary evil in the pandemic-stressed situation but it has proved to be a poor substitute especially in the case of the youngest age group of students. Even among those who had the advantage of access to online mode, the learning outcome

has been minimal at the most. Imitation cannot be a replication. It is time to prepare a post-COVID-19 recovery plan which places the teacher's role as the pivot of children's education.

AYYASERI RAVEENDRANATH,
Aranmula, Kerala

The General I have been a reader of *The Hindu* for the past three years. I refer to the paper of December 9, 2021, i.e. Thursday, that reported the passing of the first Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, Mrs Rawat and 11 defence personnel with the Page 1 headline, "Rawat, 12 others killed in T.N. chopper crash", which I found insensitive. Being a media student I understand the basics of reporting and how newspaper printing and the industry works. But merely

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referring to the surname of a person, and that too of stature of the Chief of Defence Staff, is insensitive. I understand newspapers have a hard time with space constraints on the front page. But Gen. Rawat's name could have been mentioned in a proper way in the headline too (as was done in the text).

SHRIJ RAO,
Gurgaon

■ I have been a reader of *The Hindu* for the last 12 years. Being an air veteran, I was pained to see the headline without reference to the General's rank. I could not fathom how a newspaper of *The Hindu*'s standard could be insensitive towards a national tragedy.

UMESH V.,
Bengaluru

AM-ND-E

Caught in a 'zero COVID' dilemma

Hong Kong is one of the last few places in the world that is still following a stringent 'zero COVID' policy. **Ananth Krishnan** reports on a populated but poorly vaccinated region that is doing all it can to keep cases at a minimum even as it becomes more and more isolated from the world

The first thing that hits travellers landing in Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport is the emptiness. Hong Kong International Airport (HKG) to frequent fliers used to be among the world's busiest. It handled 71.5 million passengers in 2019, which is close to 2,00,000 a day. Now, a busy day means 1,500 passengers at most. On a lean day, sometimes only half that number walks through the airport's doors.

When a passenger steps off the plane, they can walk minutes on end without seeing another passenger. The inter-terminal train, packed to capacity in pre-pandemic times, no longer takes passengers to the arrivals hall but to what is possibly one of the world's largest testing centres. An entire terminal has been transformed into a 'test and hold' facility. The departure gates have been converted into massive waiting halls. This is where passengers await their results, with tests processed at an on-site laboratory.

HKG may be unrecognisable, but the administrative efficiency for which Hong Kong is famous is not. On arrival, every passenger is whisked into a makeshift tent for a quick nose and throat swab. A series of desks then beckon, where passengers fill in a multitude of forms. Within an hour of landing in Hong Kong, travellers are issued a government-recognised vaccination certificate that lists the date of their doses, the type of vaccine and where they had their shots – all prepared in advance from the online health declaration that every passenger is required to fill before boarding.

The certificate comes with a QR code that can be scanned and stored on Hong Kong's 'Leave Home Safe' tracing app, which many Hong Kong venues, from dining establishments to cinema halls, now require for granting entry. Finally, every traveller's phone number is registered with the health authorities and checked to make sure they can receive test results and other public health alerts. Arrivals are also introduced to Hong Kong's 24/7 COVID-19 hotline, which usually takes not more than two minutes to respond to any query on WhatsApp, on everything from where to get a test to whether you can open your hotel window in quarantine (the answer is unfortunately a 'no', at least in most designated quarantine hotels).

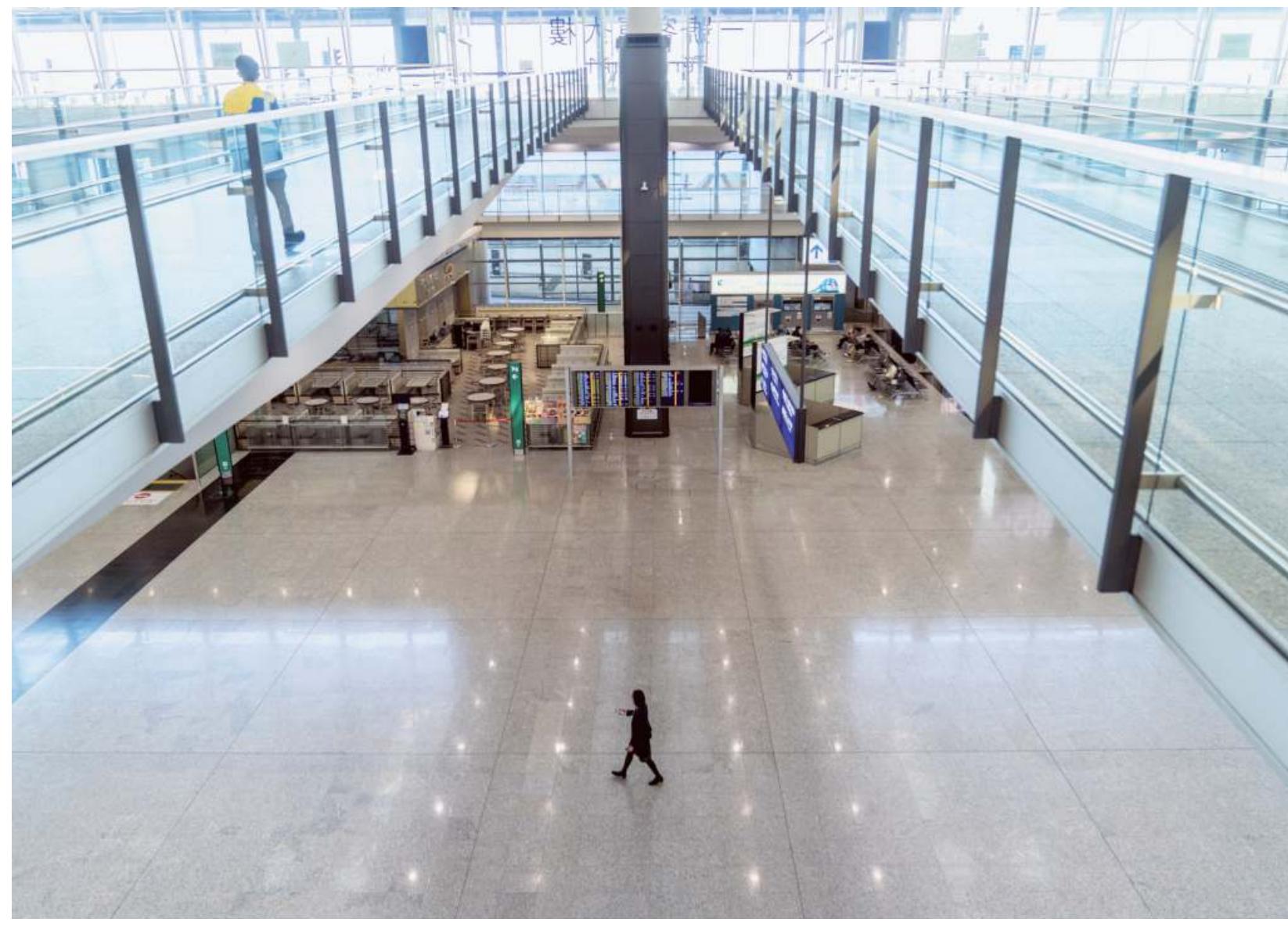
Once the forms are filled and Hong Kong's bureaucratic machinery is satisfied, a surreal sight awaits passengers who are ushered, finally, into a cavernous hall filled with a sea of desks. Travellers, pilots, air crew all sit in perfect silence as though at a massive examination centre. Over a nerve-wracking five-hour wait for their test results, passengers watch anxiously as every few minutes, health personnel in full PPEs appear, march up to numbered desks, quietly ask passengers who presumably tested positive to pack their bags, and then disappear.

A positive test means a passenger can neither clear immigration nor claim their checked-in luggage. They are taken away in an ambulance, lights flashing, to a hospital in Lantau Island near Chek Lap Kok, purpose-built for international arrivals. There they have to stay for at least 24 days in hospital, while all close contacts (those they sat next to on the flight) are taken to Penny's Bay, the government's biggest quarantine centre, for 21 days of isolation. This centre is also located in Lantau – an island once famous for hosting Hong Kong's "happiest place on earth", Disneyland, but now the centre of its massive quarantine programme.

Zero COVID, zero tolerance

If this elaborate arrival procedure and the vast system that is in place to keep it running seems excessive, it has been key to ensuring Hong Kong's extraordinary record during the pandemic. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, Hong Kong, a region of 7.5 million people, has recorded only a little over 12,000 infections and 213 deaths. Its 'zero COVID' strategy – an approach predicated on maintaining zero local cases by squashing every outbreak with mass testing and quarantine – certainly spared thousands of lives in a densely populated island, where public health experts say a virus left to run amok would have overwhelmed its already stressed health infrastructure.

Even passengers who test negative on arrival are issued a quarantine order and taken in a government-operated shuttle to their designated quarantine hotel that has to be pre-booked, usually at least two months in advance, given the limited availability designed to cap the number of arrivals. Most passengers from countries deemed 'high risk' spend 21 days of quarantine in a hotel room at their own cost. The windows in these rooms are often sealed and cannot be opened. Stepping out of the room means a hefty fine, an immediate transfer to Penny's Bay for 21 days of isolation, followed by six months in prison,



A staff member walks through the arrivals hall at Hong Kong International Airport in Hong Kong. (Below): Penny's Bay, the government's biggest quarantine centre, in the island of Lantau in Hong Kong. ■ GETTY IMAGES



reads the warning sign posted on every door.

This stringent screening of arrivals, Hong Kong's health officials pointed out on November 29, helped Hong Kong detect its first case of the new Omicron variant, before it spread, in a traveller from South Africa who tested positive on his third day in quarantine. Every individual is tested six times during their three-week hotel stay. Hong Kong also emerged unscathed from the Delta variant, with most cases caught in quarantine and the region facing no wave. The only local spread came from an airport worker, whose close contacts were all promptly transferred to Penny's Bay.

"A few elements have been key to ensuring that the cases were low," explains Siddharth Sridhar, clinical virologist at the University of Hong Kong. "Border controls, 100% mask-wearing from very early on, very strictly enforced social distancing, and a highly efficient method of testing and tracing. We do a lot of contact tracing and quarantine. So, I'd say Hong Kong uses fairly traditional methods to achieve COVID-19 control and they have worked very well for us."

Hong Kong's sweeping testing system means that entire residential neighbourhoods are locked down and individuals tested if there is a single reported case, while hundreds of close contacts are immediately sent to quarantine at the government's facility at Penny's Bay.

Another major factor for low cases has been compliance from a public that lived through the SARS epidemic. If the costs of this strategy include mask-wearing and no international travel, the benefits are that people have been living largely normal lives, with open schools, for much of the past two years after an initial strict lockdown.

Yet, this 'zero COVID' approach, in place now for close to two years, appears increasingly incongruous in a world that is gradually returning to normalcy – or was, before the emergence of Omicron. After Singapore, Australia and New Zealand opened their borders, only the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are still clinging on to a 'zero COVID' approach, with stringent travel restrictions meaning continued isolation from the world.

'A victim of our own success'

A growing number of people from foreign firms who have made their base in a place that likes to call itself 'Asia's World City' as well as people who haven't seen their families overseas for months are now asking whether this strategy is sustainable. They may, however, still be in the minority, given the broad public support for a stringent

approach.

Moreover, much of the debate about whether Hong Kong can – or should – re-open and follow Singapore's path hinges on two pressing problems that complicate any decision. One involves public health – specifically, poor vaccination rates – while the other is political, with Hong Kong having to choose between the mainland – another 'zero COVID' region – and the rest of the world while returning to normalcy.

In Dr. Sridhar's view, Hong Kong, at this moment, has no choice but to continue with this approach at least until it vaccinates more people. The single biggest concern is an extremely low vaccination rate among the elderly. On November 23, Hong Kong reached a milestone of vaccinating 70% of the population with one dose (67% have been given two doses). The number falls dramatically for the 80 and above population – the most vulnerable group – to just 18%.

Singapore's example is the warning sign that gives pause for caution. Singapore, with more than 80% of the population fully vaccinated, crossed Hong Kong's total number of deaths on October 16, mostly because of the Delta wave earlier this year. After Singapore opened its borders, it recorded more than 250 deaths in just November, which is more than what Hong Kong has seen since the start of the pandemic.

Most of those deaths were among the elderly, with 95% of those who died above 60 years, and close to three-quarters of them not fully vaccinated. Given Hong Kong's vaccination rates, opening up now would mean a wave of possibly thousands of deaths among the elderly.

What explains the low vaccination rates for a region that did almost everything else right? "We are a victim of our own success," says Dr. Sridhar. "Because COVID-19 was so effectively controlled, many people don't feel it is a threat at a personal level. Indeed, there is a perception that Hong Kong can maintain its current measures and keep COVID-19 out indefinitely."

Coupled with widespread misinformation about vaccines on WhatsApp groups, few older residents are seeking to get

vaccinated.

Yet, the low rates also feed into a vicious cycle, a consequence of a conscious policy decision to keep Hong Kong isolated. If Hong Kong was to set a timetable for opening, it would certainly spur more people to get their shots. While Dr. Sridhar says there is "no such thing as a clean exit strategy, if you tell people that there is a deadline and you are going to have to open up eventually", it would send a strong message to get vaccinated. "What we can do," he says, "is mitigate the effects of a massive COVID-19 surge in the community as far as possible. And I would argue that we will be in the best position possible to make that happen only by 2022", with a combination of more people being vaccinated and the possibility of anti-virals.

"There is no other way to exit the limbo we are currently in," he says.

The politics of opening

That is the public health argument. Then there is the politics. With the sweeping political changes introduced in Hong Kong last year, with the passing of a national security law that essentially decimated the pro-democracy opposition and gave Beijing more control than ever over its Special Administrative Region (SAR), Hong Kong's future is more than ever before wedded to that of the mainland.

The unpopular Chief Executive Carrie Lam, embattled after months of protests calling for universal suffrage in 2019 and the clampdown in 2020 that saw Beijing essentially bypass her government to pass the national security legislation, said in October that opening up to the mainland was "far, far more important" than opening up to the rest of the world.

Lam's government has spent months negotiating with Beijing about opening a travel bubble that will restore the once-thriving cross-border travel between Hong Kong and the Guangdong province. According to current rules, those travelling from Hong Kong across the land border have to quarantine for at least 14 days at a government-chosen hotel in Guangdong. This has hampered business activity and separated

families.

At least 50% of the 1,011 Cantonese-speaking residents surveyed by the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute in November said they "preferred to see the government take immediate steps to help Hong Kongers travel to the mainland instead of overseas", while "those who favoured opening international borders for outbound travel first accounted for 38 per cent of the respondents", the Hong Kong Free Press reported.

A trial bubble is slated to begin by end-December. This will allow a very limited daily quota of not more than 1,000 travellers a day to travel without quarantine, but only to Guangdong province and not to the rest of China. Negotiations on the bubble have dragged on for a year, delayed mostly by demands from mainland authorities for even more stringent measures (although, ironically, Hong Kong has had no major local spread for most of the past year while it is the mainland that has recently seen a spread of local clusters).

Cought between opening to the mainland and to the world, Hong Kong has no choice but to pursue ever-stricter measures in pursuit of the elusive bubble. Part of that effort has been to tighten rules for quarantine and impose tougher conditions for discharging positive cases. Most countries have now been moved to the high-risk category requiring mandatory 21 days of hotel quarantine. These rules are more stringent than those of the mainland that allow the last seven days to be spent at home.

Under earlier rules, anyone who tested positive could only be discharged after consecutive negative tests 24 hours apart and a minimum 10 days in hospital. In November, authorities said such people would also have to spend an additional 14 days in isolation, which means at least 24 days in hospital.

This also applies to 'repositives' – travellers who recovered from COVID-19 but tested positive on arrival in Hong Kong even if they tested negative in their home countries, which has happened in several cases because of Hong Kong's stricter testing criteria and how it measures cycle threshold (Ct) values in its COVID-19 tests. So, even a trace of dead virus from a patient who recovered months earlier will mean a minimum 24 days in hospital. Given these rules, some experts have advised travellers to think twice about travelling to Hong Kong if they had previously contracted COVID-19 unless they were willing to spend considerable time in hospital.

The new 14-day rule was criticised by several health experts as being unscientific. They pointed out that there is no evidence to suggest that such repositives are infectious or that a 14-day isolation is needed even after testing negative. Hong Kong authorities have been sensitive to criticism of these measures. When epidemiologist Ben Cowling at the University of Hong Kong in November criticised the extended quarantine as a "waste of resources and actively harming the patient with no community benefit to offset against" as well as being

"unethical", Health Secretary Sophia Chan shot back saying while "it is understandable that they perceive our stringent but necessary measures to maintain zero COVID as harsh, zero COVID is our best strategy not only on public health but also social and economic considerations, and is in line with the aspirations of our community."

The second much-debated move, which officials say is needed to open the mainland bubble, is to adopt a mainland-style Health Code app. This is a significant step up from Hong Kong's Leave Home Safe app, which only requires users to sign in when they enter a venue. The mainland's Health Code app, in contrast, tracks movements 24/7 and allows authorities to easily contact, trace and quarantine people based on their geo-locations. In Hong Kong, however, there are concerns over both privacy and sharing individuals' data with mainland authorities when they cross the border. In preparation for the bubble, the new Hong Kong health code was launched on December 10. It is not mandatory for residents, but those who want to travel to the mainland will be required to register.

Impact of policy

That Hong Kong has decided to prioritise opening to the mainland leaves little prospect of any move away from zero COVID for the time being, regardless of the impact it may have on foreign firms and Hong Kong's status as a financial centre for Asia.

Indeed, many foreign firms are already relocating to Singapore, while expatriates are either returning home or shifting to other destinations. Tara Joseph, president of the powerful American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, told Reuters in November that she would quit her post and leave Hong Kong because of its 21-day quarantine policy for overseas arrivals. "It is not in my nature to advocate on something and then embark on quarantine like a stooge," she said. She later qualified those remarks saying this was only one of several reasons for her departure. Some international airlines are reconsidering their Hong Kong routes too, and asking if the stringent testing and quarantining is worth the risk for their air crew. In late November, British Airways said it had suspended flights to Hong Kong after several of its crew were sent to quarantine at Penny's Bay after one crew member had tested positive. The airline said it was "reviewing operational requirements" for this route. Last month, after a Cathay Pacific pilot tested positive upon returning to Hong Kong, his entire family, along with more than 100 children in the kindergarten and primary school that the pilot's child was studying at, were sent to quarantine at Penny's Bay. Parents criticised this move as excessive and harsh as the children in the school were not even close contacts of the pilot, but secondary contacts.

Tens of thousands of Hongkongers have also already moved to the U.K. in recent months in response to Beijing's tightening control under a new visa programme launched by London that offers a pathway to citizenship for Hongkongers. London introduced the initiative in response to last year's national security law, which was seen as violating Beijing's commitments under the 1997 handover treaty.

As a result of these measures, Hong Kong's economy is beset by many challenges. More than ever, it is banking on the mainland and on closer integration with the Greater Bay Area (Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau) to keep its economy afloat. However, the relative normalcy of the last two zero-COVID years has also to some extent helped local businesses avoid the fate of those in other countries that struggled under the cycle of COVID-19 waves and lockdowns.

Hong Kong lawmaker Regina Ip, the outspoken founder of the pro-Beijing New People's Party, says the current strategy is justified, especially in the light of the emergence of new variants, and has helped Hong Kong avoid the fate of much of the rest of the world over the past year.

"Our 21-day quarantine requirements with regard to travellers from most countries are a function of their COVID-19 situations," she says. "The U.K. was in our Group B requiring 14-day quarantine but upgraded to Group A because of the surge of their cases involving the Delta variant. We have to stop flights from Africa because of the import of a new, dangerous strain identified by the WHO. Our priority must be to keep the 7.4 million people in our city safe, and we have done well in this respect."

If says Hong Kong doesn't have to choose between mainland China and the world. "Ideally," she says, "we want to have the best of both worlds". That is, of course, easier said than done. For now at least, it appears, Hong Kong has already made its choice.



FROM PAGE ONE

Centre says no proposal to scrap sedition law

"No such observations have been found in any judgment or order delivered by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India," the Law Minister said in a written reply.

However, Mr. Rijiju said that in a writ petition, the top court had observed that the "ambit and parameters of the provisions of Sections 124A, 153A and 505 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 would require interpretation, particularly in the context of the right of the electronic and print media to communicate news, information and the rights, even those that may be critical of the prevailing regime in any part of the nation".

Section 124A says, "Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law in [India], shall be punished with [imprisonment for life], to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine."

The Minister said the top court, in a writ petition (criminal) issued notice to the All India Judicial Service. In response to another question on the creation of an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) on the lines of other all-India services, the Law Minister said that the States were divided on the issue, with eight States objecting to such a proposal and two States supporting the idea. While two High Courts were in favour of constituting AIJS, 13 were not, Mr. Rijiju added.

Omicron tally rises to 32, symptoms mild: Centre



Curbing spread: Healthcare workers arriving at the venue of a wedding in Ahmedabad. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

He added that vaccination and COVID-appropriate behaviour continue to be the best protection against the virus.

Dr. Bhargava said the ICMR "will test efficacy of the vaccines against Omicron while following protocol".

In a note of caution, Mr. Agarwal said international passengers coming into India were not always giving their correct address.

"This makes it a challenge to then track and treat these cases. You have to help the Government help you," he said. He added that it was the responsibility of every individual to ensure that the community does not suffer because of their shortcomings.

India has now given two doses of the COVID vaccination to over 50% of its adult population, Mr. Agarwal said.

Districts of concern
According to data released by the Ministry, India reported fewer than 10,000 cases for 14 days in a row, with 52.8% of the total cases in the past week reported in Kerala. The Ministry added that eight districts in Mizoram, Sikkim and Kerala continued to report more than 10% weekly positivity and remained districts of concern.

Critical zone
"But that should not allow us to be complacent and remove the mask and stop adhering to the COVID appropriate behaviour. We continue to be in a critical zone till the virus is around and to be cautious is only prudent," said V.K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog.

"These numbers are no

Government, in which the petitioners have made a prayer before the Supreme Court for an appropriate writ, order or direction declaring Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 to be unconstitutional and void.

"Upon hearing the matter, the Hon'ble Supreme Court vide order dated July 12, 2021 has granted time for filing written submissions and counter affidavit in the matter on behalf of the Union of India," he said.

"The Writ petition (Civil) No. 682/2021 has been tagged with other matters wherein similar question of law has been raised and are pending for consideration before the Hon'ble Supreme Court," Mr. Rijiju's reply noted.

All India Judicial Service

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President calls for a debate on right to climate justice

On Human Rights Day, he says time is running out to preserve nature

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday said time was running out for preserving nature for future generations, and called for a debate on the right to climate justice.

Speaking at the Human Rights Day event here of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Mr. Kovind said while the world was waking up to harsh realities, decisive changes were yet to be made.

'Human dignity'

The President said while non-discrimination was the first condition for absolute respect for human dignity, the world was beset with countless prejudices. He said the world needed to debate and discuss the "right to a healthy environment and cli-



Non-negotiable rights: President Ram Nath Kovind during an event to celebrate the Human Rights Day. ■ PTI

mate justice".

"We owe it to our children that we save Mother Nature from the worst effects of industrialisation. The time is running out," Mr. Kovind said, while noting India's progress in the matter, par-

ticularly in its leadership of the International Solar Alliance.

The President said while the human rights discourse was justifiably focused on rights, India had always understood that rights and du-

ties were two sides of the same coin.

Earlier in the event, NHRC Chairperson Justice Arun Kumar Mishra (retd.) said tolerance and inclusion were non-negotiable human rights. Mr. Mishra said it was necessary "to provide remedy to the victims of unfair economic structure and business-related human rights violations".

"The NHRC Chairperson said freedom of speech is the most cherished value and fundamental right to be protected. However, the extent of freedom of cyberspace both online and offline is a matter of debate, as it has fuelled grave apprehension of its misuse, violating the sovereignty, integrity of the country, public order, decency and morality," an NHRC statement said.

UN confers Observer Status on Solar Alliance

It will benefit energy growth: India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
UNITED NATIONS

The UN General Assembly has conferred Observer Status to the International Solar Alliance (ISA), a historic decision which India said would help provide for a well-defined cooperation between the alliance and the UN that would benefit global energy growth and development.

The ISA was conceived as a joint effort by India and France to mobilise efforts against climate change through the deployment of solar energy solutions. It was presented by the leaders of the two countries at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris in 2015.

"I am taking the floor on behalf of India and France. I take this opportunity to

thank the entire UN membership for adopting the resolution conferring Observer Status to the International Solar Alliance (ISA). I am particularly happy that such a historic decision has been taken by the UN General Assembly under your [UNGA President Abdulla Shahid] leadership, under the Presidency of Hope," Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti said in a statement on Thursday.

"Congratulations! Today, the General Assembly, based on the Sixth Committee report, adopted resolution 76/123 & unanimously decided to invite the International Solar Alliance to participate in the sessions & work of the General Assembly in the capacity of an 'Observer,'" UN General Assembly President Shahid tweeted.

IN BRIEF



HC quashes FIR against Mithun Chakraborty

KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court has quashed an FIR against well-known actor and BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty registered at a Kolkata police station. The FIR alleged that the dialogues he uttered at a public rally amounted to promoting enmity or feelings of hatred.

"Film stars try to entertain and attract voters by saying cinematic dialogues in political rallies. The case in hand is no exception," the order said.

Total education bandh in Punjab, Chandigarh

CHANDIGARH
Teachers in colleges and universities across Punjab and Chandigarh continued with their 'total education bandh' (shutdown) for the tenth day on Friday even as teachers at Panjab University in Chandigarh staged demonstration as a mark of their protest over the non-implementation of the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission of the University Grants Commission (UGC) by Punjab Government. Teachers have been abstaining from work as part of the protest since December 1.

No words are strong enough to condemn the heinous terrorist attack on our brave J&K police jawans

MANOJ SINHA

Lieutenant-Governor

mined to completely dismantle the terror ecosystem. J&K administration will extend all possible support to the martyrs' families," Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha said.

J&K regional parties, including the National Conference, the Peoples Democratic Party, the J&K Apni Party and the Peoples Conference, have condemned the attack.

"I condemn the militant attack on the police in Bandipore area. May Allah grant them jannah and may their families find strength at this time," NC vice-president Omar Abdullah said.

Free legal aid for families of COVID-19 victims

KOLKATA
A group of doctors and lawyers associated with the non-profit 'Covid Care Network' in West Bengal launched a legal aid service for family members of COVID-19 victims on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day here on Friday. The aid will be provided free of cost to people who lost family members in the pandemic. Two helpline numbers (7044041013 and 7044041014) have been provided for callers. Also, www.nationalcovidmemorial.in is a virtual epitaph to people who died.

DGCA to probe Spicejet MAX 8 air turnback

Pilots shut down an engine after glitch

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is investigating an incident involving Spicejet's Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, which was forced to turn back shortly after taking off from Mumbai as the pilots decided to shut down one of the engines after a glitch.

The airline resumed flying Boeing 737 MAX 8s last month, after it was grounded the world over in March 2019 following its involvement in two crashes that killed more than 300 people.

SpiceJet's Mumbai to Kolkata flight (SG-467) took off from the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on Thursday at 6.55 p.m. Shortly after, the pilots turned back, and declared "PAN PAN", or the international standard signal for urgency and the aircraft landed safely in Mumbai.

Europe surge

Stating that the WHO has highlighted that public health measures should be followed by all on a continual basis, besides vaccination, Mr. Agarwal said laxity in public health measures could be one of the reasons behind the surge in cases in Europe. The Omicron variant has been detected in 59 countries so far with 2,936 confirmed cases, he added.

Health surveillance

"In India surveillance, effective screening, monitoring of international travellers and health infrastructure upgradation is being done. States have been notified to increase surveillance and actively test passengers arriving from other countries," he said.

"Across the world 78,054 probable cases have also been detected and their genome sequencing is under way. Currently the United Kingdom, Denmark, and South Africa are the top three countries with highest Omicron cases."



Boeing 737 MAX 8s were grounded in 2019.

7.50 p.m. "The aircraft has been grounded," DGCA chief Arun Kumar told *The Hindu*. "We are investigating in consultation with OEMs [original equipment manufacturers]. Further action shall depend on the outcome of the investigation," he said. He explained that the air turnback was caused because the "No.2 engine oil filter bypass light got illuminated in cruise." A Spicejet spokesperson said the aircraft landed safely in Mumbai.

"No words are strong enough to condemn the heinous terrorist attack on our brave J&K police jawans. We are firmly resolved to avenge this barbaric action by the enemies of peace and deter-

Mamata rebukes Mahua Moitra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has issued a stern message to Krishnanagar MP Mahua Moitra on factionalism in the party, emphasising that there should be no difference of opinion and the party will decide on the candidates for the upcoming civic polls.

The incident occurred during an administrative meeting at Krishnanagar in Nadia district on Thursday,

where Ms. Moitra was seated on the stage along with Ms. Banerjee. "Mahua, let me give a clear message here. I do not need to see who is with or against whom. If someone does not like a person, he or she puts up some news on YouTube. This kind of politics can go for one day but not forever. And for only one person to be in the same place forever, that is also unacceptable," she said.

"No words are strong enough to condemn the heinous terrorist attack on our brave J&K police jawans. We are firmly resolved to avenge this barbaric action by the enemies of peace and deter-

Two policemen killed in J&K militant attack

The incident took place in Bandipora

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two police personnel were killed in a militant attack in Bandipora of north Kashmir on Friday afternoon.

"Two police personnel, senior constable Muhammad Sultan and constable Fayaz Ahmad received critical gunshot injuries in the attack. Both the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital, but died of their injuries," a police spokesman said.

The incident took place around 5.15 p.m. near the busy Gulshan Chowk area of Bandipora. "Investigation is in progress and officers continue to work to establish the circumstances, which led to this terror crime," police said.

"No words are strong enough to condemn the heinous terrorist attack on our brave J&K police jawans. We are firmly resolved to avenge this barbaric action by the enemies of peace and deter-

"I condemn the militant attack on the police in Bandipore area. May Allah grant them jannah and may their families find strength at this time," NC vice-president Omar Abdullah said.

Vaccinate all students above 18 years in TN'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma. Subramanian on Friday directed colleges to vaccinate all students over the age of 18 to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Speaking to mediapersons on the sidelines of a meeting with educational institutions and there are several difficulties in establishing an aviation connection with Afghanistan. The Sikhs and the Hindus were not harassed by the Taliban, barring a few incidents where Taliban guards entered the gurdwara in Kabul and a businessman being kidnapped.

"All students who are over 18 years have to be vaccinated.

The Greater Chennai Corporation will start special camps for students in colleges on Saturday," said Mr. Subramanian.

Pointing to the 11 clusters at educational institutions in the State in the past three months, Mr. Subramanian said the clusters had been caused because of Delta variant.

"No cases of Omicron have been reported as yet," he added. Clusters of COVID-19 cases among students have been reported on campuses of Anna University and Madras Medical College.

99 Afghan Sikhs and Hindus airlifted

This is India's first evacuation since August when Taliban took over Kabul

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

NEW DELHI



The passengers from Afghanistan carried Sri Guru Granth Sahib from gurdwaras. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

India chartered a Kab Air flight (RQ 4401), which flew them to Delhi.

The passengers carried two Sri Guru Granth Sahib that were worshipped in

gurdwaras in Afghanistan.

India evacuated several hundred Sikhs and Hindus of Afghanistan in August but the airlift operation could not be completed as the Talib

Opposition plans to take protest outside

Friday was the 10th day of stir by MPs who were suspended for alleged misconduct in last session

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Ten days into the protest against the Government for the "illegal" suspension of 12 Rajya Sabha members, a section of the Opposition feels there should be a parallel agitation outside Parliament to make an impact.

At the morning meeting of the Opposition floor leaders, according to the sources, CPI (M) MP Elamaram Kareem suggested two options: organise a day-long agitation at Jantar Mantar where leaders of all Opposition parties and the suspended MPs can congregate, and hold seminars highlighting how the suspension is "unconstitutional and illegal".

Congress's role

The growing sentiment is that the Congress is not pulling its weight to gather forces to raise the decibel levels both inside and outside Par-



Back at site: Suspended MPs staging a dharna at the Parliament complex on Friday. ■ PTI

liament on the issue. Many in the party and outside have complained of a lack of clarity in the party on the protest.

On Thursday, the protests were halted for the day in tribute to General Bipin Rawat, his wife and 11 others who were killed in a helicopter

crash at Coonoor in Tamil Nadu. There was a difference of opinion in Friday's meeting over whether the protest should be suspended for another day, since Gen. Rawat and others' funeral was under way.

The Congress, the Samajwadi Party and the AAP sug-

gested that protests both inside and outside the House must be suspended. But the Trinamool Congress, the Left parties and the Shiv Sena did not agree.

Inside the Rajya Sabha too, there was divergence in the Opposition strategy.

"Since the last rites of Gen. Rawat and others are being conducted this afternoon, out of profound respect, Opposition will refrain from its protests against the unconstitutional and illegal suspension of 12 Opposition MPs in the Rajya Sabha today as well," Congress Chief Whip Jairam Ramesh tweeted.

Inside the House, the Congress participated in the proceedings, while the Trinamool Congress staged a walkout. "On Thursday, we cooperated with the Government because of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's statement on the Coonoor

helicopter crash. But the Government availed the opportunity to run the House in complete ignorance of 12 of our colleagues who are sitting outside," Trinamool MP Sushmita Dev said.

The winter session is half-way through and with nine more sittings to go, fatigue has set in among the protesters too. On Friday, only a few lawmakers like Karti Chidambaram and Benny Behanan (both Congress), Sougata Roy, Sukhendu Shekhar Roy, Ms. Dev, Jawahar Sircar, Mousum Noor and Nadinul Haque (Trinamool Congress), Jaya Bachchan (Samajwadi Party), Sanjay Singh (AAP) and Manoj K. Jha (RJD) visited the dharna site.

The suspended MPs together visited the residence of General Rawat to pay their last respects. Mr. Kareem and Binoy Viswan (CPI) though did not accompany the others.

The suspended MPs together visited the residence of General Rawat to pay their last respects. Mr. Kareem and Binoy Viswan (CPI) though did not accompany the others.

Man beaten to death in Bihar alleging cattle theft

FIR filed against unknown persons, say police officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

The police have filed a first information report against unknown persons for lynching a man alleging cattle theft in Araria district of Bihar on Wednesday.

The incident came to light only on Friday.

According to the police, Mohammad Siddiqui, 52, was lynched at Bhawanipur village in the Fulkhala police station limits of Forbesganj sub-division of Araria on Wednesday.

but Mohammad Siddiqui was caught by the villagers while others managed to escape. Mohammad Siddiqui was beaten up with sticks and fists and he died of his injuries," Fulkhala police station inspector Nagina Kumar said.

He also said an FIR had been lodged against unknown persons.

 ... there were around 100 people gathered at the spot when the incident happened

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

"We are questioning villagers to identify attackers as there were around 100 people gathered at the spot when the incident had happened," the police officer said.

No arrest has been made yet in the case."

Regular thefts

"We keep getting complaints of cattle theft regularly in the area but not of mob lynching. Arrests will be made soon in the case," a senior police official of the district said.

In a similar incident last year, a 53-year-old man was beaten to death by a mob on suspicion of cattle theft at Si-marbani village in Araria district. The victim has been identified as a resident of the neighbouring district of Supaul.

CDS, wife cremated with full military honours

Several dignitaries pay last respects at his residence; remains taken in procession to crematorium

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Final look: Kritika and Tarini, daughters of General Bipin Rawat, during the cremation of their parents on Friday. ■ PTI

The nation on Friday bid farewell to its first Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat, as he was cremated with full military honours along with wife, Madhulika Rawat. Brigadier L.S. Lidder, Military Adviser to the CDS, killed in the Mi-17V5 helicopter crash in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu, was also cremated with full military honours.

Earlier in the day, Gen. Rawat's mortal remains were laid in state at his residence to enable people to pay homage. A total of 12 officers from the three Services of the rank of Brigadier and equivalent were on vigil duty over the mortal remains.

Several dignitaries, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, paid their last respects to Gen. Rawat and wife at their residence. "Gen. Rawat was the epitome of bravery and cour-

age. It was very unfortunate to lose him so early. His commitment towards the motherland will forever remain in our memories," Mr. Shah said on social media afterwards.

Mr. Gandhi tweeted, "I ex-

tend my condolences to the family of Gen. Bipin Rawat and his wife. This is an unprecedented tragedy and our thoughts are with their family in this difficult time. Heartfelt condolences also to all others who lost their lives. India stands united in this grief."

Military procession

Around 2 p.m., the remains were taken in a military procession from his residence to the Brar Square crematorium in Delhi Cantonment. It was accompanied by a huge wave of people chanting slogans.

Six officers, two each from the Army, Navy and the Air Force, of the rank of Lieutenant-General and

equivalent were the pall-bearers. In all, 99 personnel from the three Services and 33 members of the tri-service band formed the front escort, while 99 all ranks formed the rear escort. The gun carriage was provided by the Ceremonial Battery of the Army's 2233 Field Regiment.

Several dignitaries paid their last respects at the crematorium by laying wreaths, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Ambassadors, in addition to family members.

At the funeral, a total of 800 Service personnel were in attendance and Gen. Rawat was accorded a 17 gun salute, as per laid down protocols.

'We must give him a smiling send-off'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI



Mortal remains of Brig. L.S. Lidder at Brar Square on Friday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

with it," she said.

He was a very good father, she said and their daughter would really miss him. She said he was larger than life and one can judge that by the number of people who came to the cremation ground. He was friendly and used to spread love.

"Probably, that is why people are mourning my loss. But we must give him a good farewell and a smiling send-off," she said.

More Congress leaders shift to Trinamool in Meghalaya

11 district council members follow eight MLAs of Garo Hills

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI



The western half of Meghalaya comprising five Garo Hills districts has become "Congress-free". The damage has been done by the Trinamool Congress, and not the BJP that has coined the slogan.

The Garo Hills are dominated by the Garos, one of the three matrilineal communities of Meghalaya.

On Thursday evening, 11 members of the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) quit the Congress to follow all the eight MLAs of the region to the Trinamool.

The eight MLAs, including former Chief Minister Mukul M. Sangma, were among 12 of Meghalaya's 17 Congress legislators to switch over to

part of Assam, does not have an elected Congress representative. In the last GHADC election held in April, the Congress emerged as the single largest party by winning 12 of the 30 seats.

One of them defected to the regional United Democratic Party to contest the October 30 by-election.

Two days ago, Mr. Sangma made an offer to the remaining five Congress MLAs to join the Trinamool. "Understand the ground reality and take a conscious decision. If you mean business and want to serve your people, you should jump the Congress ship," he said. The trouble for the Congress in Meghalaya began two months ago when Shillong MP Vincent H. Pala was appointed party State chief.

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS AUCTION WING, MARKETING DEPARTMENT, TIRUPATI

TTD is conducting e-auction for sale of following varieties of HUMAN HAIR vide Auction ID No.21989 through 'Konugolu' Portal of Government of Andhra Pradesh on 23.12.2021.
NEW VARIETIES OF HUMAN HAIR:

1st Variety ("27" & Above) Category 'A': 700 Kgs, Category 'B': 900 Kgs, 2nd Variety ("19" to "26") Category 'A': 2,500 Kgs, Category 'B': 4,300 Kgs, 3rd Variety ("10" to "18") Category 'A': 1,100 Kgs, Category 'B': 2,100 Kgs, & Category 'C': 500 Kgs, 4th Variety ("5" to "9"): 2700 Kgs, 5th Variety ("Below 5") : 14000 Kgs.

Note:Category 'A' : True / Full Black Hair, Category 'B': Grey / Partial Grey / Dyed Hair, Category 'C': Loose / Non-Remy

The above quantities of Human hair are tentative and the actual quantities will be updated one day before the e-auction .

For further details visit <https://konugolu.ap.gov.in> or contact 0/0 General Manager (Auctions), TTD on 0872-2264429, email: gma@tnavttd.gov.in

Roc. No.PRA/13937/Adv.No.253/PRO/2021 DT:10.12.2021 EXECUTIVE OFFICER

कार्यालय अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियन्ता जन स्वास्थ्य अधिकारीको विभाग क्षेत्र उदयपुर

दूरध्वा 0294-2481538 ई-मेल ace.uda.phed@rajasthan.gov.in

क्रमांक-अ.मा.उ.अ/व्य.अ/क्षेत्र क्रमांक-001 DT:20/12/2021-30/01/2022-31/02/2022-30/03/2022

दिनांक: 02/12/2021

ई-निविदा सूचना संख्या 135 - 142/2021-22

जन स्वास्थ्य अधिकारीको विभाग द्वारा उदयपुर के आधें "जल संवर्धन प्रयोग" जिता उदयपुर के ग्रामीण खाड़ी उदयपुर एवं खाड़ी ताल मानसाणी के कार्यालय संस्थान में जलाशय बिल्डिंग, इ-निविदा संख्या 135-142/2021-22 में इकूल या प्रिया विभाग से दिनांक 14.12.2021 साल 06.00 बजे अप्रैल आधारीका जाती है एवं अन्तिम तारीख 23.12.2021 साल 06.00 बजे अप्रैल आधारीका जाती है। कार्यालय अनुसारित लागत 2352.48 लागत है। विभाग से संबंधित समस्त जानकारी प्रोटोकॉल पोर्टल <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> एवं <http://sppr.raj.nic.in> पर देखा जा सकता है।

यूट्यूब चैनल: कार्यालय अधिकारीको विभाग संख्या 135 स्वास्थ्य अधिकारीको विभाग संख्या 135 कार्यालय अधिकारीको विभाग संख्या 135 स्वास्थ्य अधिकारीको विभाग संख्या 135

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DIPR/C/12449/2021

PARADIP PORT TRUST e-TENDER CALL NOTICE

No.EM/OPC/GW-18/18/Pt-I/943, Date:08.12.2021

e-TCN No.EM/OPC/HOP-4/2021

Name of the work "Design,

Manufacture, Supply, Erection &

Commissioning of 3200TPH

Capacity Ship Loader at IOB"

Estimated Cost : ₹30,12,50,000/-

Last Date & Time of submission of Bid

upto : 1800 Hrs. on DT:30.12.2021.

Refer our website : <http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> for details.

Executive Engineer (Mech)

Iron Ore Handling Plant

PPT/PR/129/2021-22, DT:10.12.2021

MISSING

Missing seen in this Photo, Ernakulam Railway Police Station Crime 92/2021 U/s 57 of KP Act, DIBENDRA YONGHANG, belongs to Nepal Native. He is wearing a dark blue T-Shirt & blue jeans when seen last. 5 feet 4 inch height and bald head. Only Nepali language is spoken. Any one having any information or clue about this person kindly inform the following numbers:

Police Sub Inspector
Railway Police Station, Ernakulam. Ph : 9497981118, 0484-2376359. Email: sikochirlys.pol@kerala.gov.in

2064/F/2/2021/I&PRD

Student mixes pesticide in drinking water

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

A student in Odisha mixed pesticide in drinking water and offered it to classmates so that his school could remain shut for some time.

Nineteen students fell sick after drinking the water and are under observation. The student had taken admission to Standard 11 in the Kamgaon Higher Secondary School in Baragarh district. He went to his village on December 4 and returned on December 6. According to school authorities, the boy was eager to return to his village.

"He was apparently elated by fake news circulated on social media that COVID-19 lockdown may return by December 19. When it was clarified that the news was fake, he became depressed," said Premananda Palei, principal of the school. Mr. Palei said the boy kept telling his friends that he would get the school closed. On December 8, the boy mixed pesticide in a bottle of water and persuaded his hostel mates to drink it.

Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said, "To ensure continuous nutritional support to beneficiaries, anganwadi workers and helpers distributed supplementary nutrition at the doorstep of beneficiaries once in 15 days during COVID-19 as all anganwadi centres across the country were closed to limit the impact of the pandemic."

The Minister added that anganwadi workers and helpers also assisted the local administration in community surveillance, creating awareness as well as doing other work assigned to them from time to time.

Malik apologises to HC on Wankhede comment

He said he would abide by injunction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Minister Nana Malik tendered an "unconditional apology" to the Bombay High Court on Friday for "wilfully breaching" his undertaking given to court that he would not make statements against Dhyandev Wankhede, father of Narcotics Control Bureau zonal director Sameer Wankhede, and his family.

It was not his intention to dishonour the court by breaching his own undertaking, Mr. Malik said in the three-page affidavit.

In LS, Minister lists steps for supplementary child nutrition

Rapid surveys could have been undertaken and data made public, says expert

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

The Government on Friday avoided a direct response to a question whether there was a rise in malnutrition among children had increased during COVID-19.

In the Lok Sabha, Congress member Deepak Bajaj asked whether malnutrition among children had increased during the pandemic period.

Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said, "To ensure continuous nutritional support to beneficiaries, anganwadi workers and helpers distributed supplementary nutrition at the doorstep of beneficiaries once in 15 days during COVID-19 as all anganwadi centres across the country were closed to limit the impact of the pandemic."

The Minister added that anganwadi workers and helpers also assisted the local administration in community surveillance, creating awareness as well as doing other work assigned to them from time to time.



Hunger pangs: Anganwadis that provide children with cooked meals resumed services only a few months ago. ■ K. PICHUMANI

Studies have shown that the pandemic could lead to an increase in malnutrition due to loss of livelihood, disruption in food and health services.

A paper published in July 2021 in British journal *Nature* and authored by Saskia Osendorp of the Micronutrient Forum stated that based on predicted declines in gross national income (GNI) in 118 countries included in the study, in 2022 compared to 2019 the number of children under five years with wasting could increase

by an additional 9.3 million; an estimated 2.6 million additional children were likely to be stunted; and there would be roughly 1,68,000 additional deaths of children under five years.

"It is really important that we have data on what has been going on with children and families in what has been a challenging time. There are methods for collecting rapid data during emergencies, but there was no surveillance. I would have liked to see rapid surveys in the context of CO-

VID-19 and that data made public," says Purnima Menon, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute.

Family Health Survey

Though the National Family Health Survey-5, which was made public recently, measures malnutrition indicators, researchers argue that there are difficulties in studying the impact of COVID-19.

"There are challenges in understanding NFHS-5 data.

We have to compare the data district by district to understand the changes in relation to what was happening during COVID-19 in those districts. Moreover, we need to account for seasonality in data collection since that could also differ between survey rounds for the same geographic areas. There can be vast differences if data are recorded during the monsoon season when there can be paucity of available food versus post-harvest season when diets are relatively better," says Dr. Menon.

'80% of funds for Beti Bachao was spent on media campaigns'

Parliamentary committee says Govt. must revise strategy

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

The Government spent 80% of the funds under the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' (BBBP) scheme on media campaigns and must now revisit this strategy and invest in measurable outcomes in health and education for girls, the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women has noted in its report tabled in the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

"The Committee finds that out of a total of ₹446.72 crore released during the period 2016-2019, a whopping 78.91% was spent only on media advocacy. Over the last six years, through focussed advocacy BBBP has been able to capture the attention of political leadership and national consciousness towards valuing the girl child. Now, it is time to focus on other verticals by making ample financial provisions to help achieve measurable outcomes related to education and health envisaged under the scheme," it said.



One of the aims of the campaign is to end sex-selective abortion.

The committee is chaired by Heena Vijaykumar Gavit and the report is titled "Empowerment of women through education with special reference to Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao."

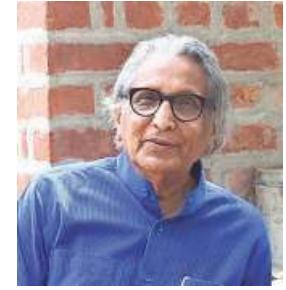
The scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2015 with the aim to address sex-selective abortion and the declining child sex ratio, which was at 918 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2011. The programme is being implemented across 405 districts.

The total utilisation under the scheme was also poor – the committee found that since the inception of BBBP in 2014-15 till 2019-20,

the total budgetary allocation under the scheme was ₹848 crore, excluding the COVID-19-stricken financial year of 2020-21. During this period, ₹622.48 crore was released to the States but only 25.13% of the funds, i.e. ₹156.46 crore, had been spent.

The committee noted that the massive spend on advertisements was despite the clearly laid-down formula for utilisation of funds – ₹50 lakh a year is earmarked a district for utilisation under six different components. Of this, 16% is for inter-sectoral consultation or capacity-building, 50% for innovation or awareness generation activities, 6% for monitoring and evaluation, 10% for sectoral interventions in health, 10% for sectoral interventions in education and 8% as flexi funds.

Advocacy and media campaigns include television publicity, outdoor and print media, SMS campaigns, radio spots and community engagement through exhibition vans.



Balkrishna Doshi wins top honour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

Architect Balkrishna Doshi will receive the Royal Gold Medal, 2022, one of the world's highest honours for architecture, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) announced.

RIBA said on Thursday that with a 70-year career and over 100 built projects, 94-year-old Mr. Doshi has influenced the direction of architecture in India and its adjacent regions through both his practice and his teaching.

Given in recognition of a lifetime's work, the Royal Gold Medal is approved personally by Queen Elizabeth II and is given to a person or group of people who have had a significant influence on the advancement of architecture.

"I am pleasantly surprised and deeply humbled to receive the Royal Gold Medal from the Queen of England. What a great honour," Mr. Doshi said, on hearing the news.

COVID-19 cases could rise next year: expert

The nature of Omicron mutations suggests increased efficiency of infection and evasion of antibodies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Coronavirus cases in India are expected to rise by early next year following the experience of Israel and the United Kingdom (U.K.) with the Omicron variant, an expert said at an online discussion on Friday organised by the Ashoka University, Sonepat, Haryana.

India is currently adding a little under 10,000 cases a day and has about 88,000 active cases.

Omicron cases in the U.K. could exceed 1 million by the end of the month on the current trajectory, U.K. Health

Secretary Sajid Javid said this week in a statement delivered to the House of Commons.

The online discussion was between Shahid Jameel, Director, Trivedi School of Biosciences, Ashoka University and Gautam Menon, Professor of Physics and Biology, Ashoka University.

"Before the emergence of the troubling variant of SARS-CoV-2 named Omicron, it was expected that people in India may be able to return to a life similar to pre-pandemic days by early next year, but this possibility now seems distant," said Dr.

Jameel. "The nature of Omicron mutations suggests increased efficiency of infection, transmission and evasion of antibodies and interferon, an early innate antiviral response." Early lab results from South Africa and Pfizer show a 40-fold and 25-fold drop in virus neutralisation ability of the Pfizer vaccine.

According to various studies, booster shots have shown to increase the number of antibodies and cut reinfection rates. Given these results, it is now time that India devises policies on booster shots and vaccination for children, Dr. Jameel added. "The news of emergence of the new Omicron variant from South Africa is worrying. We will know more in the coming weeks,

but what we know so far is that this variant spreads more efficiently and can evade immunity even from an earlier infection of COVID-19 and vaccination.

"There are some positive indications, such as the severity of the illness being possibly less than that caused by Delta variant, but this requires confirmation. In India, it is essential for us to now step up the vaccination programme to vaccinate around 15% of India's totally unvaccinated adults and also administer the second dose to the remaining population," Dr. Jameel said.

Aryan seeks relaxation in conditions of bail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Aryan Khan, son of actor Shah Rukh Khan, moved the Bombay High Court seeking minor changes in the bail conditions imposed on him by the court in the drug racket case against him.

On October 29, a Single Bench of Justice Nitin Sambale granted bail to Mr. Khan, 23, and two others and directed that they be released from the Arthur Road Jail after executing a cash bond of ₹1 lakh with one or more sureties.

Mr. Khan sought a relaxation in the conditions requiring him to appear at the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Mumbai office every Friday between 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

In the application filed on Thursday, Mr. Khan said the cruise ship drug heist case was now being probed by a special investigation team based in Delhi. He also urged the court that there should be police presence when he attended the NCB office because of the heavy media presence there.

Only 27% of funds allotted for Ladakh used: panel

Lack of trained labour cited for low expenditure

VIJAITA SINGH

NEW DELHI

A year after Ladakh was turned into a Union Territory, the Centre-run administration could spend only 27% of its allocated budget in the fiscal year 2020-21, a report by a parliamentary panel has said.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) attributed the "less expenditure" to short working seasons, unavailability of technical field staff,

lack of labour and contractors and COVID-19.

The report tabled in the Rajya Sabha on Friday, comes at a time when there is growing discontent in Ladakh as influential civil society groups have revived their demand to restore the newly created Union Territory's Statehood. A complete shutdown of Ladakh has been announced on December 13.

The Home Ministry informed the Parliamentary Committee on Home Affairs that it has approached the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to depute offic-

ers and engineers to Ladakh for "efficiency and effectiveness in execution of the projects." The total budget for Ladakh in fiscal 2020-21 was ₹5,958 crore.

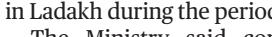
Burgeoning vacancies

The two powerful civil society groups – the People's Movement for Sixth Schedule for Ladakh, a group comprising all political parties and the influential Buddhist Association, and the Kargil Democratic Alliance

works was affected. As a result of this, the responses to the tenders were also affected," the MHA said. It said that not enough technical field staff such as draftsmen, junior engineers with various State and Central executing agencies were posted in Ladakh during the period.

The Ministry said construction agencies also took time to set up their offices in Ladakh. The panel asked the MHA to increase sanctioning powers delegated to the engineering cadre and financial power of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC).

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13424

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China claims it's the 'largest democracy'

Attacking the U.S., the Foreign Ministry says the self-styled beacon of democracy has 'evident malaise'

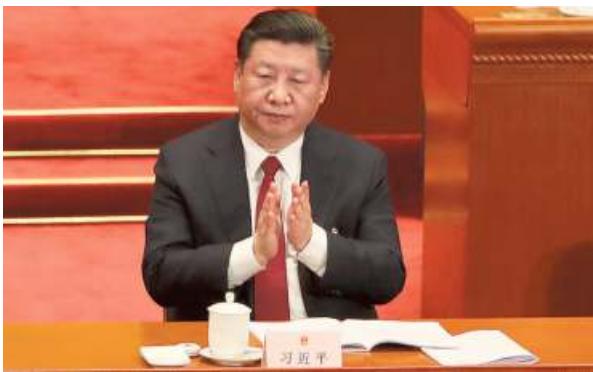
ANANTH KRISHNAN

HONG KONG

As U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday hosted world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the second day of a democracy summit, China's government capped a week-long campaign criticising liberal democratic systems by attacking America's "democratic malaise".

China's Foreign Ministry on Friday said democracy was "a common value of humanity instead of a geostrategic tool" and the summit this week was aimed at "defending U.S. hegemony, which is out-and-out anti-democratic".

"The self-styled 'beacon of democracy,'" spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, "has evident democratic malaise and huge democratic deficits." In the lead-up to the summit, China's government and official media launched a two-pronged campaign: showcasing the strengths of China's political system while pointing out the deficiencies of democratic sys-



Power point: A file photo of Xi Jinping during a session of China's National People's Congress in Beijing. ■ AP

mocracy is a problematic endeavour – it risks creating cultural conflict, political volatility or even social turmoil and causing great pain to its people," the paper said.

To make that case, China's official media routinely point to India's political system being "chaotic" or "inefficient" to justify why large developing countries are better off following China's authoritarian model. This week, official English-language broadcaster China Global Television Network published commentary headlined "Women's status in China and India: Who has human rights and democracy?", authored by a foreign scholar at Beijing's Renmin University.

"Biden's summit may try to argue that India's system embodies democracy and human rights, and China's does not. But that purely verbal claim will not alter the fact that the life and real rights of a Chinese woman are far superior to those of an Indian woman," the commentary said, adding that "it is only necessary to look at

the contrast in the lives of one-fifth of humanity, Chinese and Indian women, to see that China has delivered 'the people rule' on a gigantic scale and infinitely more than the entirely unreal criteria chosen by Biden."

The white paper, titled "Democracy That Works" and published by China's State Council or Cabinet, said "CPC leadership is the fundamental guarantee" for what it called "whole-process people's democracy," adding that "China did not duplicate Western models of democracy, but created its own." "The best way to evaluate whether a country's political system is democratic and efficient," the paper concluded, "is to observe whether the succession of its leaders is orderly and in line with the law", a reference that left some observers perplexed, considering that Xi Jinping, in 2018, removed term limits, a key part of the system of succession that had enabled, in the past three decades, three smooth transfers of power.

ELSEWHERE



U.S. court rejects bid to keep riot records secret

WASHINGTON
A U.S. federal appeals court on Thursday rejected former President Donald Trump's attempt to prevent the release of White House records relating to the January 6 attack on the Capitol. The appeals court agreed with a lower court ruling that President Joe Biden could waive executive privilege on the records, so that they could be handed over to a Congressional panel investigating the violence by Mr. Trump's supporters on the fateful day.

'Boosters give 70-75% protection from Omicron'

LONDON
Booster COVID-19 vaccine shots give an estimated 70% to 75% protection against mild disease from the Omicron variant, the U.K. Health Security Agency said on Friday, citing initial findings from a real-world study. In an analysis of 581 people with confirmed Omicron, two doses of AstraZeneca and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines provided much lower levels of protection against symptomatic infection compared to what they provide against Delta. ■ REUTERS

After Nicaragua snub, U.S. urges nations to expand Taiwan ties

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. State Department called on "all countries that value democratic institutions" to "expand engagement with Taiwan" in a statement on Thursday after Nicaragua announced it was cutting diplomatic relations with the island in favour of China.

The statement said the move by President Daniel Ortega "cannot reflect the will of the Nicaraguan people" due to the Central American country's recent presidential election being a "sham."

This deprives Nicaragua's people of a steadfast partner in its democratic and economic growth," the department's statement said.

Nicaragua's diplomatic switch from Taiwan to China leaves the island with just 14 diplomatic allies but comes as Taipei strengthens ties with multiple unofficial Western friends, including the U.S.

At the same time, the U.S. has slammed Nicaragua's November elections that saw long-time leader Ortega re-elected as illegitimate, slapping sanctions on the federal public prosecutor's office and nine officials in response.

In the months ahead of the November 7 election, Nicaraguan authorities detained nearly 40 Opposition figures, including seven would-be presidential challengers, virtually assuring victory for Mr. Ortega.

Seven years after the military cracked down on the movement, Islamabad is trying to quell a TTP comeback after the victory of the hardline Islamists across the border.

In a statement, the TTP accused security forces of killing some of its fighters and violating a one-month truce that was due to end in early December. "It is not possible to extend the ceasefire in such circumstances," a spokesman for the TTP said.

"Now the military should decide who is not abiding by the agreement."

A senior TTP commander based in Afghanistan, a government official and a security official had earlier separately told AFP that both sides had agreed to extend the ceasefire.

Up to 100 prisoners had been released as part of the negotiations.

Govt. surprised
"We were surprised with the TTP statement," the government official said on Friday from Peshawar. "Our mem-

bers of the negotiating team were assured about the extension on the ceasefire."

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan announced in October that the government was in talks with the TTP for the first time since 2014, facilitated by the Afghan Taliban, who had seized power in Afghanistan.

The talks have angered many within Pakistan, who remember the brutal attacks which killed around 70,000 people, according to successive governments.

Senate hearing for Garcetti on Tuesday

Los Angeles Mayor was nominated as Ambassador to India five months ago

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN

Five months after he was nominated to the post of U.S. Ambassador to India, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti will get a confirmation hearing with the U.S. Senate. Mr. Garcetti will appear before the Senate Foreign Relations committee on Tuesday, as per the Senate calendar.

blican Senators, notably Ted Cruz, as leverage, to get Mr. Biden to impose sanctions with regard to the Russia-Europe Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

Mr. Garcetti, who has been Mayor of Los Angeles since 2013, is a former intelligence officer from the U.S. Navy. His term as Mayor ends in December 2022.

Legal trouble
As part of the confirmation process, the office of the chairman (Democrat) of the



Senate committee, Bob Menendez, is looking into a lawsuit against Mr. Garcetti's former deputy, Rick Jacobs, according to *Los Angeles*

Times. Mr. Garcetti's former bodyguard, Matthew Garza, has said in a lawsuit that he was harassed by Mr. Jacobs and that Mr. Garcetti, who was aware of some of the behaviour, did not stop it. Mr. Garcetti has denied the allegations.

President of the University of Pennsylvania, Amy Gutmann and diplomat Donald Blome, nominees for ambassadorships to Germany and Pakistan respectively, will also appear before the Senate committee on Tuesday.

Miscreants attacked a rural village in northern Nigeria, killing 16 worshippers at a mosque and kidnapping others, said a local official.

The assault on Ba're village in the Masheda area of Niger State lasted for hours on Thursday, local government chairman Alhassan Isah Mazakuka said.

Nigerian police confirmed the incident but said only nine residents were killed. The police have in the past been accused of downplaying casualty figures in such attacks.

Those people (the gunmen) are dangerous," he said. "They killed 16 and kidnapped many of our people. We don't even know the number they kidnapped because they are uncountable."

Nigerian police confirmed the incident but said only nine residents were killed. The police have in the past been accused of downplaying casualty figures in such attacks.

Dozens of the assailants arrived on motorcycles and rampaged through the village, killing people praying

55 dead after truck smuggling migrants crashes in Mexico

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ
Rescue workers rushing to a highway accident in southern Mexico found a horrific scene of death and injury after a truck jammed with as many as 200 migrants crashed into the base of a steel pedestrian bridge, killing 55 and injuring dozens.

The migrants inside the cargo trailer were tossed and crushed in a pile of both the living and the dead.

In addition to the 55 killed

Thursday evening, at least 52 were injured. It was one of the deadliest days for migrants in Mexico since the 2010 massacre of 72 people by the Zetas drug cartel in the northern State of Tamaulipas.

Rescuers removed the dead from the pile, while the living scrambled to get out of the twisted debris of the collapsed trailer.

While the Mexican government is trying to appease the U.S. by stopping

caravans of walking migrants and allowing the reinstatement of the "Remain in Mexico" policy, it hasn't been able to stop the flood of migrants stuffed into freight trucks operated by smugglers who charge thousands of dollars to take them to the U.S. border.

Rescue workers who first arrived said that even more migrants had been aboard the truck when it crashed and had fled for fear of being detained by officials.

16 worshippers killed in attack on Nigeria mosque

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miscreants attacked a rural village in northern Nigeria, killing 16 worshippers at a mosque and kidnapping others, said a local official.

The assault on Ba're village in the Masheda area of Niger State lasted for hours on Thursday, local government chairman Alhassan Isah Mazakuka said.

Nigerian police confirmed the incident but said only nine residents were killed. The police have in the past been accused of downplaying casualty figures in such attacks.

Those people (the gunmen) are dangerous," he said. "They killed 16 and kidnapped many of our people. We don't even know the number they kidnapped because they are uncountable."

Nigerian police confirmed the incident but said only nine residents were killed. The police have in the past been accused of downplaying casualty figures in such attacks.

Dozens of the assailants arrived on motorcycles and rampaged through the village, killing people praying

at the mosque and looting, he said.

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Nobel Peace Prize winners call for journalist protections

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OSLO
The two journalists who shared this year's Nobel Peace Prize received their awards on Friday in Oslo, with both warning that the world needs independent journalism to counter authoritarian governments.

Maria Ressa of the Philippines and fellow laureate Dmitry Muratov of Russia gave their Nobel lectures at Oslo City Hall. They were chosen for the award for their separate fights for freedom of expression in countries where reporters have faced persistent attacks, harassment and killings.

"Yes, we growl and bite. Yes, we have sharp teeth and strong grip," Mr. Muratov said of journalists. "But we are the prerequisite for progress. We are the antidote against tyranny."

Maria Ressa, 58, co-founded Rappler, a news website crit-

ical of the Philippine government, in 2012. Mr. Muratov, 59, was one of the founders in 1993 of Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*.

Ms. Ressa offered a bleak view of the journalism industry, saying "the era of competition for news is dead." "We need to help independent journalism survive, first by giving greater protection to journalists and standing up against states which target journalists," she said.

Assange's legal team to appeal court decision, says fiancée

Case to be sent to Home Secretary Priti Patel for a final call

REUTERS

LONDON

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's legal team would appeal a British appellate court's decision to allow his extradition to the U.S., his fiancée, Stella Moris said.

"How can it be fair, how can it be right, how can it be possible, to extradite Julian to the very country which plotted to kill him?" she said. "We will appeal this decision at the earliest possible moment."



Stella Moris

"journalism is not a crime".

Judge Timothy Holroyde

said the case must now be remitted to Westminster Magistrates' Court with the direction judges send it to Home Secretary Priti Patel to decide whether or not Mr. Assange should be extradited.

Mr. Assange, who denies any wrongdoing, started out as a teenage hacker with the nickname Menda - a classical Latin word for "liar" - but a few decades later would expose some of the U.S.'s darkest secrets.

WikiLeaks came to prominence when it published a U.S. military video in 2010 showing a 2007 attack by Apache helicopters in Baghdad that killed a dozen people, including two Reuters news staff.

It then released thousands of secret classified files and diplomatic cables that laid bare often highly critical U.S. appraisals of world leaders from Russian President Vladimir Putin to members of the Saudi royal family.

Mr. Assange jumped bail and was offered refuge in 2012 by Ecuador's then-President Rafael Correa. He spent seven years holed up at the Embassy in London while British police spent millions of dollars watching for any sign that he would emerge.

After relations with Ecuador soured, Mr. Assange, with white hair and a long beard, was dragged out by British police.

Pakistan Taliban call off ceasefire

TPP accuses security forces of killing its fighters and violating agreed terms

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PESHAWAR

The Pakistani Taliban has called off a ceasefire mediated with the help of the Afghan Taliban, accusing the government of violating the terms of the agreed truce.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) – a separate movement that shares a common history with Afghanistan's new leaders – plunged the country into a period of horrific violence since 2007.

Seven years after the military cracked down on the

movement, Islamabad is trying to quell a TTP comeback after the victory of the hardline Islamists across the border.

In a statement, the TTP accused security forces of killing some of its fighters and violating a one-month truce that was due to end in early December. "It is not possible to extend the ceasefire in such circumstances," a spokesman for the TTP said.

Up to 100 prisoners had been released as part of the negotiations.

abiding by the agreement."

A senior TTP commander based in Afghanistan, a government official and a security official had earlier separately told AFP that both sides had agreed to extend the ceasefire.

Up to 100 prisoners had been released as part of the negotiations.

Govt. surprised
"We were surprised with the TTP statement," the government official said on Friday from Peshawar. "Our mem-

bers of the negotiating team were assured about the extension on the ceasefire."

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan announced in October that the government was in talks with the TTP for the first time since 2014, facilitated by the Afghan Taliban, who had seized power in Afghanistan.

The talks have angered many within Pakistan, who remember the brutal attacks which killed around 70,000 people, according to successive governments.

U.S. Supreme Court allows challenge to abortion ban

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday allowed abortion providers to pursue legal challenges to a near-total ban on abortions in Texas, but let the controversial law remain in effect for now.

Eight of the nine justices

on the conservative-leaning court agreed that lawsuits filed by

MARKET WATCH

	10-12-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	58,787	-0.03
US Dollar	75.78	-0.24
Gold	47,013	-0.30
Brent oil	74.56	-0.92

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	767.70	+2.05
Asian Paints	3283.15	104.45
Axisc Bank	688.05	-5.90
Bajaj Auto	3344.75	3.75
Bajaj Finserv	17711.10	114.50
Bajaj Finance	7452.50	12.20
Bharti Airtel	710.70	-3.25
BPLC	396.95	3.20
Britannia Ind	3632.45	8.55
Cipla	893.90	-0.60
Coal India	151.30	-1.35
Divis Lab	4506.45	-70.50
Dr Reddys Lab	4593.30	-0.95
Eicher Motors	2527.65	-15.30
Grasim Ind	1749.20	26.45
HCL Tech	1162.20	-6.35
HDPC	2808.75	-33.30
HDPC Bank	1522.55	-4.30
HDPC Life	684.75	1.60
Hero MotoCorp	2526.85	5.90
Hindustan	455.10	-0.55
Hind Unilever	2332.80	-6.95
ICICI Bank	758.00	3.00
IndusInd Bank	944.75	-1.65
Infosys	1759.25	-4.20
Indian Oil Corp	120.05	0.35
ITC	236.10	0.70
JSW Steel	679.55	5.45
Kotak Bank	1896.75	-19.60
L&T	1873.40	-6.40
M&M	859.70	8.60
Maruti Suzuki	7425.65	3.90
Nestle India Ltd.	19270.25	-14.50
NTPC	126.15	0.10
ONGC	147.55	0.20
PowerGrid Corp	202.65	-0.55
Reliance Ind	2458.95	2.50
SBI Life	1175.60	14.25
State Bank	494.70	6.05
Shree Ram	26406.45	-10.05
Sun Pharma	761.35	1.60
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	769.65	-7.85
Tata Motors	494.45	0.50
Tata Steel	1180.00	3.15
TCS	3636.80	35.05
Tech Mahindra	1602.65	-8.55
Titan	2339.35	-33.80
UltraTech Cement	7440.45	6.60
UPL	737.45	-4.75
Wipro	638.25	-4.95

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 10

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.57	75.89
Euro	85.18	85.55
British Pound	99.75	100.18
Japanese Yen (100)	66.46	66.75
Chinese Yuan	11.86	11.92
Swiss Franc	81.75	82.10
Singapore Dollar	55.31	55.55
Canadian Dollar	59.40	59.66
Malaysian Ringgit	17.91	18.00
Australian Dollar	54.01	54.29

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF**Google defers Play billing deadline to Oct.**

NEW DELHI Google on Friday said it is deferring the deadline for developers in India to integrate with its Play billing system to October next year from March 2022. The extension had been made in view of the changes to India's recurring digital payments norms, it said. In the past, developers had objected to the mandatory use of Google's billing system. PTI

RBI allows LIC to raise IndusInd stake to 10%

NEW DELHI IndusInd Bank on Friday said the RBI had given approval to Life Insurance Corporation to increase stake in the bank to 9.99%. The state-run insurer currently holds 4.95% of the total issued and paid-up capital of the bank. The approval is valid for a period of one year i.e., up to December 8, 2022, the bank said. IndusInd Bank shares dipped 0.23% to ₹944.15 on the BSE. PTI

Thinking of quitting jobs, says Tesla's Musk

Tesla Inc Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk said he was 'thinking' of leaving his job and becoming an influencer. 'Thinking of quitting my job & becoming an influencer full-time wdyt,' Mr. Musk said in a tweet on Thursday, without elaborating. It was not immediately clear if Mr. Musk, a prolific user of the social media platform, was being serious about quitting his roles. REUTERS

TVS unveils Apache, NTORQ in Philippines

CHENNAI TVS Motor company on Friday announced the unveiling of its Apache RR 310 and 125 cc scooter TVS NTORQ in the Philippines market. "It gives us utmost pleasure to introduce TVS Apache RR310 and TVS NTORQ 125 with best-in-class features and RT-Fi technology in the Philippines," said J. Thangarajan, president director, Indonesia. PTI

Fuel demand declined 11.4% in November after festival boost

'Demand outlook upbeat going into 2022 on easing COVID impact, reopening'

REUTERS

Hitting the brakes: Petrol sales dipped 0.7% year-on-year to 2.65 mn tonnes, but were 4.4% higher from Nov. 2019. *AFP

India's fuel consumption fell in November after scaling a seven-month peak in the preceding month, government data showed, as demand eased in the world's third-biggest oil consumer after the festival season.

Fuel consumption, a proxy for oil demand, totalled 17.13 million tonnes, down 4% from October and was 11.4% lower than a year earlier, data from the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell showed.

Fuel demand rose in October to a seven-month peak, while gasoline sales surged to an all-time high, as festivals boosted mobility

and economic activity. "Drop-off in demand points to seasonal factors," said Ed Moya, senior market analyst at brokerage OANDA.

"However, fuel demand outlook remains upbeat go-

ing into 2022 as COVID is not really impacting the country and [there is] good growth outlook on continued reopening momentum."

India's festival season ended in early November.

Growth not durable, will peak in H1 2022: Nomura

'High inflation, CAD to come into play'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**MUMBAI**

The current growth cycle being witnessed in the country is not durable and will peak by the first half of 2022, Japanese brokerage Nomura said on Friday.

Higher inflation and wider current account deficit – [the] side effects of loose policies adopted to push growth during the pandemic – will come into play, forcing RBI to act even as the 'scarring effects cast doubt on growth's durability', it said in its yearly outlook.

It said recovery had been uneven, hurting consumption of lower-income households, and a sustained capital expenditure upcycle was also not in sight. "With

mixed growth, high inflation and wider twin deficits, we expect India's risk premium to rise and the RBI to catch up as it falls behind the curve," its analysts said.

"In our base case, momentum starts to moderate in H2 [of 2022], reflecting cyclical factors and the impact of scarring effects, which have lowered the potential growth rate," it said.

Star Health recovers after muted debut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**NEW DELHI**

U.S. consumer prices post biggest gain in 39 years

Nov. CPI jumps 6.8% year-on-year

REUTERS

said Paul Ashworth, chief economist at Capital Economics in Toronto.

The consumer price index rose 0.8% last month after surging 0.9% in October. The broad-based increase was led by gasoline prices, which rose 6.1%.

Food prices rose 0.7%.

In the 12 months through November, the CPI accelerated 6.8%. That was the biggest year-on-year increase since June 1982 and followed a 6.2% advance in the preceding month.

"The biggest problem for the Fed is the mounting evidence of a strong pick-up in cyclical price pressures,"

Montra brand to pioneer TI Cycles' EV business

Firm to unveil e-autos, cargo vehicles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**CHENNAI**

TI Cycles of India, part of the diversified conglomerate Murugappa Group, has firmed up plans in the electric mobility space with its popular brand 'Montra' to lead the firm's electric vehicle business, the company said on Friday.

The city-based company said, as a first step it would unveil – under the Montra brand – electric auto rickshaws and 3W electric cargo vehicles later. The company said it would enter electric vehicle business in three segments – last-mile delivery and personal mobility under the Montra brand. TI Cycles said under its 'last-mile' commute segment, TI Cy-

cles' first venture would be three-wheeler electric autos, expected to be unveiled by first quarter of FY22-23.

Under the 'last-mile' delivery segment, 3W electric cargo vehicles would be introduced. Already e-bicycles were unveiled in the personal mobility segment, the company said.

With range of best in class EVs, TI Cycles said it plans to improve people's quality of life through eco-friendly mobility solutions.

IIP growth remains subdued for second month in a row

Oct. industrial output expands 3.2% on waning base effect

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**NEW DELHI**

Consumption of diesel, which accounts for about 40% of India's refined fuel sales, also eased 1.7% month-on-month to 6.51 million tonnes and was down 14% compared with November 2019.

Diesel sales slid 7.6% from the same period last year.

Sales of petrol, decreased by about 0.7% year-on-year to 2.65 million tonnes, but were 4.4% higher from November 2019. They were down 3.6% from October.

Asia's third-largest economy, last month said it would release 5 million barrels of oil from its strategic reserves in coordination with other buyers including the U.S., Japan and South Korea.

to August. It then slipped to 3.3% in September and further to 3.2%, mainly due to waning low base effect.

The manufacturing sector, which constitutes 77.63% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), grew 2% in October, according to data from the National Statistical Office (NSO). Mining sector output rose 11.4% in October, while power generation increased 3.1%.

Factory output recorded double-digit growth in each of the four months from May

to August.

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to August.

Similarly, two-wheeler dispatches to dealers declined to 10,50,616 units, from 16,00,379 units in November 2020.

Passenger vehicle (PV) sales stood at 2,15,626 units last month as against 2,64,898 units in the year-earlier period. Production in November 2021 was also down 9.5% to 2,66,552 vehicles, from 2,94,596 units.

Production was down more than 29% to 13,67,701 units from 19,36,793 units in the year-earlier period.

"Industry continues to face headwinds due to global semiconductor shor-

and many States imposed restrictions to curb the spread of infections.

"Growth rates over the corresponding period of the previous year are to be interpreted considering the unusual circumstances on account of COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020," the NSO said in the statement.

Output of capital goods, a barometer of investment, contracted 1.1% in October 2021. It had witnessed a growth of 3.2% a year earlier. Consumer durables manufacturing contracted 6.1% against a growth of 18.1% in October 2020. Consumer non-durable goods production grew 0.5% in October against a 7.3% rise in the year-earlier period.

Root and Malan dig in as England fights back at the Gabba

The pair adds 159 for the unbroken third wicket as the visitors reach 220 for two and whittle down the hosts' lead to 58; Head's 152 takes Australia to 425



Driving force: Root is now one short of his highest score in Australia and also went past 1,500 runs in a calendar year. ■AP

THE ASHES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRISBANE

Joe Root and Dawid Malan put on a defiant unbeaten partnership of 159 to give England hope of salvaging a draw in the opening Ashes Test at the Gabba on Friday.

A rejuvenated England was 220 for two at close of play, with skipper Root on 86 and Malan 80, only 58 runs behind Australia.

Root's year!

After England lost both openers in the session before tea, Root and Malan looked increasingly comfortable on the third-day Gabba pitch as they steadily wore down the Australian attack.

Root's classy 86 not out is one short of his highest score in Australia and took him past 1,500 runs in a calendar year, the most ever by an Englishman, surpassing Mi-

chael Vaughan's 1,481 in 2002.

Leading by example, the skipper barely offered a chance in his innings, stroking 10 boundaries including a sublime reverse-sweep off spinner Nathan Lyon.

The South Africa-born Ma-

lan scored his only Test century on the last tour of Australia and although not as comfortable as his captain, he also looked in control.

He did struggle with fatigue towards the close, however, and went down with cramps.

SCOREBOARD

England – 1st innings: 147.

Australia – 1st innings: David Warner c Stokes b Robinson 94, Marcus Harris c Malan b Robinson 3, Marnus Labuschagne c Wood b Leach 74, Steve Smith c Buttler b Wood 12, Travis Head b Wood 152, Cameron Green b Robinson 0, Alex Carey c Pope b Woakes 12, Pat Cummins c Hameed b Root 12, Mitchell Starc c Burns b Woakes 35, Nathan Lyon c Robinson b Wood 15, Josh Hazlewood (not out) 0; Extras (b-4, lb-6, nb-4, w-2): 16; Total (in 104.3 overs): 425.

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-166, 3-

189, 4-195, 5-195, 6-236, 7-

306, 8-391, 9-420.

England bowling: Woakes 25-76-2, Robinson 23-8-58-3, Wood 25.3-4-85-3, Stokes 12-0-65-0, Leach 13-0-102-1, Root 6-0-29-1.

England – 2nd innings: Haseeb

Hameed c Carey b Starc 27, Rory Burns c Carey b Cummins 13,

Dawid Malan (batting) 80, Joe Root (batting) 86; Extras (b-4, lb-5, w-5): 14; Total (for two wkts. in 70 overs): 220.

Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-61.

Australia bowling: Starc 14-2-1, Hazlewood 8-4-13-0, Cummins 14-4-43-1, Lyon 24-4-69-0, Green 7-2-12-0, Labuschagne 3-0-14-0.

Earlier, Travis Head scored a superb 152 to put Australia in what seemed a commanding position.

Australia was dismissed for 425, 30 minutes before lunch, a handsome lead of 278.

DRS saves Burns

Rory Burns, who was out first ball of the series on Wednesday when clean-bowled by Mitchell Starc, was lucky to survive the dreaded pair when he was adjudged leg-before off Starc's sixth ball of the first over.

But, replays showed the ball was just missing the top of middle stump, and a relieved Burns survived.

Falling soon

But he didn't last long after lunch and gloved to wicket-keeper Alex Carey off Australia captain Pat Cummins.

Haseeb Hameed looked in great touch and eased to 27,

but he tried to glance a wide ball from Starc, only to get a faint touch to Carey.

Malan knows that plenty more work lies ahead despite England's improved showing.

"To come here today and do what we did after a day and half of hard fielding is fantastic, but that's only half the job," he said.

"We need another 250-300 runs on Saturday to put ourselves in a good position."

Review plans

Labuschagne said the hosts needed to hold their nerve.

"Test cricket is a grind, it's meant to be hard otherwise it wouldn't mean so much," he said.

"For us it's a day at the office. We'll review our plans and how we bowled today, and come up with some ideas and get those last eight wickets."

King Carlsen's reign continues as he crushes Nepo with three games to spare

Norwegian outwits the Russian in 49 moves in Game II; fourth win gives him a fifth World title

WORLD C'SHIP

RAKESH RAO

Magnus Carlsen ended Ian Nepomniachtchi's agony with three games to spare, winning the 11th game of their best-of-14 game World chess championship match in Dubai on Friday.

Carlsen punished Nepo's blunder, committed on the 23rd move, with a tactical plan and eventually finished the job in 49 moves. The champion's fourth victory – second with black – was the final score read 7.5-3.5.

This was the fourth time Carlsen defended the World title he first won from Viswanathan Anand in 2013. He overcame the challenges of

Anand (2014), Sergey Karjakin (2016) and Fabiano Caruana (2018) before destroying Nepo.

After five drawn games, Carlsen pulled off a 136-move victory in the sixth. Thereafter, it was clear that Nepo was not the same. The Russian committed one pawn-move blunder three times in the next five games and the result was a premature end to the contest.

Relieved

"I'm relieved, of course. It's hard to feel that great joy when the situation was so comfortable to begin with, but I'm happy with a very good performance overall," was Carlsen's initial reaction after clinching his fifth World

title. "I didn't expect it to go like this," said Carlsen at the post-match media conference. "I think it was just a very good professional performance overall. No regrets at all, just very satisfied."

"I guess this was similar to my first match with Anand (in 2013), which was quite even and nervous at the start. When I got my first win, it was kind of the same story: it was relatively clean from there on."

On Friday, after Nepo employed the Italian opening, the game progressed on expected lines. Once Nepo erred on the 23rd turn, the Norwegian took just 79 seconds to spot the precise continuation. He immediately traded his rook for a knight

and took it back by force following the exchange of queens. He reached a rook-and-pawn ending with an extra pawn.

Carlsen sacrificed the rook to 'queen' his pawn and then forced the resignation, four moves later.

For his part, Nepo said, "In my career I lost quite some stupid games but not as many in such a (short) time."

The moves: Game 11: White: Nepomniachtchi; Black: Carlsen

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. c3 d6 6. O-O a5 7. Re1 Ba7 8. Na3 h6 9. Nc2 O-O 10. Be3 Bxe3 11. Nxe3 Re8 12. a4 Bc6 13. Bxe6 Rx6e 14. Qb3 b6 15. Rad1 Ne7 16. h3 Qd7 17. Nh2 Rd8 18. Nh4 Ngx4 19. hxg4 d5

20. d4 exd4 21. exd5 Re4 22. Qc2 Rf4 23. g3

dxe3 24. gxh4 Qxg4+ 25. Kf1 Qh3+ 26. Kg1 Nf5 27. d6 Nh4 28. fxe3 Qg3+ 29. Kf1 Nf3 30. Qf2 Qh3+ 31. Qg2 Qxg2+ 32. Kxg2 Nxel+ 33. Rxel Rxd6 34. Kf3 Rd2 35. Rb1 g6 36. b4 axb4 37. Rxh4 Ra2 38. Ke4 h5 39. Kd5 Rc2 40. Rb3 h4 41. Kc6 h3 42. Kxc7 h2 43. Rb1 Rxc3+ 44. Kxb6 Rb3+ 45. Rxh3 h1=Q 46. a5 Qe4 47. Ka7 Qe7+ 48. Ka8 Kg7 49. Rb6 Qc5. Nepo resigns.



Monarch of all he surveys: Carlsen defended his World title for the fourth time. ■AP

Hamilton tops the charts in practice



Turning it around: Hamilton was third in the morning session before taking the top spot. ■GETTY IMAGES

ABU DHABI GP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ABU DHABI

Lewis Hamilton's quest to make Formula One history at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix began brightly with the Mercedes driver topping the timesheets after Friday's opening practice.

Hamilton, chasing an unprecedented eighth World title, goes into Sunday's season-ending race level on

points with Max Verstappen.

And it was the Dutch title contender who was quickest out of the blocks at the Yas Marina circuit, taking the honours in the morning session.

Hamilton, placed third, turned the tables under floodlights in second practice with a 1m 23.691s lap to get his weekend off to an encouraging start. "It doesn't feel too bad," said Hamilton.

Brazil 2012: Going into the final race, Hamilton was trailing teammate Nico Rosberg by 12 points. The former controlled the race from pole but needed the latter to finish outside the podium to win the title. Towards the end of the race, Hamilton dramatically slowed his pace to hold back Rosberg who was being hotly pursued by Sebastian Vettel and Verstappen. Despite the team ordering him to pick up pace, Hamilton tried his best to trip up Rosberg but the German prevailed and went on to take his only world title.

Brazil 2010: In what was one of the closest seasons, four drivers had a mathematical chance of winning the title. Alonso led the Red Bull drivers Mark Web-

ber. Vettel had a poor start from fourth while Alonso moved ahead of his rival starting eighth. Vettel was then hit by Bruno Senna, leaving him last and a lot of damage to his car. The German, however, continued and battled hard to finish sixth while Alonso took the second spot and lost the title by three points.

Abu Dhabi 2010: In what was one of the closest seasons, four drivers had a mathematical chance of winning the title. Alonso led the Red Bull drivers Mark Web-

ber by eight points and Vettel by 15 and McLaren's Hamilton by 22.

Vettel controlled the race from pole while Alonso and Webber were running fourth and fifth. An early safety car allowed Rosberg and Vitaly Petrov to stop at the end of lap one. Webber stopped early on lap 12, prompting Alonso to cover him three laps later.

However, this meant the two were stuck between Petrov who kept them at bay for the rest of the race. Vettel won the race easily ahead of

Hamilton and Button with Alonso finishing seventh. The Spaniard needed to finish fourth to clinch the title.

Brazil 2008: In one of the most thrilling finales in the history of the sport, McLaren Hamilton led Ferrari's Felipe Massa by seven points. But the latter took pole position on lap 12, prompting Alonso to cover him three laps later.

However, this meant the two were stuck between Petrov who kept them at bay for the rest of the race. Vettel won the race easily ahead of

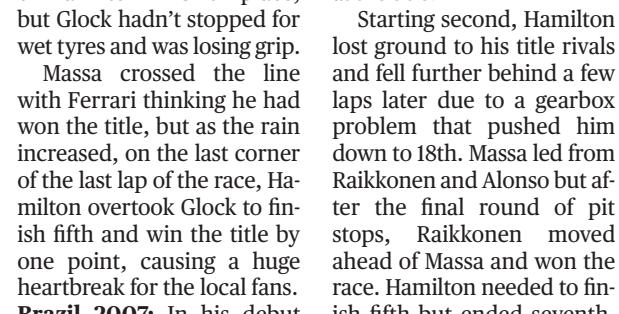
Hamilton and Button with Alonso finishing seventh. The Spaniard needed to finish fourth to clinch the title.

Brazil 2007: In his debut season, McLaren's Hamilton led by four points ahead of teammate Alonso and seven

ahead of Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen, all three having a shot at the title.

Starting second, Hamilton lost ground to his title rivals and fell further behind a few laps later due to a gearbox problem that pushed him down to 18th. Massa led from Raikkonen and Alonso but after the final round of pit stops, Raikkonen moved ahead of Massa and won the race. Hamilton needed to finish fifth and win the title by one point, causing a huge heartbreak for the local fans.

Brazil 2006: In his debut season, Alonso was third as both the McLaren drivers lost the crown by a solitary point.



IN BRIEF

Dhull named India under-19 skipper

NEW DELHI

Delhi batter Yash Dhull will lead a 20-member India squad in the upcoming Under-19 Asia Cup scheduled to be held in the UAE from December 23, the BCCI announced on Friday.

The squad: Yash Dhull (Capt.), Harnoor Singh Pannu, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Ansh Gosai, S.K. Rasheed, A. Gautam, Siddharth Yadav, Kaushal Tambe, Nishant Sindhu, Dinnesh Bana (wk), Aaradhya Yadav (wk), Rajangan Bawa, Ravjardhan Hargangekar, Garv Sangwan, Ravi Kumar, Rishith Reddy, Manav Parakh, Amrit Raj Upadhyay, Vicki Ostwal, Vasu Vats (subject to fitness clearance). PTI

Super sub Jonathas does it for Odisha

SPORTS BUREAU



Settling the issue: Jonathas is gung-ho after netting the match-winner. ■FOCUS SPORTS/ISL

nathas 81) bt NEUFC 0.
Today's matches: ATK Mohun Bagan vs Chennaiyin FC (7.30 p.m.); FC Goa vs Bengaluru FC (9.30 p.m.).

Villarreal survives Atalanta scare

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERGAMO

Arnaud Danjuma struck twice as Villarreal won 3-2 away to Atalanta on Thursday in a match rearranged after heavy snowfall to clinch the final spot in the Champions League last 16.

The Dutch international put Atalanta ahead inside three minutes and Etienne Capoue doubled the lead shortly before half-time on another chilly evening in Bergamo.

Danjuma scored again

in the second half but Villarreal was forced to hold on as Atalanta responded

with goals from Ruslan Malinovskiy and Duvan Zapata while hitting the woodwork three times.

Villarreal finished as runner-up to Group F winner Manchester United, with Atalanta going into the Europa League knockout-round play-offs in February.

Quarter-finalists two seasons ago, Atalanta needed a win to climb above Villarreal into second place in the group in a game pushed back from Wednesday after a cold snap swept across northern Italy.

The result: Group F: Atalanta 2 (Malinovskiy 71, Zapata 80) lost to Villarreal 3 (Danjuma 3, Capoue 42).



Opening salvo: Dan

TV PICKS

The Ashes: First Test, day 4, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 p.m., 8.30 p.m. & 11 p.m.; SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 8.30 p.m.
F1: Abu Dhabi GP (Qualifying); SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. & 9.30 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 8 p.m. & 11 p.m.

IN BRIEF



James' feat in vain as Grizzlies maul Lakers

LOS ANGELES
 Memphis Grizzlies withstood LeBron James' 100th career triple-double in a 108-95 NBA victory on Thursday. Lakers superstar James scored 20 points, pulled down 10 rebounds and handed out 11 assists. **The results:** 76ers 96 lost to Jazz 118; Grizzlies 108 bt Lakers 95; Spurs 123 bt Nuggets 111. AFP

C'wealth Championships gold for Lalrinnunga

TASHKENT
 India's Jeremy Lalrinnunga could not breach his personal best mark but the effort of 305kg was enough to win the gold medal in the men's 67kg category at the Commonwealth Championships, here on Friday. The 2018 Youth Olympics gold medallist lifter finished with a best effort of 305kg (141kg+164kg) in the men's 67kg event. His personal best stands at 306kg (140kg+166kg) which came in 2019. PTI

Pele to remain in hospital for 'a few days'

SAO PAULO
 Brazilian soccer great Pele has said he will remain in a hospital in Sao Paulo "for a few days" to undergo new exams on his colon tumour. Pele, who was admitted to the Albert Einstein hospital this week, said on Instagram he had been "having small chemotherapy sessions as part of my treatment." He added: "Don't worry, I'm just getting ready for the holiday season!" AP

India in the lead at Asia & ME bridge

KOLKATA
 The Indian team — Jaggy Shivedasani, Sumit Mukherjee, Debarata Majumdar, Keyzad Anklesaria, R. Tiwari and Sandeep Thakral — led the field with 83.91 VPs after the first round of the 21st Asia and Middle East bridge championships on Friday. The UAE and Pakistan are second and third with 62.29 and 49.97 VPs. The top two teams from this online competition will qualify for the World bridge championship to be held in Italy in March.

Rossi test drives Audi for endurance races

PARIS
 Valentino Rossi, who retired from MotoGP at the end of the 2021 season, test drove an Audi at the Ricardo Tormo circuit near Valencia, Spain, with the aim of competing in endurance races, the WRT team said on Thursday. The 42-year-old Italian made his last MotoGP appearance in Valencia on November 14. AFP

Divyansh Singh Panwar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chirag scorches the track, tops practice

Veteran Balu fastest among saloon cars



Pushing through: Arjun Balu survived a dramatic spin and emerged on top. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

MOTORSPORTS

SPORTS REPORTER

CHENNAI

Bengaluru schoolboy Chirag Ghorpade put in a dominating performance in the MRF F1600 class while defending champion Arjun Balu (Race Concepts) from Coimbatore survived a dramatic spin and emerged the fastest among saloon cars in the second round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Car Racing Championship commenced at the MMRT here on Friday.

Chirag, only 16, did a time of 01:39.809 in the first practice session and went even quicker in the second, clocking 01:39.761.

His arch-rival, Shahan Ali Mohsin, the teenager from Agra, who leads Chirag in the championship standings following his double in the first round, matched the timing with a 01:39.937 in the morning run, but was way off the pace in the second session due to gearbox issues and was placed ninth.

Earlier, Balu topped both the practice sessions in the

premier Indian Touring Cars class. He clocked a best lap of 01:51.680 in the first outing this morning and bettered it with a 01:51.308 in the afternoon despite a vicious spin that led to a brief flag stoppage.

The qualifying sessions for all categories, followed by five races, will be run on Saturday.

In the MRF Saloon Cars category (Toyota Etios) that has a grid of 21, Ahmedabad's Akshay Gupta posted the best lap of 02:05.257 over two practice sessions.

Sahab defeated second seed Nishant Dabas 1-6, 6-3, 7-6(3) to set up a title clash against fifth seed Max Batyutenko of Kazakhstan, who beat Chirag Duhan in straight sets.

Third-seeded Shruti downed sixth seed Hayu Kinoshita of Japan for the loss of six games. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chennaiyin looks to keep momentum

Two consecutive defeats have ATK Mohun Bagan on the backfoot

ISL

SPORTS BUREAU

Chennaiyin FC will hope to continue its unbeaten run in the Indian Super League when it takes on ATK Mohun Bagan at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Fatorda on Saturday.

The former champion has two wins and a goalless draw — in its last game against SC East Bengal — so far.

Creating chances

Even though CFC struggled to score in its last game despite creating several chances, the team has been solid in defence, having conceded just one goal in three matches. It is a strategy the team

will likely employ on Saturday as well and coach Bozidar Bandovic highlighted it as one of the positives to come out of the last game.

"I was happy defensively,

in attack and even in set-pieces, we were dangerous. But we need to improve in scoring. The last pass, the last decision, we need to put the ball in the net," said Ban-

dovic.

Bagan on the other hand comes into the game after two defeats and will need to find the winning form it showed in the opening two fixtures.

The team will quickly need to shore up its defences as it leaked goals in its last two matches, something both Mumbai City FC and Jamshedpur FC exploited well to post convincing wins.

After the twin defeats, Bagan coach Antonio Lopez Habas said, "it is about bringing back the confidence of our side. I consider my players the best in the world. We have to continue with the same energy and demonstrate that we are the best."

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Sharpening skills: Chennaiyin players gear up for the ATK MB challenge. ■ CFC

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Dead even and down to the wire, but has it got too dirty?

Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton have produced a Formula One season for the ages. The enthralling title race has generated buzz, drawing new eyes to the sport. But have the driving and war of words crossed the limit of what is acceptable?

S. DIPAK RAGAV

Formula One had been waiting for this for a long time. Ever since the regulations were overhauled in 2014, with the sport switching to the hybrid power unit, Mercedes has been dominant. Save for Ferrari's brief challenges during parts of the 2017 and 2018 seasons, the Silver Arrows have often entered the track secure in the knowledge that the race was theirs to lose.

While the drivers make the sport what it is, engineering excellence plays a defining role, with the fastest car being more important for success than the fastest driv-

ers – Hamilton in Silverstone and Verstappen in Monza – these were borderline racing incidents. To a large extent, this is what the fans want to see: two drivers at the top of their game going at it with their elbows out.

But an ill-tempered war of words between the drivers and team bosses had begun to accompany the on-track racing, with nothing seemingly off limits – neither snide barbs on the quality of the opponent's driving skills nor questions about the legality of the other's car.

Tensions rose during the Brazilian GP when Red Bull asked the FIA about Mercedes' rear wing after the Silver Arrows found an extra step in their straight-line speed. The FIA discovered a small issue – not the one Red Bull raised – and sent Hamilton to the back of the sprint race grid. This move by Red Bull was seen as payback for Mercedes questioning Red Bull's rear wing, alleging that it was flexing more than legally permitted, which had caused the FIA to issue a new technical directive.

Despite the grid penalty, Hamilton came back fighting and won the race but before he was pushed wide off the track by Verstappen. It was a borderline move that attracted no penalties, but it set a precedent for what is considered acceptable racing and had a direct effect on what unfolded in Jeddah.

Verstappen came off worse in the skirmish. Then in Monza, the two took each other out. Though the stewards split

the blame between the drivers – Hamilton in Silverstone and Verstappen in Monza – these were borderline racing incidents. To a large extent, this is what the fans want to see: two drivers at the top of their game going at it with their elbows out.

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Verstappen came off worse in the skirmish. Then in Monza, the two took each other out. Though the stewards split

[Verstappen] is over the limit, for sure. I've avoided collision on so many occasions with the guy and I don't always mind being the one that does that, because you live to fight another day.

LEWIS HAMILTON

er. For F1 to have an exciting season, the first requirement is to have at least two closely matched teams. This is not an easy thing to achieve, especially in modern F1, considering the varying budgets across the grid.

Even-stevens
But 2021 has been different. Red Bull has found the right engineering solutions to match Mercedes so evenly that just a couple of tenths of a second have separated the teams across 21 races so far.

Close combat

While he was circumspect, knowing he had a car that did not need over-driving, he was fairly combative and got the better of Hamilton in wheel-to-wheel battles in the first half of the season.

From around mid-season, things started getting tense between the two. Silverstone was the spark that lit the fuse. Hamilton drew a line in the sand, deciding he wasn't going to let his rival dictate terms. Verstappen came off worse in the skirmish. Then in Monza, the two took each other out.

Though the stewards split

NOTHING BETWEEN THEM

This is only the second instance in F1 history of the top two championship contenders being tied on points ahead of the final race. The first occurred in 1974, with McLaren's Emerson Fittipaldi and Ferrari's Clay Regazzoni tied on 52 points ahead of the final race in Watkins Glen, USA. Fittipaldi finished fourth to Regazzoni's 11th and took the crown

ly veered into a potentially dangerous situation.

Contentious moves

Verstappen produced three questionable moves on Hamilton in Saudi Arabia and was deemed to have been at fault on all three occasions. First he pushed Hamilton wide despite the latter having edged slightly ahead before the braking point. Then he went off-track to stay ahead and, when asked to give up the place, he was adjudged to have brake-tested Hamilton while slowing down, causing the seven-time champion to hit him from behind.

Canny or crafty?

Hamilton was a touch fortunate: not only did he not suffer huge damage, but he also got away with more than a hint of cheekiness. His not wanting to pass the slowing Verstappen before the DRS detection zone – wary of ceding the advantage of using the DRS on the start/finish straight to his rival – con-

tributed to the incident, too.

At Jeddah, it was as if Verstappen, knowing he had a slightly slower car, was ready to put everything on the line to stay ahead, considering he had an eight-point lead and was not overly bothered about both of them not making the finish.

If one were to trace Verstappen's lineage among the sport's historical greats, he is clearly from the Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher school of driving, which

argues that exceptionally talented drivers should give no inch to their competitors and often push the limits of what is acceptable. It is no surprise that Senna and Schumacher were principal actors in four separate title-deciding final races that ended in crashes.

Smash-hit success

Even before the events of Sunday, the tight battle this season has renewed much-needed interest among the fans. The circumstances of this year's fight make for a compelling, organic narrative. While Hamilton is the senior statesman fighting to create history – a record eighth crown would put him above Schumacher – the prodigious Verstappen is hoping to secure his first world title, something that many believe is his destiny since he started racing

Lewis gives just as good as he gets, he's very wily with the way he does it sometimes... But Lady Luck is shining on Lewis at the moment.

CHRISTIAN HORNER,
RED BULL TEAM PRINCIPAL

enticing, offering a small peek into the glamorous world of F1.

Although the events of Sunday set the virtual world on fire and have now set up an enthralling final race – for the first time in five years, the title is on the line in the season-ender – one also wonders if the rivalry has gone too far.

The final chapter

The season has seen some breathtaking racing from the protagonists, but the prospect of the title fight ending in a crash or, worse, the stewards' room is starting to look very real. One hopes this is not the final chapter of what has been one of the best seasons of all time. Nothing turns off potential new fans like the title being decided off-track in incoherent legalese.

The two drivers owe it to the fans to race clean and give a fitting end to a championship that will be remembered for years to come.



STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Novak Djokovic	34	11,540	14
2	Daniil Medvedev	25	8,640	23
3	Alexander Zverev	24	7,840	23
4	Stefanos Tsitsipas	23	6,540	26
5	Andrey Rublev	24	5,150	28
6	Rafael Nadal	35	4,875	11
7	Matteo Berrettini	25	4,568	21
8	Asier Ruud	22	4,160	35
9	Hubert Hurkacz	24	3,706	32
10	Jannik Sinner	20	3,350	42
11	Felix Auger-Aliassime	21	3,308	28
12	Cameron Norrie	26	2,945	31
13	Diego Schwartzman	29	2,625	25
14	Denis Shapovalov	22	2,475	28
15	Dominic Thiem	28	2,425	15



English Premier League Standings

#	TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Man. City	15	11	2	32	9	23	35	39
2	Liverpool	15	10	4	1	44	12	32	34
3	Chelsea	15	10	3	2	35	9	26	33
4	West Ham	15	8	3	4	28	19	9	27
5	Tottenham	14	8	1	5	16	17	-1	25
6	Man. United	15	7	3	5	25	24	1	24
7	Arsenal	15	7	2	6	18	22	-4	23
8	Wolves	15	6	3	6	12	13	-1	21
9	Brighton	15	4	8	3	14	16	-2	20
10	Aston Villa	15	6	1	8	21	24	-3	19
11	Leicester City	15	5	4	6	23	27	-4	19
12	Everton	15	5	3	7	19	25	-6	18
13	Brentford	15	4	5	6	19	21	-2	17
14	Crystal Palace	15	3	7	5	19	21	-2	16
15	Leeds United	15	3	7	5	15	22	-7	16
16	Southampton	15	3	7	5	14	21	-7	16
17	Watford	15	4	1	10	20	29	-9	13
18	Burnley	14	1	7	6	14	21	-7	10
19	Newcastle	15	1	7	7	17	30	-13	10
20	Norwich City	15	2	4	9	8	31	-23	10



Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Real Madrid	16	12	3	1	37	15	22	39
2	Sevilla	15	9	4	2	25	11	14	31
3	Real Betis	16	9	3	4	26	18	8	30
4	Atletico Madrid	15	8	5	2	27	16	11	29
5	Real Sociedad	16	8	5	3	19	13	6	29
6	Rayo Vallecano	16	8	3	5	24	16	8	27
7	Barcelona	15	6	5	4	23	17	6	23
8	Valencia	16	5	7	4	24	22	2	22
9	Athletic Bilbao	16	4	9	3	13	11	2	21
10	Osasuna	16	5	6	5	15	19	-4	21
11	Espanyol	16	5	5	6	15	15	0	20
12	Real Mallorca	16	4	7	5	16	23	-7	19
13	Villarreal	15	3	7	5	16	17	-1	16
14</td									



The impressive Sharda Nand scores in India's quarterfinal win over Belgium. ■ PTI

A reality check, not a stick check

India missed out on a podium finish in the recent men's hockey Junior World Cup, but at that level the process is more important than the result. A look at what the performance says about the health of the pipeline to the senior team and what is needed to make the step up

V.B. SARI

As the music paused at Bhubaneswar's Kalinanga Stadium to facilitate the interaction between players and journalists after India's loss to France in the bronze medal match of the men's hockey Junior World Cup, a teenage girl in the upper tier of the stands shouted: "India, India".

It was a rare gesture from a passionate fan trying to console the dejected home players, moving slowly with drooping shoulders and lowered eyes, by spreading some positivity. Perhaps she understood the burden of high expectations the juniors experienced in the backdrop of India achieving its first Olympic medal in 41 years.

Learning experience

It would have been nice to build on the Tokyo momentum, but India's second fourth-place finish after 2005 at the JWC should not be viewed as a stick check on its progress. Rather, it is an opportunity to conduct a reality check ahead of iconic events such as the 2023 World Cup at home and the 2024 Paris Olympics.

India chief coach Graham Reid underlined that the JWC was a "learning experience" for the players.

Defending India's 2016 JWC title at home was a tough

benchmark for the current lot. It was a completely different batch of under-21 players, of whom seven made their international debut at Bhubaneswar. And their preparation was plagued by the coronavirus, which denied them crucial match practice against overseas teams. They played the seniors, but it was not the same experience.

What happened in 2016

In 2016, the team was under the constant guidance of Harendra Singh and had enough exposure against foreign teams. With Roelant Oltmans overseeing the build-up and a highly qualified set of other support staff, including strategic coach Roger van Gent and scientific advisor Cody Tribe, taking care of different areas, the Indian side had the best of preparations in the run-up to its crowning glory in Lucknow.

The present team was primarily coached by B.J. Kariappa and some Indian support staff, including a few who completed the Hockey India Coaching Education Pathway programme, before Reid took over for about a month prior to the event.

Captain Vivek Sagar Prasad, who was part of the Olympics-bound Indian team, joined the squad only during the last phase of

it is unfair to compare the juniors' showing with the seniors' Olympics bronze-winning performance.

One may argue that the next logical step for the juniors is to play in the senior team. True, but not always.

Seven of the 2016 JWC-winning Indian side featured in the 2021 Olympics team. Similarly, not all the members of other champion junior sides around the world go on to play for their senior teams. The transition takes toll.

"The under-21 teams are not experienced. They don't have patience. So they play aggressively. Players mature with experience and patience comes gradually," said former India player V.R. Raghunath.

At the junior level, as is the norm in some European nations, the process is always more important than the result.

Bright spots

Notwithstanding the host's three wins and as many losses in Bhubaneswar, some Indian players showed they had the skills and the spark. Players including Sanjay, Sharda Nand Tiwari, Mander Singh, Uttam Singh, Yashdeep Siwach, Vishnukant Singh, Arjeet Singh Hundal, Sudeep Chirmano and two goalkeepers Prashant Chauhan and

Pawan appeared to possess the talent to graduate to the next level.

The big picture

Germany coach Valentin Altenburg had a word of praise for the Indians. "A lot of them (are very good) from India.

We are very confident that the No. 1 (Sharda Nand) will be a very good player. He is young but very skilful. There are other ones who are very quick," said Altenburg.

If the youngsters improve to serve the Indian senior team in fu-

ture, then that will be some achievement. In such a scenario, missing out on a podium finish at the JWC will appear insignificant.

In order to tread the right path of transition, the players need to focus on a few areas.

As was evident in the semifinal match against Germany and the bronze medal contest against France, India's decision-making faltered in crucial moments. As a result, the host could not capitalise on several scoring chances. It ultimately impacted the match results and the overall placing.

Adapting to pressure and maintaining the side's tempo irrespective of the opponent's intensity is another area of improvement.

Sticking to the basics, tackling outside the circle (which is so important to deny the opposition penalty corners) and finishing moves are some priority areas that also need attention. "Both ends of the pitch are where you win and lose matches

and that's probably where we need to be looking at," said Reid.

Other than the individual talent, the Indians had a few positives to count on as a team.

The biggest plus is the variety of drag-flickers, led by defender Sanjay. The lad from Hisar had a good success rate – he was placed joint third with eight goals, including six penalty corner conversions, among the top goal-scorers of the tournament – even though the Indian forwards managed to earn only a few penalty corners in the last three matches against Belgium, Germany and France.

Penalty-corner promise
With good shoulders, Sanjay not only fired in the high flicks well, but also executed the low flicks effectively. He was quite good in exploring different angles to fox the opposition's defence.

"Sanjay has maturity. He is a replica of Harmanpreet. He has confidence and a good approach. In one or two years he can join Harmanpreet. He takes that element of risk whether in attack or defence. He has a good dodge and pushes forward as a right half," said Raghunath, a lead drag-flicker in his day.

Sharda Nand, a fine defender and a flicker with a smooth action, and Arjeet,

a forward who doubles up as a drag-flicker, complement Sanjay and provide good options.

India's attacking and defensive numbers – 175 circle entries and 28 saves respectively, the highest in the competition – speak of the potential the side has.

The other prominent aspect of India's campaign was its players' never-say-die attitude. On more than one occasion, the team fought until the last minute to close the gap.

No teacher like failure

The reality check and a bit of learning from other teams – especially the top-three finishers, Argentina, Germany and France (as each of these sides presents a different case study) – in the JWC can do wonders.

Such exercises can boost the quality of supply to the senior side that faces the dual challenge of performing consistently and living up to the expectations of die-hard supporters over the next three years, packed with several top events including the FIH Pro League, the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, World Cup and the Olympics.

Those who don the national colours would love to hear an 'India, India' chorus instead of just a lone voice from the stands.



Sanjay was one of the Indian players who caught the eye.

■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

GAME THEORY

Simeone's influence on the Madrid Derby

When Diego Simeone was named manager of Atletico Madrid in December 2011, Real Madrid was in complete control of the Madrid derby dynamic: it hadn't been beaten by Atletico in 22 games. Have Atletico's fortunes against Real changed under Simeone? A look at how the clubs stack up ahead of Sunday's Madrid derby at the Bernabeu:



Madrid derby head-to-head (with Simeone as Atletico manager)

Simeone has both improved Atletico's win-rate and reduced Real's win-rate overall (compared to the all-time figures)

	Real Madrid	Atletico Madrid	Draws	Real win %	Atletico win %
League games	7	4	8	36.84%	21.05%
Cup games	2	2	1	40.00%	40.00%
Champions League games	4	1	1	66.67%	16.67%
Other games	1	2	1	25.00%	50.00%
Overall	14	9	11	41.18%	26.47%

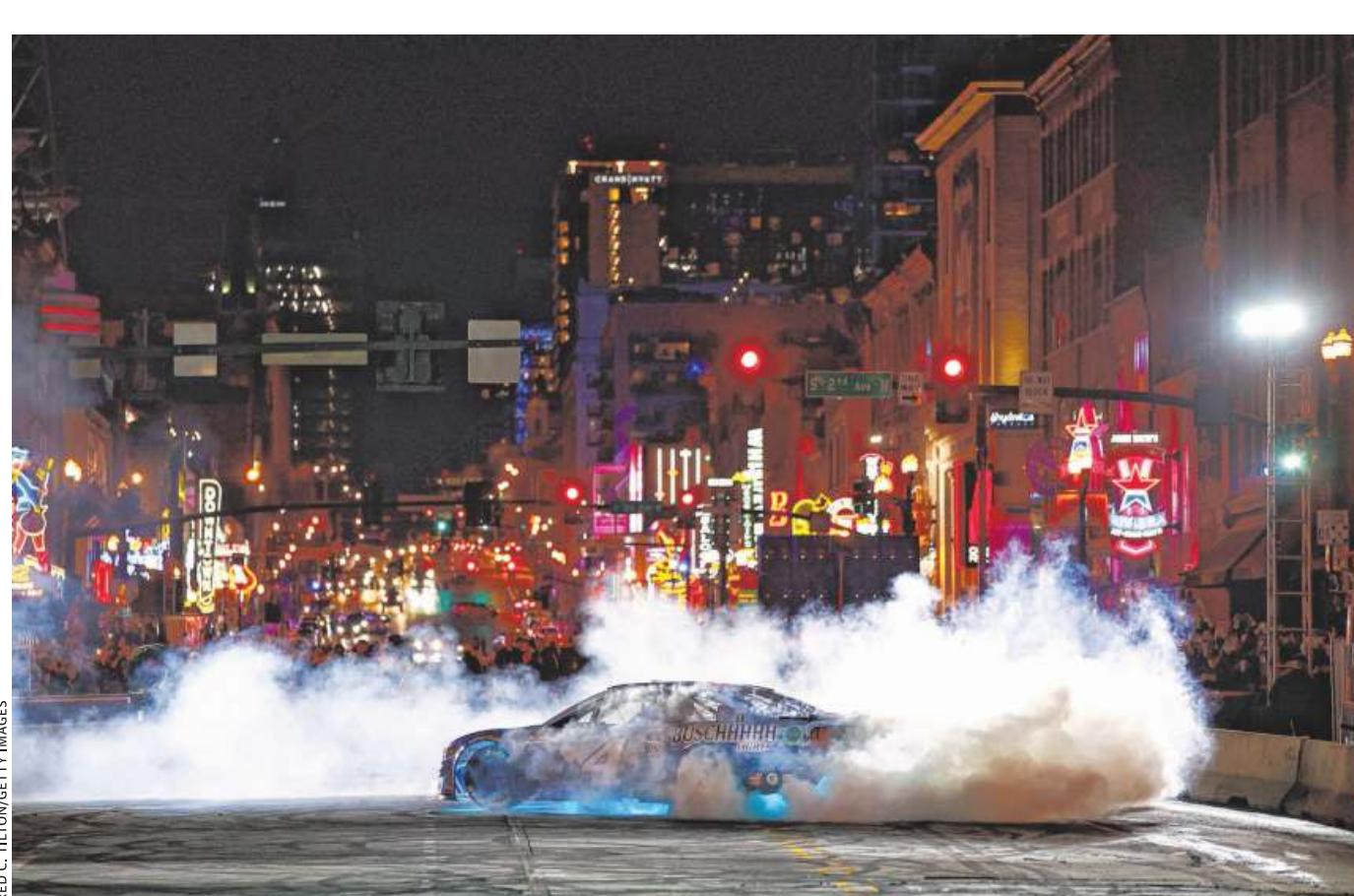
Breakdown of league games (with Simeone as Atletico manager)

Under Simeone, Atletico has matched Real at the Bernabeu in LaLiga. But Real has won four times as many games as Atletico has at Atletico's home

	At Real's home	At Atletico's home
Real Madrid	3	4
Atletico Madrid	3	1
Draws	3	5
Real win %	33.33%	40.00%
Atletico win %	33.33%	10.00%

SOURCE: TRANSFERMARKT.CO.UK, WHOSCORED.COM

PICTURE THIS



Symphony of devastation

There's nothing that says epic victory celebration quite like the gratuitous destruction of equipment – if you can do it with smoke and neon lights, you're practically a rock star, aren't you?

Well, NASCAR drivers certainly think so. They can't go a race win

without spinning their wheels, causing the tyres to heat up and smoke.

It got so popular that there's now an annual televised event – 'Burnouts on Broadway' – where fans watch drivers find the most creative ways to wreck tyre rubber, drive-trains and even the odd steering wheel.

Last week, Nashville, or 'Music City' as the cool folk call it, played host to this symphony of devastation in its nightclub district. The audience was treated to flips, tricks, choreographed routines and burnouts in their purest form – straight-up rubber murder.

Kevin Harvick was one of the standout 'vandals', blowing his rear tyres out and walking away, leaving his ailing Mustang in the centre of the street.

"Everybody tries to overcomplicate everything," Harvick said. "My hope was that we could blow the tyres off down to the wheels, shoot sparks and walk off. We did everything but the sparks."