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## NEARBY



Heavy rain lashes the Capital; hail likely today

NEW DELHI  
The Capital received heavy rain accompanied by thunder and gusty winds on Sunday with the Safdarjung weather station receiving 29.1 mm of rainfall overnight up to 8.30 a.m. and 14.8 mm during the day. The Met Department has forecast the possibility of hail at isolated places in NCR on Monday.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

## Delhi records lowest daily cases in 7 months

NEW DELHI  
The Capital witnessed 424 fresh COVID-19 cases on Sunday – the lowest number of cases recorded in a day over the past seven months, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. In 24 hours, the city reported 14 deaths and saw 708 recoveries. The positivity rate was 0.62% and 68,759 tests were conducted in the same period, the bulletin added.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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EDUCATIONPLUS ▶ PAGE 5

# India approves two COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use

Regulator grants nod to Covishield by Serum Institute, Covaxin by Bharat Biotech

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

The Central Drugs and Standards Committee (CDSCO) on Sunday formally approved the COVID-19 vaccines by Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India (SII).

This allows the vaccines – Covishield by SII and based on the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, and Covaxin by Bharat Biotech – to be offered to healthcare workers and frontline workers in India. The Health Ministry had said that 3 crore such personnel, considered at the highest risk for COVID-19, would be given the vaccine for free. It isn't yet known which vaccine will be made available to these personnel though officials said roll-outs could begin in less than a fortnight.

### Yet to complete trials

Neither Covishield nor Covaxin has completed the crucial Phase-3 trial, under which a vaccine candidate is administered to volunteers at multiple locations across the country. The approval was based on a recommendation by a Subject Expert Committee which deliberated for two days on granting approvals to the vaccines.

The minutes of the SEC meeting aren't yet available.

### Vaccines out, but data missing

The efficacy data of the Phase-3 trials conducted in India for the two vaccines approved for restricted public use on Sunday have not been made public yet

#### COVISHIELD

■ A vaccine developed by the Serum Institute-Pune based on the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine has been given 'conditional approval'

■ The vaccine's efficacy is reported to be 70.4% based on the Phase-3 trials conducted in the U.K. and Brazil

■ The efficacy data of the Phase-3 trials conducted on 1,600 volunteers in 17 Indian cities have not been made public yet



#### COVAXIN

■ A vaccine developed by Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research has been approved for restricted emergency use in clinical trial mode

■ During the first two months after the roll-out, the firm has to inform drug regulators every fortnight about the adverse effects of the vaccine

■ Phase-1 and 2 trials were conducted on 800 volunteers to determine the safety and immunogenicity of the jab

■ The efficacy data of the ongoing Phase-3 trials with 22,500 volunteers have not been made public yet

However, a Health Ministry statement said the vaccine's efficacy in Indian volunteers was "comparable" to that tested in overseas trials.

Both approvals accorded are for "restricted use in emergency situation" and in the case of Bharat Biotech, the approval wording notes that it is in "...public interest as an abundant precaution, in clinical trial mode, to have more options for vaccination,

tions, especially in case of infection by mutant strains". These conditions were not specified.

Bharat Biotech, whose vaccine candidate is being tested in large Phase-3 trials in India, has provided safety and immunogenicity data.

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A HURRIED GAMBLE ▶ EDIT

## Preparations done, roll-out in near future'

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

India should be able to roll out its COVID-19 vaccination programme in the "near future" as the preparations are ready and robust, NITI Aayog member (health) V.K. Paul said in an exclusive interview to *The Hindu*.

He added that at least 12 countries had expressed interest in the indigenous vaccine, Covaxin.

Dr. Paul said all preparations had been made to reach the last mile to dispense vaccines to beneficiaries.

Stating that all vaccines currently available across the world work even with the mutation of the virus, Dr. Paul said, "ICMR-Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is a whole virion vaccine approved for restricted use in an emergency by the Drugs Controller General of India and since this vaccine works on the whole of the virus, this is our additional weapon against it."

"We will be honouring the honest, but at the same time, we will not hesitate from doing things to deter those who try to cheat the system," Mr. Pandey said.

"GST collections in December show the economy is undoubtedly on the fast recovery track. We have also been working on improving compliance for more than a year now, at the systemic level and at the enforcement level," Mr. Pandey said.

"We will be honouring the honest, but at the same time, we will not hesitate from doing things to deter those who try to cheat the system. I think there is now a sense among the fringe elements who were trying to game the system that it is not going to be so easy to continue in that fashion as the times have changed," Mr. Pandey said.

In a recent case, an e-commerce player was found to have even procured manpower services from a fake company, he pointed out.

AROUND 187 PERSONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN ARRESTED, INCLUDING FIVE CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS AND A COMPANY SECRETARY.

"Most of them had to spend 40-50 days in jail, because the crime was so grave that the courts were not inclined to give them bail. The I-T Department is also taking action as the direct tax implications for beneficiaries of fake invoices, are much, much higher than the GST implication," the top Finance Ministry official said.

"If you see the penalties on I-T evasion, it will be more than the invoice value itself," Mr. Pandey said. This co-ordinated action had also helped bolster Customs revenues, which crossed the ₹16,000 crore mark in December, 93% higher than the same period a year ago.

IF YOU SEE THE PENALTIES ON I-T EVASION, IT WILL BE MORE THAN THE INVOICE VALUE ITSELF," MR. PANDEY SAID.

THIS CO-ORDINATED ACTION HAD ALSO HELPED BOLSTER CUSTOMS REVENUES, WHICH CROSSED THE ₹16,000 CRORE MARK IN DECEMBER, 93% HIGHER THAN THE SAME PERIOD A YEAR AGO.

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# A show of kabaddi skills at Singhu border for protesting farmers

All-woman teams converged to express solidarity with farmers; 12 teams participated in the tournament

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

An all-woman bunch of professional kabaddi players, including some national and State-level athletes, on Sunday organised a kabaddi tournament at Singhu border, the site of farmers' protest.

Most of these players are from farmer families of Punjab and Haryana and they had converged at the site to express solidarity with the protesters.

A total of 12 teams participated in the tournament, which started around 11 a.m. The first match was organised between Sonipat and Fazilka and a team from Jind district in Haryana won the tournament.

Sukhwinder Singh (55), joint secretary of Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, Punjab, from Tarn Taran district of Punjab said that the teams participated in the tournament on their own.

"Teams from different States came forward and said they wanted to organise

a kabaddi tournament. We have planned to do different activities every day for the entertainment of people here at Singhu border," Mr. Singh said.

#### Prizes

The winning team will get ₹2,100 and the runner-up ₹1,100. The prizes have been announced by people who have donated the amount, he said.

"Most of the kabbadi players or wrestlers belong to farmers' families. In villages, sports are mainly supported by farmers who keep organising tournaments. So, these people get to showcase their talent at the international level. It is now their turn to stand with the farmers," said Kavita Kumari, a player.

Jagbir Singh from Jind district of Haryana, who was the head coach of the tournament, said that a majority of the players here are college students and they volunteered to participate.

"Teams from Haryana, Pun-

jab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi have participated in the tournament. They all have come here to support the farmers. There are also some national and international players who participated in the match," he said.

Ritika Dalal, a second-year student, said, "I have played at State and national level from Delhi. The match was good. We could not, however, win it and make it to another round."

The matches were played on the temporarily turf.

Narender Kumar, a kabbadi coach from Rohtak, said:

"I received a message on WhatsApp yesterday [Saturday] regarding the matches. It was mentioned that only girls will play, following which I took my team of 10 girls, including my twin daughters, and reached here this morning. It is a knockout tournament and you have to win each and every match. My team lost by two points but they performed really well."

Students participating in a kabaddi match at the Singhu border. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



All weather protest: Farmers take shelter in their tents on the Ghazipur border as heavy rain lashed the Capital on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## Heavy rain, cold fail to dampen spirits of farmers

Protesters not ready to leave despite firewood, blankets and food turning soggy

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The unseasonal rain over the past couple of days failed to dampen the spirits of protesting farmers despite the material damage it caused and the weather severity it induced. Farmers said that the water ruined the firewood and blankets that were their only guard against the cold and even spoilt food kept with them.

#### Fumigation drive

Volunteers from Mohali district of Punjab held fumigation drive at Singhu border to protect protesters from water-borne diseases.

"The rain has caused a lot



Unseasonal rain has caused a lot of damage at the protest site at the Singhu border in Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

of damage at the protest site. They have no place to sleep as their tents are waterlogged and they have nothing to wrap themselves in this biting cold as their blankets are wet. They are especially focusing on health and other logistics for aged protesters who are more prone to

fall sick," said Kuldeep Singh, a protester.

Another protester said that he waters his crops at his farms in Punjab when the temperature is around one degree Celsius. He said the cold in Delhi is nothing compared to the harsh weather in which farmers work and

survive across the country and that one should come and see how farmers are braving the cold.

"The weather will not dampen the spirit of farmers who have been protesting for over a month now. We will bear it. The government is not taking us seriously, but

we will not leave the site until our demands are met," said Harvir Singh, a protester.

Protesters claimed they also tried contacting the local municipal body for clearing the drains as the entire area was waterlogged, but they did not receive any response.

#### Unflinching spirit

"The protest will continue and we will not back off. People from Delhi and other States have come to our support. We will die but will not go back until the farm laws are withdrawn. We have made arrangements for tea and wood to keep the protest site warm for everyone," said Amandeep Singh, a protester.

Maninder Singh, an associate professor at a university in Punjab, said, "In view of the ongoing pandemic situation and due to the rain, we have decided to spray pesticides to maintain hygiene."

## GETTING BACK ON TRACK

The pandemic had severely hit the Delhi Metro's ridership, though it is gradually picking up

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI

**S**ince the resumption of metro services in September, post lockdown, the Delhi Metro saw a ridership of 3.29 lakh (11%) as compared to the 29.66 lakh same month last year, according to data provided by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) in response to an RTI query filed by *The Hindu*.

The metro services in the national capital had remained suspended since March 22 after the pandemic outbreak. But five months later, on September 7, passenger operations resumed, following a nod from the Centre.

Metro services had resumed in a graded manner with staggered timings and it took around a week to make the nearly 400 kilometre-long network to become fully operational.

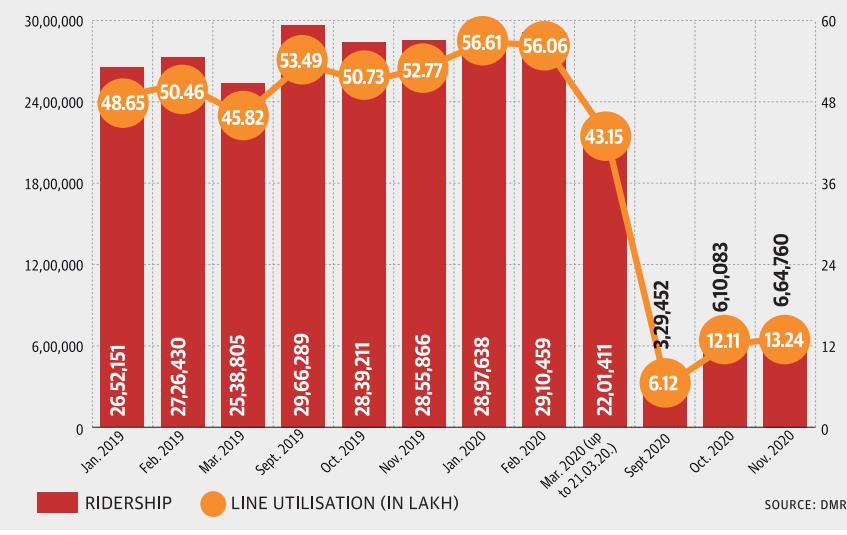
In September last year, the average daily ridership on the network was 29.66 lakh with a line utilisation of 53.49 lakh, which was also highest for the year 2019. According to the DMRC, line utilisation indicates the number of passengers who travel on a particular line or a portion of that line during their overall journey across the metro network.

**Marginal increase**  
Data provided by the DMRC showed that over the next two months post lockdown, the average daily ridership on the network in November this year rose to 22% of the highest ridership of last year. The figures for November last year, however, were 28.55 lakh with a line utilisation of 52.77 lakh.



#### RIDING PAST ADVERSITY

After reopening of the metro system, due to restrictions and fear in public, the ridership is less compared to previous year



utilisation of 52.77 lakh. The network, excluding the Airport Express Line and Rapid Metro Gurugram, saw an average daily ridership of 6.64 lakh in November this year with a line utilisation of 13.24 lakh.

The lowest average daily ridership recorded by the DMRC in 2019, was in March when it recorded a

line utilisation of 45.82% with a ridership of 25.38 lakh. However, this year before the lockdown was announced, the Delhi Metro saw a daily average ridership of 22.01 lakh. The corresponding line utilisation figures had been 56.61 and 56.06 lakh.

According to an internal note of the DMRC dated December 21, for the 2019-20 period, an operational ratio of 80.55% was recorded, which facilitated the public

transporter to meet the daily expenditure. However, post lockdown and suspension of operations, the traffic earnings had reduced to "nil."

"Even after reopening of the metro system, due to several restrictions and fear in public, the ridership is very low and consequently the revenues are also very low. In the last eight months the DMRC has earned only ₹247.65 crore whereas expenditure was ₹2208.24 crore [approximately] including JICA loan and their interest payment due during this period," the note read.

#### Safety measures

Following resumption of services, the DMRC had also issued a detailed guideline to ensure compliance of COVID-19 norms that included mandatory social distancing in terms of seating, restricted number of commuters inside stations, wearing masks throughout the journey and so on and so forth.

The public transporter had also introduced flying squads to ensure compliance of the guidelines and had said that violators would be penalised.

Among other offences, fines collected for spitting inside the premises, which was also an offence earlier, saw around 1.82% of commuters being fined in the month of September soon after resumption of services. However, in the subsequent months, the number declined and the DMRC collected a fine of ₹5,200 and ₹5,400 in October and November this year.

## Submit timeline for declaration of results, Delhi University told

HC order to ensure students are not inconvenienced

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The High Court has ordered

Delhi University (DU) to submit a timeline for declaration of results, issuance of mark sheets and holding convocation on an annual basis for students.

Justice M. Prathiba Singh gave the direction to make sure that the students are not inconvenienced every semester and are not forced to approach the court for obtaining their transcripts, mark sheets and degree certificates.

"This court is of the opinion that in order to ensure that there is a comprehensive, streamlined procedure for declaration of results, issuance of transcripts, mark sheets and degree certificates

cates, etc., DU ought to have a prescribed timeline...," the court said.

#### 'Unsatisfactory affidavit'

It also remarked that the previous affidavit submitted by the university was not satisfactory as it did not contain any specific timelines for the issuance of digital degree certificates and for transmission of data to Digilocker.

"The affidavit is quite cryptic," the High Court remarked.

It asked the university to provide a timeline for declaration of results after conclusion of the last exam in a particular semester for undergraduate and post-graduate courses. It also asked for timeline for issuance of mark sheets/ transcripts to Digilocker after the same has been announced by DU.

The court further asked it to provide the timeline for issuance of digital transcripts for such students who may require the same for further education or for employment and for transmission of data relating to mark sheets/ transcripts to Digilocker after the same has been announced by DU.

The High Court asked the university to submit its affidavit before the next date of hearing on February 17. It was hearing a bunch of petitions by former DU students seeking direction for issuance of degree certificates on an urgent basis to enable them to pursue higher education.

## Govt. sets up academy to promote Tamil culture

It will recognise works of people

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Department of Art, Culture and Language of the

Delhi government set up a Tamil academy on Sunday to promote the South Indian language and culture in the Capital. It also appointed former municipal councillor and member of the Delhi Tamil Sangam N. Raja as vice-chairman of the academy.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that it is diversity that forms Delhi's vibrant and cosmopolitan culture as people from all parts of the country come to

settle in the Capital for work.

He added that Delhi has a large population of people from Tamil Nadu and the government wants to present a platform to get the taste of art and culture of Tamil Nadu.

The academy will introduce various awards to promote and reward the works of people in Tamil language and culture.

It will also provide language courses. It will also celebrate and organise cultural festivals for the people of Tamil Nadu.

## Civic body commissioners summoned

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly's environment committee has summoned the commissioners of the three BJP-ruled municipal corporations here over the problem of dust pollution, asking them to appear on Monday.

Road dust is a major contributor to Delhi's pollution, yet the municipal corporations of Delhi are not deploying mechanical sweeping, the committee's chairperson and AAP MLA Atishi said in a statement on Sunday.

**Timings****DELHI**

MONDAY, JAN. 04
RISE 07:15 SET 17:39
RISE 22:49 SET 11:05
TUESDAY, JAN. 05
RISE 07:15 SET 17:39
RISE 23:51 SET 11:40
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 06
RISE 07:15 SET 17:40
RISE 00:00 SET 12:14

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	16	10
Safdarjung	16	10
Palam	17	11

**Delhi Pali Today**  
18°C Light to moderate rain and thundershower with isolated hail storm and moderate gusty wind would occur at many places.

**Delhi Pali Tomorrow**  
19°C Few spells of rain or thundershower with cloudy sky will continue with less intensity.

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**IOC launches new initiative****STAFF REPORTER**

NEW DELHI

The Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) launched a new initiative – Prayaas – to address the needs of the local communities near its fuel stations.

**At night shelters**

The personnel from the IOC's Delhi State Office visited night shelters located near their fuel stations and distributed blankets.

Shyam Bohra, Executive Director and State Head of Delhi and Haryana State Office, distributed blankets to the inhabitants of night shelters near IOC-owned company-operated outlet in Jangpura. The company added that these night shelters are run by Delhi government and NGOs here help and support the weaker sections of society.

# Capital records lowest daily cases in 7 months

CM congratulates nation after approval of 2 vaccines made in India

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The Capital witnessed 424 fresh COVID-19 cases on Sunday – the lowest number of cases recorded in a day over the past seven months, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

In 24 hours, the city reported 14 deaths and saw 708 recoveries. The positivity rate was 0.62% and 68,759 tests were conducted in the same period, the bulletin added. On May 26 last, the city had reported 412 cases.

The total number of cases stands at 6,26,873 with a positivity rate of 7.06% with a total of 10,585 deaths and 6,11,243 recoveries.

**Active cases**

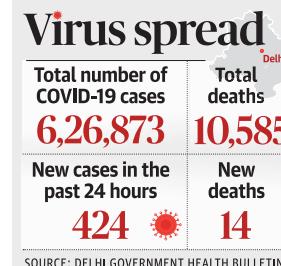
There are currently 5,044 active cases out of which 2,600 are under home isolation.

The positivity rate in the Capital has been less than 1% for the past 12 days. On Saturday, 494 cases were recorded with a positivity rate of 0.73%.

A day after the city pre-



Medical staff at a COVID-19 vaccination centre during the dry run in Daryaganj. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR



val by DCGI for emergency use of two made in India vaccines will give a positive direction to the country's fight against COVID-19. Salute to the scientists and doctors whose hard work helped us reach here."

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has approved Oxford COVID-19 vaccine Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute, and the indigenous Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use.

pared for the roll out of COVID-19 vaccine with a dry run, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday tweeted: "Congratulations to all the countrymen. Ap-

# Delhi Police completes COVID vaccination dry run for over 80,000 personnel

Entire force, including infected officers and those over 50 years of age or with medical conditions, will be covered in three phases of inoculation

**SAURABH TRIVEDI**

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has completed the second dry run to check the best way to vaccinate around 87,000 personnel against COVID-19, a senior officer said on Sunday. The entire process will be done in

three phases.

Muktesh Chander, the Special Commissioner of Police and nodal officer for the COVID-19 action plan, on December 26 passed an order to Delhi Police to update the cellphone number in the Personal Information System

(PIS) on IntraDP system. All the policemen were instructed to update their mobile numbers by January 3, 2021. All district and unit heads were also instructed to ensure completion of the exercise in time so that no one is left out of the vaccination pro-

gramme. The officer said till now, they have conducted two dry runs in the past one week to find out any loopholes in communication and logistics. Both the dry runs were successful and they managed to approach the entire force, the officer said. A

message sent to police personnel had their PIS numbers, names, and mentioned that they will be intimated about the date, time and venue of the vaccination on this mobile. "After the successful completion of the dry run, the police personnel will be in-

formed about the location where they will be vaccinated," said the officer.

He added that till now, 7,612 police personnel have been infected by COVID-19. Though the recovery rate was quite high as 7,424 personnel recovered while 32 died due to the virus.

## + 'Decision of armed forces' doctors on fitness final'

High Court rules while declining plea of a Central Armed Police Forces aspirant

**STAFF REPORTER**

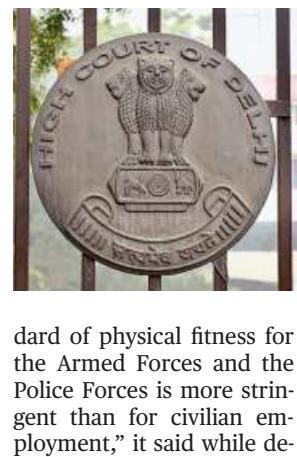
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has reiterated that once the doctors of the Armed Forces, who are well aware of the demands of duties of the Forces, have formed an opinion that a candidate is not medically fit for recruitment, opinion of private or other government doctors to the contrary cannot be accepted.

A Bench of Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Justice Asha Menon noted that private or other government doctors are "unaware of the demands of duties" in which the recruited personnel are required to work in the Forces.

**Stringent standards**

We have on several occasions observed that the stan-



tion. Unfortunately, she was declared medically unfit due to 'Cubitus Valgus' a medical deformity in which the forearm is angled away from the body to a greater degree than normal.

Ms. Priyanka then approached the specialist orthopaedic surgeon in the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital in Karnataka, who, after conducting a thorough examination, declared her fit, observing that "there is a bit Cubitus Valgus carrying angle < 20° (18°)".

**Medically unfit**

Later, she appeared before the Review Medical Board which again declared her medically unfit for the same reason – "Carrying Angle > 20° Both Side".

Further, in order to assure herself that she was not suf-

ferring from any defect, she got herself examined at Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore. The specialist, D. Akshay Yadav examined her and concluded that the carrying angle was: "right elbow 18°, left elbow 19°".

The HC pointed out that even the specialist consulted by Ms. Priyanka found that she suffered from 'cubital valgus'.

"What may seem as a minor difference in the assessment of the civil doctors in comparison to the assessment of the medical boards, may blow up into a serious health condition during the course of service with the CAPFs," it said.

"The general health of candidates would be permanently impacted due to the stress, both physical and mental," it remarked.

Further, in order to assure herself that she was not suf-

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# Heavy rain lashes city; hail likely today

Minimum temperature settles at 9.9°C; inclement weather to continue till Jan. 5

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The Capital received heavy rain accompanied by thunder and gusty winds on Sunday with the Safdarjung weather station receiving 29.1 mm of rainfall overnight up to 8.30 a.m. and 14.8 mm during the day.

Due to overcast conditions, the maximum temperature settled at 15.8 degrees Celsius, which is four degrees colder than normal. The minimum settled at 9.9 degrees Celsius, which was three degrees above normal for the season.

Although the rain brought down the maximum temperature, it provided relief from the cold wave that had led to the mercury to dip to 1.1 degrees Celsius on January 1.

The IMD forecast said that such weather conditions is likely to continue till January 5 and cause moderate to intense wet spell with fairly widespread precipitation accompanied by thunderstorm, lightning and hailstorm over northwest India, with peak activities on January 3 and 4 over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan.

The forecast for January 4 reads, "Generally cloudy sky with light to moderate rain/thundershowers accompanied by gusty winds with speed between 20-30 kmph."

The Met Department has also forecast the possibility of hail at isolated places in the NCR. The maximum and



Vehicles navigating through a heavy spell of rain in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

minimum temperatures are likely to settle between 18 and 10 degrees Celsius.

**Record rainfall**

Mahesh Palawat, vice-president Meteorology at SkyMet

said that the city has already recorded 39 mm of rainfall on Sunday which is the highest in the last decade in January with more to come during the next 48 hours. The record for rainfall in January is 173.2 mm in 1985.

The IMD added that after cessation of wet spell, fresh northerly-northwesterly winds likely to set in over

the plains of northwest India causing cold wave to severe cold wave conditions from January 7 onwards.

**AQI improvement**

The air quality improved slightly due to strong winds on Sunday.

The AQI based on the average of readings from 31 weather stations over a 24-hour period settled at 354, which was in the "very poor" category. The AQI of Delhi was 443 on Saturday, slightly up from 441 on Friday, which were both in the "severe" category.



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(JSD) PHE DEPARTMENT, DIVISION PULWAMA

email: xenphewpulwama@gmail.com

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The cost of tender documents (Non-refundable/Non-Transferable) should be in the shape of e-Challan or Treasury Challan/Receipt in favour Executive Engineer PHE Division Pulwama.

S. No Name of Work Estimated Cost Cost of Tender Document Earmarked Money Deposit Time of completion Tender Opening Authority Class of Contract

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3	Bid submission start date	01	01	2021	1600 Hrs.
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# A reNEWed beginning

With the likelihood of colleges reopening, even if in a staggered manner, we asked students what they were looking forward to the most. Here are a few of the several responses we received from students across the country...

I look forward to the continuation of inculcating computer skills in students. One online class a week should be made mandatory. It will help students become computer savvy.

**Saloni Tyagi,**  
I Year, BJMC,  
Maharaja Agrasen  
Institute of  
Management Studies  
(GGSPU), Rohini,  
Delhi



ignoring my friends. So, the first thing I will do when my college reopens is to spend time with my friends – talk to, understand, and respect them.

**Rimjhim Sharma,**  
V semester, B.A.LLB,  
S. S Jain Subodh Law  
College, Jaipur,  
Rajasthan



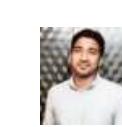
It's been almost six months since classes began for my 10-month course. I want my college to either pause the course or offer an extension, so that the current batch does not miss on the required practical exposure.

**Shohit Rohilla,**  
PGDM in Journalism &  
Mass Communication,  
Xavier's Institute of  
Communication,  
Mumbai,  
Maharashtra



This era of remote study has brought us all to a zone where we learn according to our convenience. Once college reopens, I'm looking forward to an environment that gets me out of this comfort and lets me push my limits.

**J.R. Kunal,**  
I Year, MBA,  
Sri Balaji University,  
Pune, Maharashtra



Earlier I used to borrow books from my college book bank but, due to the pandemic, it was not possible. I gave my exams and assignments based on online resources. So, the very first thing I am going to do after my college reopens is to run to the library.

**Tanu Sharma,**  
II Year, M.Com,  
Schools of Open  
Learning (Delhi  
University),  
Delhi



During the lockdown, the one thing I realised was that we must have people in our life with whom we are able to share our feelings, achievements, failure, dreams... I was spending all my time in realising my goals while



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

enjoy the five-minute breaks, drinking lime tea while talking about anything and everything with a sparkle in our eyes.

**Bhagya Jayesh,**  
I Year, MSc Statistics,  
Christ University,  
Bengaluru,  
Karnataka



I am eagerly looking forward to discovering my new college. I would love to meet my new friends and the professors, tour the college campus and enjoy the hostel nights with my college mates.

**Adrija  
Gangopadhyay,**  
I Year, B.Tech, Indian  
Institute of  
Engineering Science  
and Technology,  
Shibpur, West Bengal



When colleges open, bridge course will be necessary for a smooth transition from online to classroom learning. At the same time, the experiences of online learning can be used to reform the decade-old pedagogical approaches and bring in some innovative learner-centric approaches

**Arun V.R.,**  
I Year, MA English  
Literature,  
Government Arts  
College, Karur,  
Tamil Nadu



The pandemic started a new revolution in online education. During the lockdown, the professors were available 24x7 to clear my doubts and also offered to take free classes to help prepare for exams like GATE and IES. I am looking forward to this continuing even after offline classes start.

**Neeraj Kumar,**  
Final Year, B.E Civil  
Engineering, DAV  
Institute Of  
Engineering and  
Technology, Jalandhar, Punjab



**Aswin S.,**  
II Year, B.Com., LL.B.  
(Hons.), The School  
of Excellence in Law,  
TNDALU, Chennai



gathering of friends, be it during the lunch break or between lectures. We would gather and discuss a topic, make fun of something, chat about the things trending in social media, and make plans for the weekend.

**Sivarishi,**  
Final Year, B.E.  
Mechanical,  
Sankara University,  
Kanchipuram,  
Tamil Nadu



The one thing that I'm looking forward to is the continuation of online classes even after the pandemic ends, as it is more convenient and less time-consuming to attend a class from home. In a week, three should be allocated for online classes and three for offline. Online learning can be as good or even better than in-person classroom learning when done right.

**Tarapreet Kaur,**  
II Year, BA, Govt  
Bilasa girls PG  
college, Bilaspur,  
Chhattisgarh



I look forward to experiencing that morning panic when my alarm rings, my eyes pop open and I'm instantly off for my 8:00 a.m. class thinking about the day's myriad tasks with a grumpy face that instantly disappears when I see my friends.

I want to sit down in a classroom with a pen and a notebook, listen to lectures,

## CAREER

### High notes

Five essential points to consider for one who wants to succeed as a musician

■ ASHUTOSH PHATAK

There's a place for every type of personality in the music industry, as its scope is incredibly large. However, this article will focus on the performers, producers, sound engineers, DJs and the like, who create the "product" of music and engage directly with audiences and clients.

#### Do you have a constant drive to express yourself creatively?

It's almost like a compulsion for most successful musicians. Whether you're creating a new song, commercial or performing a gig, every instant requires an unique expression to capture the mood, what the client wants or even captivate an audience. This constant reinterpretation of the art requires a consistent drive that should be second nature to an artist.

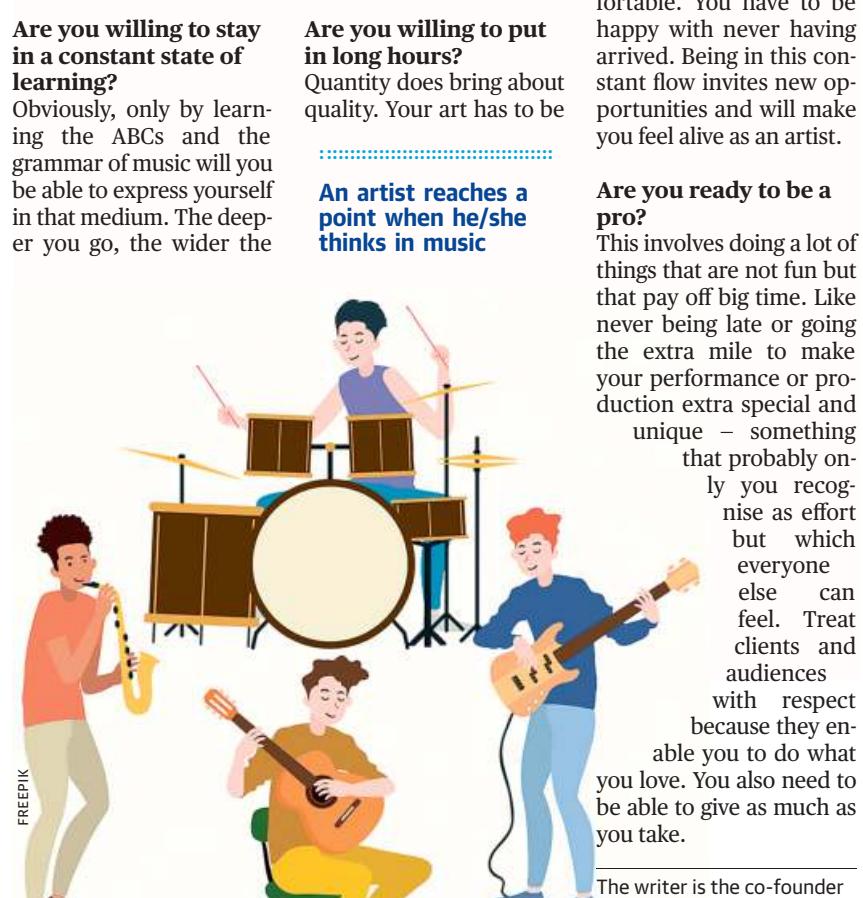
#### Are you willing to stay in a constant state of learning?

Obviously, only by learning the ABCs and the grammar of music will you be able to express yourself in that medium. The deeper you go,

#### Are you willing to put in long hours?

Quantity does bring about quality. Your art has to be

#### An artist reaches a point when he/she thinks in music



FREEPIC

CM YK

The writer is the co-founder of The True School of Music.

performed so many times that it becomes second nature and, as everything you have learnt, converts to instinct, will enter that meditative space where creative expression happens instantaneously. Losing the concept of time after putting in a lot of time enables one to constantly create, keeping the art and expression fresh and professional.

**Are you willing to adapt?**

One cannot emphasise enough the importance of flexibility and willingness to adapt for a successful career. Staying current and relevant often involves reinvention. This does not mean that you need to forget what you have learnt or change a carefully crafted identity. It's all about evolution and you need to get comfortable with not getting comfortable. You have to be happy with never having arrived. Being in this constant flow invites new opportunities and will make you feel alive as an artist.

**Are you willing to put in long hours?**

Quantity does bring about quality. Your art has to be

**Are you ready to be a pro?**

This involves doing a lot of things that are not fun but that pay off big time. Like never being late or going the extra mile to make your performance or production extra special and unique – something that probably only you recognise as effort but which everyone else can feel. Treat clients and audiences with respect because they enable you to do what you love. You also need to be able to give as much as you take.

**Offensive cybersecurity**

These experts are responsible for finding loopholes in systems by attacking them, just like hackers. Roles in this domain include Network Security Administrator, Digital Forensic Analyst, SOAR Developer, and Cybercrime Investigator. A professional with two to four years of experience earns between ₹5 lakhs and ₹8 lakhs per annum.

## OPTIONS

### For a resilient future

Here are five emerging areas that will see a substantial demand

■ GAURAV VOHRA

Amid the ongoing pandemic and the changing dynamics of the business world, it has become imperative for students to choose a resilient career path. Let's take a look at five emerging options that students can consider.

#### Defensive cybersecurity

This is one of the two fundamental pillars of cybersecurity. These experts identify security vulnerabilities in organisational networks by performing risk assessment and develop defensive strategies to protect the network. A student can build a career as an SOC Analyst, Security Analyst, Incident Responder, and Intrusion Detection Analyst. A professional in this domain with two to four years of experience earns between ₹5 lakhs and ₹8 lakhs per annum. With over five years of experience, professionals can earn up to ₹14 lakhs annually.

#### Product management

In today's technology-driven world, Product-as-a-



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Service continues to dominate and Product Management offers promising opportunities in different sectors like IT/ITES, E-commerce, Retail, Consumer Goods, Healthcare, Travel and Hospitality, FinTech, and more. According to PayScale.com's salary survey, a Product Manager with one year of experience can earn up to ₹10 lakhs annually.

#### Digital HR

Digital HR is the optimisation process of Workforce Management to make the processes more efficient and effective by leveraging technologies like Social, Mobile, Analytics and Cloud (SMAC). It focuses on using different HR Software and centralising various HR and business-related data.

Popular job roles include HR Operations and Data Management, Human Resource Information Systems Specialists and HR Analysts. An early career Digital HR Specialist earns between ₹4 lakhs and ₹6 lakhs annually.

The writer is the co-founder and CEO, Jigsaw Academy.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

### Physical Research Laboratory Post-Doctoral Fellowship

Physical Research Laboratory, Department of Space, Government of India, offers this fellowship to promote post-doctoral research.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Students whose Doctorate (PhD) thesis has been submitted in any field of science or engineering, who have first class (60%) or equivalent grades at both Bachelor's and Master's levels and are under 35 years of age.

**PRIZES AND REWARDS:** Monthly stipend up to ₹55,000, contingency grant and other benefits.

**DEADLINE:** Round the year

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years of getting their Ph.D. They should not be more than 35 years old.

**PRIZES AND REWARDS:** Monthly stipend of ₹55,000, contingency grant and other benefits.

**DEADLINE:** Round the year

**APPLICATION:** Online b4s.in/EDGE/PDIS

**Dr. Abdul Kalam Scholarship for Medical/Engineering Aspirants**

Buddy4Study India Foundation supports the higher education of meritorious students who need financial support.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Open to students from the economically weaker sections, who are appearing for national/state-level engineering/medical entrance exams, have passed Class 12 examination with minimum 55% marks. Students appearing for the Class 12 exam in 2021 can also apply but will have to present the mark sheet after the results are announced. The annual family income should be less than ₹3 lakh from all sources.

**PRIZES AND REWARDS:** ₹20,000

**DEADLINE:** February 15

**APPLICATION:** Online b4s.in/edge/PLP4

### Post-Doctoral Fellowships at IIT-Palakkad

Indian Institute of Technology Palakkad offers this scholarship to promote higher research.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Indian doctoral degree holders from any recognised institute/university can apply within five

years of getting their Ph.D. They should not be more than 35 years old.

**PRIZES AND REWARDS:** ₹20,000

**DEADLINE:** February 15

**APPLICATION:** Online b4s.in/edge/AKS2

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

**LAMP Fellowship**

A 10-11 month programme, the Legislative Assistants to Members of Parliament (LAMP) fellowship is open to Indian citizens who have a Bachelor's degree in any discipline and are 25 years or younger. LAMP fellows work as legislative aides to MPs providing them research on laws and policies being debated in Parliament. This experience allows them to see how MPs balance their responsibilities as an elected representative and their role as a lawmaker. The fellowship serves as a stepping stone for careers into politics, civil services, think tanks, and public policy.

**Last date to apply is January 15, 2021.** For more details, visit <https://bit.ly/3n6bzDl>

### NCPA-Citi Scholarships

The National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), in partnership with Citi, offers scholarships to young and promising students who seek advanced training in the field of Hindustani music (vocal and instrumental). In 2021, the Citi-NCPA Scholarships are being offered to Indian citizens only for Vocal (khayal/dhrupad) and Percussion (tabla/pakhawaj).

Applications (biodata on music education) must be sent ONLY by email to [ncpascholarships@gmail.com](mailto:ncpascholarships@gmail.com)

**Last date to apply is January 15, 2021.** For more details, visit <https://bit.ly/3n6bzDl>

AN-NOE



## A hurried gamble

Opacity in communication is dangerous when there is high vaccine hesitancy

The stage is set for the biggest vaccine rollout in India's history with the Drugs Controller General of India formally approving two vaccines for restricted use under emergency conditions: Covishield by the Serum Institute of India (SII), and Covaxin by Bharat Biotech. Though other vaccine candidates are in the fray too, these two set a precedent for how future COVID-19 vaccines will be evaluated and administered. India has been long known as a manufacturer of vaccines but less so as one that can develop from scratch, test and then provide it to the world. The pandemic offers an unprecedented opportunity to establish those credentials, but already a key step – of establishing the vaccine's efficacy in the Indian population before rollout – has been side-stepped. A double-blinded phase-3 trial – where some volunteers get the vaccine and some do not and the rate of disease in both arms is compared to determine the vaccine's ability – is among the foundations of evidence-based medicine. The SII because of its agreement with AstraZeneca has furnished data from a phase-3 trial in the U.K. and Brazil, but nothing publicly on how protective the vaccine was in 1,600 Indian volunteers. All of the leading vaccine candidates – Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca itself – made public at least partial results of the vaccine's abilities in their own populations before these were given a go-ahead by the respective regulators. Bharat Biotech, which is conducting such a phase-3 trial in India, is yet to furnish similar data because it has not been able to finish recruiting the required number of volunteers. The Indian data furnished by the companies only attest to the vaccine's safety and its evoking some immune response. However, this pandemic has revealed multiple instances of therapies and interventions – from convalescent plasma therapy to a slew of antivirals – that seemed to work well under idealised lab conditions but did not measurably protect in real-world hospital conditions.

The concern from approving an untested vaccine is that it makes it nearly impossible to conduct a proper phase-3 trial. It will be unethical to expect volunteers to participate in a trial where there is only a 50% chance of being administered the actual vaccine, when they have the option of the real dose elsewhere. Both SII and Bharat Biotech, given the pace of recruitment and potential pool of volunteers, would have been able to generate much more data within mere weeks. So, it is hard to imagine why an emergency use authorisation of these vaccines was hurried through. Opacity marks the government's communication strategy in a country where distrust of vaccines remains in spite of years of vaccination programmes and elimination of grave diseases. The government neglects this at the country's peril.

## A tortuous recovery

Record GST inflows in December augur well, but the economy is still in a flux

For a fiscally strapped government, scrambling to arrest the economy's recessionary decline, the GST collections in the last month of 2020, of over ₹1.15-lakh crore, come as welcome tidings. With revenue receipts at just 40% of the Budget target in the first eight months of 2020-21, the government would hope that December's indirect tax inflow, the highest since the indirect tax regime's launch in July 2017, shall sustain over the last quarter of the year. GST inflows have now stayed above ₹1-lakh crore for three months in a row, averaging ₹1.05-lakh crore through October and November, before the December spike. After two quarters of a sharp shrinkage in the economy following the COVID-19 lockdown last March, this also infuses hope that the third quarter might see India's headline growth rate resurfacing from subterranean depths. The Finance Ministry has stressed that the 12% year-on-year buoyancy in GST's December kitty, the highest growth rate recorded in 21 months, reflects 'rapid post-pandemic economic recovery', bolstered by improvements in compliance following a recent crackdown on indirect tax evaders. It is important to discern how much of an impact stricter oversight and better compliance had on these revenues so as to distil what came from normal economic activity in November, which is what December revenues largely account for. Moreover, November included the fag end of India's festive season so the numbers may moderate in the months to come, even though growth rates may stay high due to a low base effect as it gets close to a year after the lockdown.

But new GST rules, effective January 1, are expected to tighten GST compliance further so that part of the revenue booster should persist. Second, the GST on imports grew a robust 27% in November, even though overall merchandise imports contracted 13.33%. With December recording a 7.6% surge in imports, growing for the first time since February 2020, GST on imports should rise further in the coming month. Similarly, car sales surged for the fifth month in a row in December, which should not only boost the GST receipts in January but also bring in precious compensation cess. Whatever trajectory revenues take from here, pain points persist and some key niggling issues seem to be aggravating further. Core sectors recorded yet another contraction in November, with cement and steel slipping back after a minor uptick. New investments in the October to December 2020 quarter declined a whopping 88% from a year ago, as per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Employment levels declined significantly in October, followed by almost 35 lakh job losses in November and continue to deteriorate through December, CMIE reckons. The Centre needs to address some of these challenges – in the coming Union Budget or outside – to recover lost ground faster.

# Time to resurrect a popular front

Allies and political alliances need to be rearranged and the country requires a new political instrument for governability



HARISH KHARE

**T**he UPA is dead and it lies buried in a *kabristan* in Bharuch." This pithy observation was made by a senior Congressman, though he dare not publicly claim its authorship. The reference was to the last resting place of Ahmed Patel who was generally acknowledged to be the informal 'convenor' of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) that ruled India from May 2004 to May 2014. Sooner or later, the polity will need to address the central issue: Is the United Progressive Alliance truly dead and has the time come to put in place a different understanding and arrangement to take on the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

### UPA, blunted and a target

As a tender of political currency, the UPA is worth as much as a pre-demonetisation two thousand rupee note. Its only notional value is to provide a false sense of exalted importance to Mrs. Sonia Gandhi who remains its titular head. As a working political arrangement, the UPA is a blunted and useless instrument.

Yet, the "UPA" remains a convenient shorthand for the amorphous political groups and parties arrayed in opposition to the NDA, even though the grouping has no

common theme or purpose. Past loyalties and solidarities are not remembered among the erstwhile UPA partners, but it remains a handy object of abuse and ridicule for the Prime Minister, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its designated abusers. The UPA is dubbed the enemy, an unholy congregation of unprincipled leaders and parties.

The BJP gets some purchase because of the Congress's insistence on preening itself as the centre of the UPA as it happens to be the largest party, even though its paltry kitty of 50 odd seats is not enough for it to demand the Leader of the Opposition status in the Lok Sabha. This claim, in effect, boils down to an expectation on the Congress's part that its leader, Rahul Gandhi, be acknowledged as the potential 'shadow' prime minister, the only national alternative to Narendra Modi.

And that remains the rub because all potential partners are painfully aware that the Congress's feebleness and infirmities have much to do with the whole unresolved question of a Rahul Gandhi leadership. These possible allies concede that the BJP has laughed its way to bigger and bigger Lok Sabha tallies by mocking and ridiculing the Rahul Gandhi pretensions.

Nonetheless it is pertinent to keep in mind that, on its part, the NDA, as per the 2019 results, still does not command the majority of popular vote; its combined vote share was nearly 45%, of which the BJP's contribution was 37.4%; but, now with the departure of the Shiv



Sena and the Shiromani Akali Dal, the NDA figure stands reduced. The majority can be said to remain firmly immune to the Modi charm.

### A credible alternative

The task before the non-BJP forces and groups will remain about how to cohere in a manner as to present a credible alternative to Mr. Modi's BJP. But before it can convert itself into an electoral entity, it will need to graft for itself a collective political persona.

It should be taken as axiomatic that these last seven years of the Modi raj have, inevitably, produced a new political economy of satisfaction and anger, a new matrix of anxieties and resentments, and a new calculus of fear and triumphalism. The political challenge is how to mobilise the emerging aspirations and unaddressed discontents; how to provide hope and encouragement to those who have been made to feel helpless, powerless, even disenfranchised.

These frustrations manifest themselves in a million mutinies, big and small, all over India. Meaningful terms such as "struggles," "resistance" and "movements"

may have disappeared from the mainstream media's lexicon, but these continue to have a meaning and relevance as unjustness and inequities continue to define our society.

The Congress cannot be an honest partner in this venture. Both the Congress and the BJP are parties of *status quo* and both are unsympathetic to the masses' yearning for a gentler India. Except for a *pro forma* different take on the Hindu-Muslim divide, the Congress and the BJP represent the same coin.

### Platform not Congress-centric

A Congress-centric alternative to the BJP no longer works. A new national front is needed: an umbrella platform under which very many forces and individuals may get incentivised to take shelter. The Indian political class is remarkably expedient; a new consortium should enable a Naveen Patnaik to firmly de-wean away from the BJP or offer a way out to Nitish Kumar, as also to accommodate and tame an Asaduddin Owaisi. Just as there are no permanent enemies, there can be no permanent disengagement. Maharashtra has shown the extent to which partners and allies can be remulched.

A new national 'front' will have to anchor itself in a common political purpose and a shared sense of national destiny. A minimum understanding can be forged around four imperatives: first, restoring a balance between the Centre and the States – the Centre has made a mockery of the federal spirit and arrangement; restoring a sense of

partnership and participation to the minorities – it is entirely unhealthy that a ruling party of 303 MPs cannot boast of a single Muslim member; restoring the constitutional institutions to their original vitality as a much needed check on arbitrary and absolute power; and, restoring a semblance to sensitivity and civility to our political life – there is too much violence and ugliness against citizens.

### As a serious endeavour

All this is predicated on a premise that the non-Congress, non-BJP platform will not just be a feast of vultures but a serious endeavour in national responsibility and moral seriousness. And such a congregation should be able to hold out an assurance that these leaders are cognisant of the fault lines gnawing the polity; they will need to project a confidence that not only do they have a good idea how these breaches can be plugged but they also have what it will take to ensure that new fault lines do not ensnare the polity. That it can deliver governability and coherence, unity and stability – and, that, it would not push India into uncertainty and anarchy.

Too much of strong leadership has robbed India of its democratic exuberance and constitutional dynamism. Come to think of it, there is nothing inevitable about an extravagantly flamboyant Virat Kohli; a quiet, effective Ajinkya Rahane can also deliver.

Harish Khare is a senior journalist based in Delhi

## An anti-disclosure amendment that hits public health

The dilution of patent working disclosure rules hampers the effectiveness of India's compulsory licensing regime



PANKHURI AGARWAL

**T**he central government recently published the Patent (Amendment) Rules, 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3oajZqZ>), amending the format of a statement that patentees and licensees are required to annually submit to the Patent Office disclosing the extent to which they have commercially worked or made the patented inventions available to the public in the country. The amendment has significantly watered down the disclosure format, and this could hamper the effectiveness of India's compulsory licensing regime which depends on full disclosure of patent working information. This in turn could hinder access to vital inventions including life-saving medicines, thereby impacting public health.

### Disclosure of information

In exchange of a 20-year patent monopoly granted to an inventor, India's patent law imposes a duty on the patentee to commercially work the invention in India to ensure that its benefits reach the public. In fact, the purpose of granting patents itself is to not only encourage innovation but also ensure that the inventions are worked in India and are made available to the public in sufficient quantity at reasonable prices.

A failure of this duty could trigger compulsory licensing (<https://bit.ly/3pKKhVI>) or even subsequent revocation (<https://bit.ly/3n8g9lx>).

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



the government to strictly enforce the patent working disclosure rules and take action against the violators. The PIL also called for a reform of Form 27 (<https://bit.ly/3plfkl9>), arguing that the information it sought was grossly insufficient to ascertain the extent of the working of the patent.

### Dilution of disclosure

The government acknowledged that the Form 27 format was problematic and provided an undertaking to the court to effect appropriate amendments. The court accordingly disposed of the PIL in 2018 (<https://bit.ly/2JjcXk0>), directing the government to complete the amendment process within the timelines mentioned in the undertaking. However, in non-compliance of the court's order, the government published the amended form recently after a delay of almost two years. More importantly, instead of strengthening the form, the amendment has significantly weakened it further, thereby defeating the entire purpose of the amendment exercise.

Instead of calling for more elaborate details of the information already sought in the Form as suggested in the PIL, the amended form has removed the requirement of submitting a lot of such important information altogether,

thus damaging the core essence of the patent working requirement and the Form 27 format. The form now requires the patentees and licensees to provide only for the following information: whether the patent has been worked or not; if the invention has been worked, the revenue or value accrued in India from manufacturing and importing the invention into India; and if it has not been worked, reasons for the same and the steps being taken towards working. They are no longer required to provide any information in respect of the quantum of the invention manufactured/imported into India, the licenses and sub-licenses granted during the year and the meeting of public requirement at a reasonable price.

How will the data on merely the revenue/value accrued from manufacturing/importing the invention enable one to determine the extent to which it has been worked and its public requirement has been met? The most basic data required for this assessment is the quantum or the total units of the invention manufactured/imported in India. It is the disclosure of this data by Bayer in Form 27 that played a crucial role in grant of India's first compulsory license to Natco for the anti-cancer drug Sorafenib/Nexavar (<https://bit.ly/3n8g9lx>). The deletion of the requirement of its disclosure is thus shocking and defeats the very purpose of this form.

The removal of the requirement of submitting any licensing information, including the disclosure of even the existence of licenses (instead of seeking further details such as names of licensees/sub-licensees and the broad terms of the licenses as suggested in the PIL),

means that the patentees/licensees can just self-certify that they've worked the patent without having to support the claim with the data on how they've done so, including through licensing/sub-licensing the patent.

Further, the omission to mandate disclosure of details such as the price of the invention, its estimated demand, the extent to which the demand has been met, details of any special schemes or steps undertaken by the patentee to satisfy the demand, etc., as recommended in the PIL, makes it extremely difficult to ascertain whether the invention has been made available to the public in sufficient quantity and at an affordable price.

**Impact on public interest**

To conclude, the government has significantly weakened the critical duty imposed by the law on patentees/licenses to disclose patent working information, so much so that it has defeated the very purpose of it. The lack of this information could prevent invocation of compulsory licensing and other public interest measures in cases of patent abuse and make certain inventions inaccessible to the public.

Such lack of accessibility in case of patented medicines could in turn have adverse consequences for public health of the country.

Therefore, the government must reconsider its amendments to the form taking into account the PIL recommendations and re-amend it to restore as well as strengthen its spirit.

Pankhuri Agarwal is an IP law researcher and a Managing Editor at SpicyIP, an IP law blog. The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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and some key niggling issues seem to be aggravating further. Core sectors recorded yet another contraction in November, with cement and steel slipping back after a minor uptick. New investments in the October to December 2020 quarter declined a whopping 88% from a year ago, as per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Employment levels declined significantly in October, followed by almost 35 lakh job losses in November and continue to deteriorate through December, CMIE reckons. The Centre needs to address some of these challenges – in the coming Union Budget or outside – to recover lost ground faster.

### Prepping for the jab

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has accorded approval for specific vaccines though the crucial phase-3 trial is still in progress in India. Does the fact that a similar vaccine has been approved in the U.K. seem to have weighed heavily on the Subject Expert Committee of the DCGI? The decision to administer the second dose anytime between four and 12 weeks after the first dose may prove to be counterproductive in the absence of any "clarity on how long the protective effect of a single first dose lasts". It may be more prudent to adhere to the original plan of administering the second dose, as there is the danger of the entire exercise going

to waste. It would be better to administer two doses with a four week interval to a smaller number of people and be sure about the protection. The point to be noted is that the U.K.'s decision to increase the interval between two doses of vaccine has been severely criticised by the British Medical Association. The reason is said to be the current and rapid surge of new cases. But how far this measure will help the U.K. in containment is anybody's guess.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,  
Hyderabad

time to cut down on cases and casualties. Even so, it is of paramount importance that all internationally stipulated protocol for vaccine development and approval are followed before such a launch. The government and the DCGI are certainly well-intentioned, but the question is whether we can take our chances and start the vaccination programme. Impatience is not necessarily a virtue in pandemic time. It is unwise and pointless to mix national pride with life-saving vaccines and we must not do anything to the liking of anti-vaxxers. The nod for Covaxin is premature. Till more robust data is available, the indigenous Bharat Biotech vaccine must be held in abeyance and can be considered for use as back-

### up when phase-3 trial results permit it.

G. DAVID MILTON,  
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

■ The new year has brought with it hope in the form of the imminent launch of vaccines in India. While the 'dry runs' and logistics are being worked out, there is no dearth of rumours doing the rounds, especially on social media, to discredit the vaccination programme, making it difficult for the layperson to know what lies ahead. Doctors in charge of community health in Kerala assure people that though the vaccines do not claim to be 100% effective, they are the best bet under the circumstances to acquire immunity for at least a minimum of six months. They have also recommended continuing

### with all precautions even after vaccination, to be safer. This message needs to get across.

ELIZABETH KOSHY,  
Maramon, Pathanamthitta, Kerala

**Protocol 'breach'**  
The men in blue run the risk of fielding a depleted team or playing no cricket in Sydney if Cricket Australia and the BCCI fail to resolve the bio-bubble 'breach' issue amicably. It was only recently that the England-South Africa series had to be

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the story titled "Ahead of crucial FATF meeting, Pakistan arrests LeT leader Lakhvi" (Jan. 3, 2020), there was a reference to a think-tank called Global Counter Terrorism Centre. Actually, it is called Global Counter Terrorism Council.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by phone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. The Terms of

# The importance of an otherwise routine vote

There will possibly be a unanimous rejection of the Republican objections to Joe Biden's electoral votes



G. BALACHANDRAN

While there is little doubt that Joe Biden will be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States on January 20, 2021, the coming week will have major implications not only for the effectiveness of his administration but also for the future direction of U.S. politics and society.

At present, Republicans hold 52 seats and the Democrats 48 seats. Therefore, Republicans control the Senate. Unless the Democrats win both the runoff elections in Georgia, this situation will continue. Even winning one seat, which under normal circumstances would be a credible achievement, will not do any good as the Republicans will still have a majority of 51 against 49. Depending on the loyalty Donald Trump commands after January 20th and the political ambitions of the Senate majority leader, Mr. Biden may find it difficult to get even some, if not many, of his appointments ratified by the Senate let alone some of his major legislative bills. Therefore, the first issue of consequence for the Biden administration will be the results of the January 5 Senate by-elections in Georgia.

#### Announcing electoral votes

The second issue that will not have any direct impact on the Biden administration but would definitely affect the future course of party politics in U.S. will be on January 6 when the electoral votes are formally announced and tabulated in a Joint Session of Congress. Normally this is a sedate affair lasting less than a couple of hours and hardly attracts any attention. This year, however, it is likely to stretch out over a longer period and is likely to get minute-by-minute TV coverage and commentaries. (But that would not be unusual this election. In normal times, neither the media nor the public even notices the State Electoral College voting. This year, however, there was a day-long minute-by-minute media coverage of this process across all States.)



Ahead of Georgia's two Senate runoff elections on January 5, volunteers rally for the Democratic candidates, Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock. • AFP

Why is this important this year? This process is a rather routine affair set out in the Electoral Count Act of 1887. It requires the opening and counting of electoral votes from the States – as required by the Twelfth Amendment – to commence at 1:00 p.m. on January 6, with both the Senate and the House of Representatives present in "the Hall of the House of Representatives" and the President of the Senate serving as "their presiding officer".

#### Making objections

It then provides that the opening and counting of each State's electoral votes will proceed State-by-State in alphabetical order. If there is only one submission of electoral votes from a State, the operation of the statute is acceptably straightforward and comprehensible: this submission must count according to the electoral votes contained therein unless there is an objection to the State's electoral votes. The Act takes into account a situation where such objections are made. According to the Act, "Upon such reading of any such certificate or paper, the President of the Senate shall call for objections, if any. Every objection shall be made in writing, and shall state clearly and concisely, and without argument, the ground thereof, and shall be signed by at least one Senator and one Member of the House of Representatives before the same shall be received."

In the present instance, already a number of Republican Senators and

Congresspersons have made known their support for such objections to be made when the results of some States carried by Mr. Biden are read out and announced. What happens when such objections are made?

The Act requires in such case: "When all objections so made to any vote or paper from a State shall have been received and read, the Senate shall thereupon withdraw, and such objections shall be submitted to the Senate for its decision; and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall, in like manner, submit such objections to the House of Representatives for its decision."

What happens then? In the present instance where, from all accounts, only one "return" of electoral votes have been submitted for each of the States, the Act provides that "no electoral vote or votes from any State which shall have been regularly given by electors whose appointment has been lawfully certified to according to section 6 of this title from which but one return has been received shall be rejected, but the two Houses concurrently may reject the vote or votes when they agree that such vote or votes have not been so regularly given by electors whose appointment has been so certified." In plain language, both the Houses must agree separately to uphold the objections and reject the votes. In the present instance, the objections will only be in respect of electoral votes won by Mr. Biden.

On January 6th, the Republicans will control the Senate with a major-

ity of 51-48. Theoretically all the Republican Senators can vote to sustain the objection. However, the Democrats, having a strength of 222 members in a full house strength of 435, will control the House of Representatives. The House will, therefore, in all likelihood reject the objections. Since there will, under the circumstances, be no agreement between the two Houses to sustain the objection, it will be rejected and Mr. Biden's electoral votes will not be disturbed. Therefore, the objections raised by some Republican Senators and Congresspersons are destined to fail. The lack of unanimity will be ascribed to partisan politics.

#### Danger for the Republicans

The real danger (to the Republican Party) is, however, that there may be unanimity between both Houses in rejecting the objections. As mentioned earlier, on January 6th there will be 51 Republican Senators and 48 Democrats. If two or more Republican Senators vote with their Democratic colleagues in rejecting the objections, then the Senate, too, would be rejecting the objections. Already according to press reports, a number of Senate Republicans have acknowledged Mr. Biden's victory, and several – including Senator Susan Collins (Maine), Patrick J. Toomey (Pennsylvania) and Mitt Romney (Utah) – have said that they plan to oppose any challenge to the electoral college vote. In addition, the Republican Senate Majority Whip John Thune isn't whipping for or against Mr. Trump saying that the GOP leadership is letting members "vote their conscience." Therefore, those Republican Senators who vote to sustain the objections cannot fall back on the excuse that they were following party directives. They will have to admit that they were either following their "conscience" or Mr. Trump. Both are unlikely to go well in future electoral battles.

Therefore, there is a strong possibility that there will be a unanimous rejection of the Republican objections to Mr. Biden's electoral votes on January 6. It cannot but have some repercussions on the future direction of the Republican Party and U.S. political developments.

Dr. G. Balachandran is former Development Correspondent of The Hindu

#### FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

## Metaphor for hope

Journalism creates a better-informed citizenry, which in turn creates a better collective future



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

excesses are not romanticised. The pain and poignancy of struggle never become roadblocks in our march forward; they tend to become guiding markers instead. In this model, the agency is clearly with the citizens and it never gets transferred to strongmen leaders.

Some critics of journalism have asked me over the last few years what the benefits are of the two tracks of journalism: bearing witness and making sense. They argue that journalism focuses on a narrative of gloom that forces many people to avoid news altogether. However, for many, these two tracks contribute to strengthening the agency of citizens as they help them retain their curiosity to know about the happenings around them and cultivate a will for change. Silicon Valley is celebrating ideas like a custom-built news feed, personalisation, and machine learning. Its focus is more on encapsulating news and analysis, which are propelled by metrics and analytics. The ideas of 'echo chambers' and 'information silos' are natural corollaries of this model. At a deeper level, the metrics-driven model looks at the present through a rear-view mirror. It successfully eschews the plurality of views as it focuses excessively on catering to the exclusive needs of an individual or an interest group.

#### Public good

It is my earnest view that journalism functions as a conscious breaker of silos. It has an inclusive approach where the focus remains on the idea of a public good. Despite the sway of WhatsApp, which has become the fountain head of disinformation, citizens turned to journalism when it mattered most. A survey by YouGov under its Covid-19 Consumer Monitor programme validated my theory that the 'public good' element in journalism will protect the sector from the vagaries of the market. The numbers for India are really encouraging. The important find of the survey was that 76% of the respondents in India said they had watched or read more news lately than they did earlier. This was the highest, followed by Japan, with 61%. The survey, contrary to popular belief, found that even those who are worried about the future opt to consume more news rather than avoid it. Journalism creates a better-informed citizenry, which in turn creates a better collective future.

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## Don't ignore the women farmers

The gender gap in the agriculture sector will only widen more with the current farm laws

#### THAMIZHACHI THANGAPANDIAN

Eminent agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan once said, "Some historians believe that it was women who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fibre and fuel."

#### A common misconception

In India, whenever we talk about agriculture, we think of men as farmers. However, this is far from the truth. According to the agricultural census, 73.2% of rural women are engaged in farming activities but only 12.8% own landholdings. Due to cultural, social and religious forces, women have been denied ownership of land. This stems from the perception that farming is a man's profession. The India Human Development Survey reports

that 83% of agricultural land in the country is inherited by male members of the family and less than 2% by their female counterparts. Thus, women are mostly left without any title of land in their names and are excluded from the definition of farmers. Besides, 81% of women agricultural labourers belong to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, so they also contribute to the largest share of casual and landless labourers.

The government too turns a blind eye to their problem of non-recognition and conveniently labels them as 'cultivators' or 'agricultural labourers' but not 'farmers'. Without any recognition, women are systematically excluded from all the benefits of government schemes. Moreover, they are not guaranteed the rights which they would otherwise be given if they were recognised as farmers, such as loans for cultivation, loan waivers, crop insurance, subsidies or even compensation to their families in cases where they commit suicide.

Non-recognition as farmers is only one of their problems. As the Mahila



SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

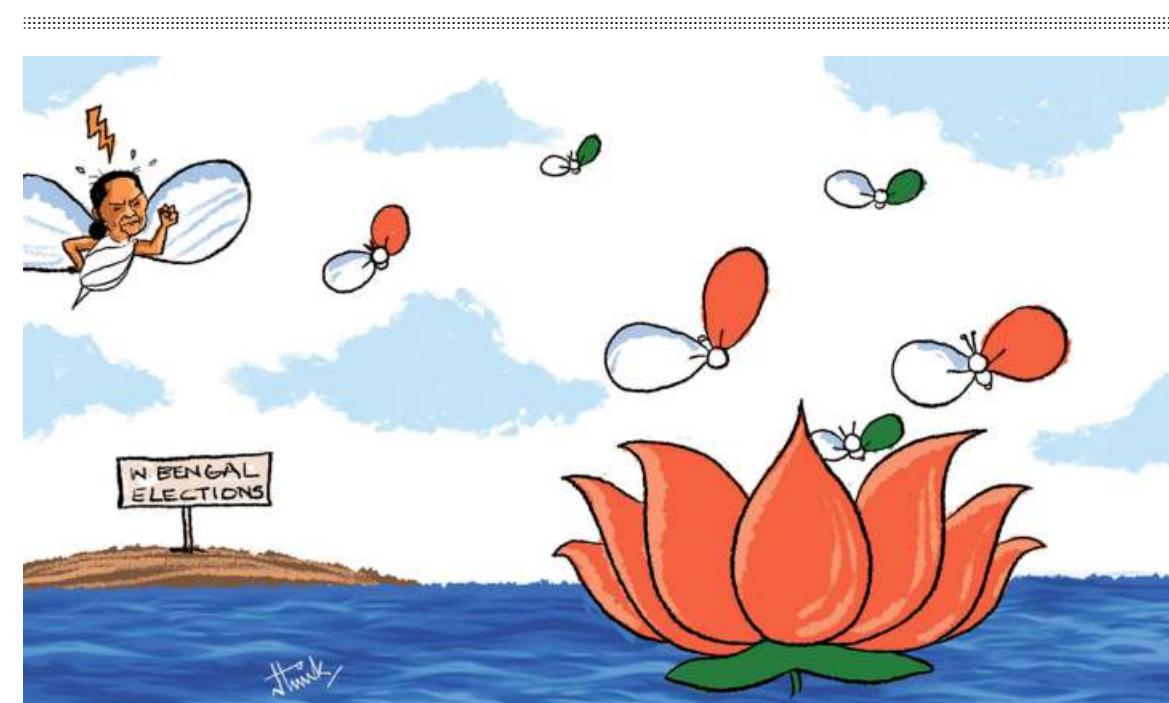
Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM) notes, they have unequal access to rights over land, water and forests. There is gendered access to support systems such as storage facilities, transportation costs, and cash for new investments or for paying off old dues or for other services related to agricultural credit. There is also gendered access to inputs and markets. Thus, despite their large contribution to the sector, women farmers have been reduced to a marginal section, vulnerable to exploitation.

#### The farm laws

Now they have a new worry: the farm laws. Since the government's policies never aimed to reduce disparity or alleviate their distress, women farmers fear that the farm laws will further deepen gender inequality in the sector. MAKAAM, in its statement, has highlighted several issues with the laws. The first is the lack of any mention of MSP (minimum support price) that protects farmers from exploitation. It also highlights how women are barely in a position as empowered agents who can either understand or negotiate (written) agreements with traders and corporate entities who are seeking to enter into agreements with the farmers to purchase their produce or for other services. It is clear that farmers will have no bargaining power in the corporatisation of agriculture, where corporates will decide the price with no safety net or adequate redressal mechanism for the farmers. Consequently, the small marginal and medium farmers will be forced to sell their land to big agro-businesses and become wage labourers.

But while this struggle rages on, we must not forget the troubles of our women farmers. Perhaps that is why they are at the front line of this protest – to remind us that they are too are farmers and have an equal stake in this fight.

T. Sumathy aka Thamizhachi Thangapandian is an academic, Tamil poet, an MP (South Chennai constituency), and member of the Standing Committee (Information and Technology)



#### DATA POINT

### Nature's fury

Extreme climate events have increased significantly across India since the turn of the millennium, according to a recent report. Floods, droughts, and cyclones have become increasingly common in many regions across India's diverse climatic zones. Worryingly, some flood-prone districts are becoming drought-prone or vice-versa in a short period.

**FLOODS** | The chart shows the number of floods (left axis) and the number of districts affected by floods (right axis). Between 1970 and 2004, three floods occurred per year on an average. However, between 2005 and 2019, the yearly average rose to 11. Similarly, 19 districts were affected annually on an average until 2005. After 2005, the number

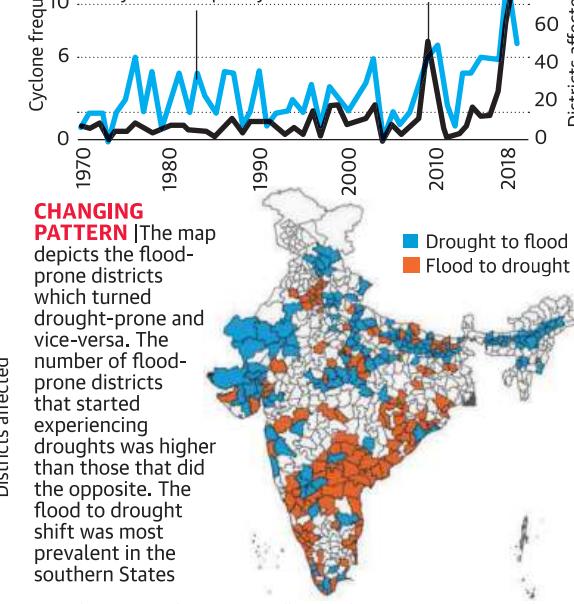
jumped to 55.

**DROUGHTS** | The chart shows the number of extreme droughts (left axis) and the number of districts affected (right axis). Since 2000, there has been a sharp increase in the number of drought-hit districts. However, droughts have been better managed in recent years, resulting in less loss and damage.

**CHANGING PATTERN** | The map depicts the flood-prone districts which turned drought-prone and vice-versa. The number of flood-prone districts that started experiencing droughts was higher than those that did the opposite. The flood to drought shift was most prevalent in the southern States.

**CYCLOCNES** | The chart shows the number of cyclones (left axis) and the number of districts affected (right axis). Before 2005, eight districts were affected by cyclones annually on an average. This figure increased to 28 after 2005. Puri, Chennai, Nellore, North 24 Parganas, Ganjam, Cuttack, East Godavari, and Srikakulam are cyclone hotspots

**DATA POINT**



#### The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 4, 1971

Patient murdered in hospital

Three unknown persons armed with deadly weapons walked into a ward in the Government Headquarters Hospital here [Cuddapah] last night, around 7:30, chased an inpatient, Thava Chinna Subbi Reddi of Dumpalgunta village in Cuddapah Taluk, from bed to bed and killed him, inflicting as many as 14 stab injuries. The crime was witnessed by the other patients in the ward who could not resist the intruders. Dr. T.L. Narasimha Rao, Superintendent of the Hospital said the incident occurred in the ward when the Medical Officer on duty, the staff nurse and the ward boy were assisting the surgeon in the operation theatre. The Medical Officer, on hearing cries for help from patients, rushed to the ward from the operation theatre and saw Thava Chinna Subbi Reddi lying in a pool of blood on the ground. He saw three persons armed with deadly weapons walking out of the ward and the hospital staff on duty could do nothing to seize them. The Superintendent said he informed the Cuddapah Town Police immediately about the incident. He also requested the Superintendent of Police to post a regular armed guard at the hospital. In the year 1968 a stabbing incident occurred near the outpatient ward of the hospital.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 4, 1921

Ireland's agony

(From an editorial)

After days of silence over the reported attempts at peace in Ireland, Reuter just now cables that the negotiations have broken down to a certain extent. The Government, it is alleged, is disappointed that the leaders of Sinn Fein offered no more effective guarantee than a mere truce. Granted a genuine desire for conciliation, this degree of stiffness on the part of Sinn Fein should not be such a violent disturber; the Government, it is open to guess, is still on the resolve that there is no parleying with Sinn Fein except as between master and servant. The glimmerings of a change of heart, which we seemed to discover a few days ago, have vanished. In spite of the Home Rule Bill, the suspicion is forced that the Georgian Cabinet finds the more effective panacea in terrorism. The policy of reprisals, upon which the Government embarked some months ago in defiance of all enlightened advice and warning, is being worked with an intensive suggestiveness of desperate agony rather than of ordered government.

CM YK

Source: Mohanty, Abinash. 2020. Preparing India for Extreme Climate Events: Mapping Hotspots and Response Mechanisms. New Delhi: Council on Energy, Environment and Water.



## INTERVIEW | AJAY BHUSHAN PANDEY

# 'Economy is on fast recovery track'

Finance Secretary cites better tax compliance and growing revenues

## VIKAS DHOOT

*With GST collections hitting a record in December 2020, Finance Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey is confident that the economy is recovering fast and will bounce back over 2021. The 'Vivaad se Vishwas' scheme for resolving tax disputes has already helped settle cases worth ₹83,000 crore out of an estimated ₹8 lakh crore, he says.*

**How much of a role did improved compliance play in the record GST collections last month?**

■ The economy is undoubtedly on the fast recovery track.

We have also been working on improving compliance for over a year now. We now have a very close data exchange between Income tax, Customs, banks and GST [Goods and Services Tax], and are able to undertake data analytics, using artificial intelligence (AI).

We are able to trace all dubious transactions from the inception of GST – if someone has issued or availed a fake bill in July 2017, we are able to detect that as well. Even if the bill may have passed through multiple layers of intermediaries, we are in a position to create a network diagram quickly through our AI tools and we are able to identify who all have been partners in the tax fraud and we are able to

take action against them.

You are bringing in more changes in the GST system from this month. Do you expect these to help sustain the collections and compliance levels seen in December?

■ This is our endeavour. We have taken certain steps for improving overall compliance. For instance, earlier, any taxpayer could claim input tax credit. Now, we are actually showing to him at the time of filing returns, that he is entitled to only 'x' amount of credit, calculated based on the returns filed by his suppliers. Therefore, any excess input tax credit (ITC) claim and thereby, understating tax dues, will become very difficult.

Till the last month, we had a rule that said one could not take ITC more than 10% of what is available from his suppliers. Now that is reduced to 5%. What it means, in turn, is that we have now 95% of invoices being matched.

So these are the systemic changes we have made that is leading to easier compliance for honest taxpayers and deterring those who used to be on the fringe and were looking for an opportunity to game the system. Now, things are getting harder and harder for them.

Revenue receipts stood at 40% of the Budget target by



**C** We have made systemic changes that is leading to easier compliance for honest taxpayers

November 2020, corporate tax collections are sharply down ...

■ I wouldn't like to go into the exact numbers because we are amidst the budgetary exercise. We will present our revised estimates at the time of the Budget. So, it will be very premature for us to say what the deficit could be ... If you look at total direct tax collections in the current year, we are down by 9.9%, which also has to be seen in the backdrop of the severe impact of the first two quarters.

Direct Tax collection is not always proportionate to turnover. If the turnover is below a certain level, one may go into losses and may not pay any direct tax at all. We will see the impact of this factor.

In addition, we had also taken a series of steps to provide certain benefits to the

taxpayers. The TDS amount that constitutes a major part of our collections, we reduced by 25%. So, despite the 25% reduction in TDS and the abolition of dividend distribution tax and COVID, we are seeing only a 9.9% reduction in the direct tax collection by December, which shows an improvement in trends.

**D**o you expect more shortfalls in compensation revenue for States over 2021-22?

■ We will have to watch. Considering the current measures we have taken, the revenue position should improve. But how much, and to what extent it will meet the 14% compounded growth (in revenues payable to States), is something we will have to see.

**W**hat has been the response to the Vivaad se Vishwas Scheme (VSVS) for resolving tax disputes?

■ The VSVS dispute settlement scheme got a little setback at the outset as it was launched on March 15, 2020, and then we were immediately struck by the novel coronavirus pandemic. We have received 96,000 cases worth ₹83,000 crore out of 5 lakh appeals pending in various appellate forums. Now, we have further extended the last date till January 31 seeing the good response and we hope we will get many more cases by then.

## India's journey to the \$5 trillion club

This is how PM Narendra Modi's Government is working to catapult India in the world economy



Madhukar Kotawe  
Top Unacademy Educator

a \$5 trillion economy. The Government has also taken steps to help NBFCs and HFCs with credit guarantee systems by sanctioning support of ₹5 lakh crore to these firms. It has also approved various proposals worth ₹7,000 crores and more.

On the real estate side, the system has taken steps to support real estate firms, corporate tax, and capitalisation of banks. It has cleared dues worth lakhs of crores to enhance market liquidity. The RBI has sanctioned more than ₹70,000 crore worth of loans under the new regime. The Government is encouraging schemes to boost private investments in the country. The MSMEs marked ₹80,000 crores worth of investments. FDI is missioned to improve exports and boost exchange returns.

**C**Women driving growth

India cannot witness wholesome growth if it leaves half of its valued population behind. It is reported that only 26% of the women population is working, and the others are either underpaid or unemployed, thereby becoming victims of gender disparity.

An economic survey was undertaken and a 'Team India' formed to make India



every single person's contribution matters, every woman's worth matters too. It is after all in our hands to grow collectively, to empower or to hold the power.

*This weekly column for civil services aspirants is brought to you by Unacademy. Send your subject specific queries to upsccepreparation@unacademy.com*

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## IN BRIEF



## M.P. Cabinet expanded, 2 Scindia loyalists inducted

BHOPAL The Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led Madhya Pradesh Cabinet was expanded on Sunday with the induction of two loyalists of BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Governor Anandiben Patel administered the oath of office to Tulsiram Silawat and Govind Rajput, who returned to the Cabinet after a gap of over two months. With their induction, the strength of the Cabinet went up to 31. PTI

## VBA chief slams bid to rename Aurangabad

PUNE The controversy over renaming Aurangabad city as 'Sambhajinagar' was a ploy to divide the Hindu and Muslim communities, said Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi chief Prakash Ambedkar, hitting out at both the ruling Shiv Sena, which heads the 'Maha Vikas Aghadi', as well as the opposition BJP. "What is the need for such religion-based politics? There are about 80% Hindus in this country, so why play politics based on religion?" said the VBA chief.

# Police stop Rajasthan farmers

They were marching towards the national capital to join the ongoing protest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Around 600 farmers from Rajasthan tried to break through the barricades at Rewari in Haryana on the Delhi-Jaipur highway on Sunday to march towards Delhi.

The police lobbed tear-gas shells and chilli grenades to stop them. Sources in the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), a joint front of farmer unions, said the group of farmers was acting on its own and the unions did not approve of their action.

## Another round of talks

The incident comes as farmers' leaders and Ministers are set for yet another round of talks on Monday to break the impasse over the controversial farm laws, whose repeal has been demanded by farmers who continue to hold sit-ins around Delhi's borders in pouring rain and biting cold.

Farmers belonging to Haryana and Sri Ganganagar districts in Rajasthan, owing allegiance to a local group of farmers and workers, broke through the first layer of barricades at Rewari



**Violent clash:** Farmers running away from a tear gas shell fired by the police, at Dharuhera in Haryana on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

around 4 p.m. to march towards Delhi, but the police managed to stop them near Masani village. This group had managed to break through the barricades at the Haryana-Rajasthan border on Thursday and travelled several kilometres towards Delhi before settling down.

"They were settled close to the first layer of barricades and managed to break

through it, but a second layer was put at some distance to stop them. The police had to use tear-gas shells and chilli grenades to stop them," said Abhishek Jorwal, Superintendent of Police, Rewari.

SKM sources said the farmer leaders were trying to speak to the group and convince them to protest peacefully.

Aastha Modi, Deputy

Commissioner of Police, Headquarters, Gurugram, said a Rapid Action Force company and a substantial number of police personnel under the supervision of two Assistant Commissioners of Police were deployed at Kapdiwas to stop the farmers. She said that traffic headed towards Jaipur was being diverted at a couple of points on the Delhi-Jaipur highway in the district.

# Little hope of breakthrough: BKU(U)

The BJP-led govt. has a 'stubborn attitude', says union chief Joginder Singh

## VIKAS VASUDEV

## CHANDIGARH

Ahead of the next round of meeting between farmers' outfits and the Central government on January 4, Joginder Singh, president of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ugrahan) (BKU-U), one of the largest outfits in Punjab, says there is "little hope" for any breakthrough on revoking the contentious farm laws amid what he terms the "stubborn attitude" of the BJP-led government".

"The way the leaders of the ruling government at the Centre have been giving statements in favour of the new laws and terming them good for farmers, I am not too hopeful of any positive outcome from talks on January 4. Our stand is very clear – we want a legal guarantee for minimum support prices (MSPs) for farm produce, besides revocation of all the



Farmers protesting at the Singhu border in Delhi on Sunday.

three farm laws. If our demands are not fulfilled, we will continue with our agitation indefinitely," Mr. Singh told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

## Partial achievement

Mr. Singh said in the last meeting, the Centre had assured farmers of decriminalising stubble-burning and safeguarding electricity subsidies, but that is only a partial achievement. "The resolution of the ongoing impasse lies only in the go-

vernment accepting our demand of revoking the new farm laws. Until our core demands are accepted, the struggle will continue and will only intensify further," he said.

Mr. Singh added that the government needs to understand that the prevailing *mandi* system under the Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act (APMC) in Punjab and Haryana has been working well and it should continue. "Even contract farming had been in place before the new laws were enacted. Let it be the way it was," said Mr. Singh.

The government has been trying to justify the laws by saying that several farmers' unions are supporting them, but this is only an attempt to weaken the ongoing movement and divert attention, said Mr. Singh. "The unions, that the government has

been claiming are in favour of these laws are those which have no existence on the ground. These unions exist only in office records. How many of these unions have participated in any of the farmers' movements? They are just a sham," said Mr. Singh. "The government's intent is to establish a parallel platform to weaken the ongoing agitation."

Mr. Singh said though the BKU (Ugrahan) is not part of the group of 32 farmers' unions from Punjab, all outfits were working together to get the farm laws revoked. "We have started a tractor march in the villages of Haryana in support of our agitation. Over 1,000 tractors are participating in this march, which will increase in the coming days. The march started from Tikri border on January 3 and will continue for the next three-four days."

He said though the pandemic had trumped the issue of citizenship, there was "no room for complacency". "It's very clear we are in danger of having a citizenship regime that is arbitrary, biased and

# India still at risk of a biased citizenship regime'

COVID-19 overtook the anti-CAA stir, but there's no room for complacency: N. Ram

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

## NEW DELHI

**C**The Hindutva project is to divide and target the so-called other

N. RAM  
Director, The Hindu Group of Publications

surveillance-oriented," he said.

## Constituent Assembly

Mr. Ram said there had been arguments made in the Constituent Assembly in favour of acceding citizenship on the basis of religion, but they were put down by leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer. Today, he said, some of the same themes have cropped up.

He said the anti-CAA protests and the ongoing farmers' agitation had "shown the limits of power of those who seek to seize more" at a time of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. "Collective failure"

Speaking about the Muslim population, which is estimated to be 207 million, or 14.6% of the total population, in 2021, he said, "It's not as if the Muslim population as a whole is threatened. There are many States where Muslims and Hindus, and people belonging to other religious groups live in perfect harmony. But the Hindutva project is to divide and target the so-called other."

He said the political project of Hindutva had been around for a long time. "They have bided their time. They have played the long game," he said.

He said the anti-CAA protests and the ongoing farmers' agitation had "shown the limits of power of those who seek to seize more" at a time of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. "Collective failure"

On the citizenship issue, he said, "At the heart is the question whether Hindu communal majoritarianism – the concept of Hindutva put into practice – will be allowed to trump the secular character of the Constitution."

He said political parties, including the Congress, could not escape accountability. For instance, they could not explain why the exercise of compiling a National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam was conducted.

The proposed all-India NRC and the National Population Register (NPR), coupled with the CAA, which gives a path to citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Parsis and Jains from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, while leaving out Muslim refugees, posed a direct challenge to India's secular polity and political stability, Mr. Ram said.

While there has been no timeline for the NRC, the NPR was supposed to have started in 2020, but was pushed back due to the pandemic.

# FSSAI slashes limit for transfat levels in foods

5.4 lakh deaths a year globally from its intake, says WHO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has capped the amount of trans fatty acids (TFA) in oils and fats to 3% for 2021 and 2% by 2022 from the current permissible limit of 5% through an amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulations.

The FSSAI notified the amendment on December 29, more than a year after it issued a draft on the subject for consultation with stakeholders.

## Broad spread

The revised regulation applies to edible refined oils, vanaspati (partially hydrogenated oils), margarine, bakery shortenings and other mediums of cooking such as vegetable fat spreads and mixed fat spreads.

Transfats are associated with an increased risk of



The regulation applies to edible refined oils, vanaspati, margarine and bakery shortenings.

communicable diseases has risen. Cardiovascular diseases, along with diabetes, are proving fatal for COVID-19 patients," says Ashim Sanyal, chief operating officer of Consumer VOICE, adding that the regulation must not be restricted to oils and fats, but must apply to all foods. "It is hoped that the FSSAI will address this as well before January 2022 to eliminate chemical trans fatty acids from the Indian platter."

## 2018 pledge

While the regulation comes into effect immediately, industry players were made to take a pledge back in 2018 that they would comply with the WHO's call for action to reduce TFA by 3% by 2021 allowing them three years to comply with the latest norm.

It was in 2011 that India first passed a regulation that set a TFA limit of 10% in oils and fats, which was further reduced to 5% in 2015.

heart attacks and death from coronary heart disease.

According to the World Health Organization, approximately 5.4 lakh deaths take place each year globally because of the intake of industrially produced trans fatty acids.

The WHO has also called for the global elimination of transfats by 2023.

"The FSSAI rule comes at the time of a pandemic where the burden of non-

# Bareilly 'love jihad' case FIR not expunged: police Girl's statement to be recorded

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GHAZIABAD

Denying media reports that the FIR against three men under the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 in an alleged "love jihad" case in Bareilly had been expunged, police officials told *The Hindu* on Sunday that the matter was still under investigation and an "impartial probe" would be done.

The

Bareilly police made a statement on Saturday that during surveillance, the boy's mobile phone was not found in Faridpur on the day the girl alleged he asked her to convert and threatened to destroy her family.

The

surveillance report was not enough to expunge the FIR registered under Sections 354, 504 of the IPC and Section 3/5 of the new ordinance. We spoke to the girl and she said that because of her mental state she did not remember the exact date. In her complaint, she said the incident had happened on Decem-

ber 1, now she is saying it happened a day after. We are going to get her statement recorded before a magistrate under Section 164 of the CrPC. After that, we would make a press statement," said Sansar Singh, Superintendent of Police (Rural), Bareilly.

Describing it as a case of "one-sided love spread over a period of time", Alok Agrahari, Circle Officer, Faridpur, said the girl, a student of B.Sc. Nursing, approached the police on December 31 alleging that a boy had been threatening her. In the FIR, she said that on December 1, the boy and his two brothers "stopped her and asked her to marry the boy and convert to Islam, at gunpoint". She said he had been stalking her for some time and she has developed mental health issues.

He said the boy was absconding and his family members were questioned.

"The guilty would not be spared and no innocent person would be targeted," he said.

# Haryana SIC seeks comment on rejoinders from Khemka

IAS officer has sought 'penal action' under RTI Act

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

The Haryana State Information Commission (SIC) has issued a notice, asking the office of the Chief Secretary (Political Department), and the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD), to give their comments on the rejoinders filed by senior IAS officer Ashok Khemka on the matter of an appeal under the Right to Information Act, in which he has sought initiation of "penal action" under Section 20 of the Act.

The matter pertains to the seeking of information relating to the Justice S.N. Dhinra Inquiry Commission set up in May 2015 to probe granting of Change of Land Use (CLU) licences in villages in Gurgaon during the rule of the Bhupinder Singh Hooda-led Congress government, including that bet-



Ashok Khemka

ween Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law Robert Vadra's Sky Light Hospitality and real estate developer DLF Universal Ltd.

The one-man commission submitted its report to the State government on August 31, 2016.

Mr. Khemka, Principal Secretary, Archaeological Department, Haryana, had in September 2020 approached the SIC with an ap-

peal, complaining that complete information had not been furnished by the respondents – the State Public Information Officer; the office of the Chief Secretary, Haryana (Political Department); and the office of the Director, Town and Country Planning Department, with regard to his application under the RTI Act.

Mr. Khemka said he had sought five-point information, including the total amount paid to Tushar Mehta, advocate, presently Solicitor-General of India, in the defence of CWP No.24139 of 2016 titled as "Bhupinder Singh Hooda vs State of Haryana and others" in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Mr. Khemka came to the limelight after he cancelled the mutation of a land deal between Mr. Vadra's company and DLF.

# CVC sets timeline for vigilance cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has directed the chief executives and the chief vigilance officers of government organisations to finalise by May 31 the pending cases initiated between January 2011 and December 2018.

The commission said it found during a review that several cases had been pending in some organisations.

# Adityanath takes a dig at Akhilesh Yadav

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, taking a dig at the Opposition parties, said on Sunday that those who used to dismiss Lord Ram as "imaginary" were now stating that "Ram belongs to everyone".

Mr. Adityanath made the comments in Gorakhpur while speaking on the change that had come about

after the BJP came to power in the State. "They ordered firing on Ram Bhaktas and say that Ram doesn't even exist. Now they have felt the power of Ram Bhaktas and are saying that Ram belongs to everyone," Mr. Adityanath said. His comments appeared intended at Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav who recently said Lord Ram also belonged to his party.

## GUJARAT URJA VIKAS NIGAM LIMITED (A wholly-owned undertaking of Government of Gujarat) Sardar Patel Vidyut Bhavan, Race Course, Vadodara 390007 PBX : (0265) 2310582-86, Web : www.guvnl.com CIN U40109GJ2004SGC045195

### EXTENSION IN LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION UNDER "POLICY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL SCALE DISTRIBUTED SOLAR PROJECTS -2019"

The last date for submission of applications for setting up small scale solar projects of 0.5 – 4 MW under Government of Gujarat's "Policy for Development of Small Scale Distributed Solar Projects -2019" dated 06.03.2019 is hereby extended up to **15.01.2021**. All other terms and conditions of earlier public notice dated 03.10.2020 shall remain unchanged.

For further details like State Government's GRs and Draft PPA, please visit GUVNL's website - <https://www.guvnl.com/notices.html>

Date: 03-01-2021 General Manager (IPP)

## KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD (A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

# 49, East Wing , 4th & 5th Floor, Khanjia Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bengaluru - 560 001.  
Ph: 080-40931272 Website : [www.kiadb.in](http://www.kiadb.in) e-mail: cdoce1@kiadb.in or jdt@kiadb.in

No.: IADB/ENGG/EIA/EC/ETND-EC-03/10169/2020-21 Date: 02.01.2021

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER TO PROVIDE CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR OBTAINING ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE (EC)

(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only)

KIADB is inviting tenders under two cover systems for providing consultancy services for preparing EIA, SIS studies etc., to obtain Environmental Clearance (EC) from State Level Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) and Consent for Establishment (CFE) from Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) for the following KIADB Industrial Areas. The firms who are listed as Accredited Consultants in the accredited list of Ministry of Environment and Forest, New Delhi are eligible to participate in the tender.

Sl. No	Proposed name of the new industrial area	Approx. Extent	EMD (Rs. in lakhs)
1	Masthenhalli Industrial Area, Phase-II, Thalagavara, Marappalli, Malkapur and Masthenhalli Villages, Kaivara Hobli, Chinthamani Taluk, Chikkaballapura District.	414.65 Acres (167.87 Ha)	0.00
2	Mindahalli Industrial Area, Mindahalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Maluru Taluk, Kolar District.	335.41 Acres (135.79 Ha)	0.00

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>

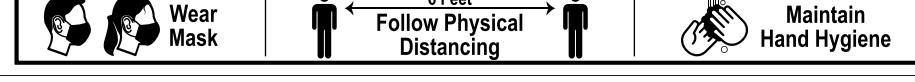
### Scheduled dates are as follows:

- Last date to receive pre bid queries : 11.01.2021 upto 5:00 pm
- Pre bid meeting will be held on : 13.01.2021 at 11:30 am
- Dead line for submission of Technical and Financial bids is 28.01.2021 upto 4:00 pm.
- Time and date of opening Technical bids is on 30.01.2021 after 11:30 am

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### ई-निविदा संक्षिप्त सूचना / E-TENDER BRIEF NOTICE

तिथि / Date: 29.12.2020

ई निविदा सूचना / e-Tender Notice No./ सीएमजी/सी/ डब्ल्यू / CMG/C/W 2087005 / सीएमजी/सी/ एल / CMG/C/L 2087006 / सीएमजी/सी/ ए/ / CMG/C/A 2087007

1. भारत के राजपति की ओर से, निर्माणित किया के लिए, ई-टेंडरिंग के माध्यम से मद-दर्द निविदा द्वारा आमंत्रित है। On Behalf of the President of India, item-rate tender is invited through e-tendering for the following work(s).

कार्य का नाम Title of Work	सतीश धवन अंतरिक्ष केंद्र, शार के लिए एसएलपी क्षेत्र में नगरनाल बैकेअप टर्मिनल कक्ष का निर्माण (वर्षमान और सारिंग भवन का विस्तार) के लिए विभिन्न प्रक्रियाएँ	सतीश धवन अंतरिक्ष केंद्र का कक्षीय मालाकूल तैयारी सुधार (आगमी वर्ष) के लिए बाह्य नियुक्त आपूर्ति का कार्य (डीनी कक्ष तथा संर्वारत सिविल एवं पीढ़ी कार्य) / External Power Supply for Orbital Module Preparation Facility (OMPFI) एवं SDSC SHAR (DG room and Associated Civil & PH Works).	सतीश धवन अंतरिक्ष केंद्र में गणनायन परियोजना की ओरपाइपल ट्रैक हेतु अधिकारी लाइन के लिए पैटर्सनल एवं बहुरी केविल ट्रैक का निर्माण / Construction of Pedestals for fireighting line & External Cable trench for OMPFI Gantry Project, SDSC SHAR
एनआरटी सं. एवं तिथि NIT No & Date	सीएमजी/सी/ डब्ल्यू / CMG/C/W 2087005 तिथि /Dt:29/12/2020	सीएमजी/सी/ एल / CMG/C/L 2087006 तिथि /Dt:29/12/2020	सीएमजी/सी/ ए/ / CMG/C/A 2087007 तिथि /Dt:29/12/2020
निविदा की अनुमानित लागत Estimated Cost put to tender	₹ 261 लाख / Lakhs	₹ 167 लाख / Lakhs	₹ 148 लाख / Lakhs
पूरा करने की अवधि Period of Completion	06 माह / Month(s)		
निविदा दस्तावेज संगती की अवधि Period during which documents can be requested	05.01.2021 को 10:00 बजे से 18.01.2021 को 14:00 बजे तक From: 05.01.2021, 10:00 Hrs To: 18.01.2021, 14:00 Hrs	08.01.2021 को 1	

# Private hospitals keen on vaccine role

Once Pfizer and Moderna vaccines get approval, they will possibly start offering these vaccines

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

Private healthcare providers say they are keen on offering COVID-19 vaccination, with the Union government stating that its priority now is to vaccinate the most vulnerable groups immediately.

"Currently, the vaccine is not available in the private sector. The government is focused on vaccinating its priority group with beneficiaries having to register with the government," Randeep Guleria, Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, said in a video message released by the Union Health Ministry on Sunday.

Senior health officials said the government could bring in measures to help a larger population to get vaccinated.

## 'Ready to back govt'

K. Hariprasad, president of the hospitals division at Apollo Hospitals, said: "We will follow the government regulations. The government has drawn up good plans for what is probably the largest immunisation programme in the world, and the largest preventive healthcare programme in the world. We in

## Inoculation campaign

A look at a select list of COVID-19 vaccines that have been approved for full/emergency use in different countries



Manufacturer	Efficacy	Storage	Status
Oxford University-AstraZeneca	Up to 90%	-2-8 degree Celsius	Approved for restricted emergency use in India and emergency use in U.K.
Bharat Biotech-ICMR	Unknown	-2-8 °C	Approved for restricted use in emergency situation in India
Pfizer-BioNTech	95%	-70 °C	Approved for full use/emergency use in several countries
Moderna	94.50%	-20 °C	Approved in Canada; emergency use in U.S.
Gamaleya Research Center	91.40%	-18 °C	Early use in Russia, emergency use in Belarus and Argentina
CanSino Biologics	Unknown	-2-8 °C	Limited use in China
Vector Institute	Unknown	-2-8 °C	Early use in Russia
Beijing Institute of Biological Products	79.34%	-2-8 °C	Limited use in China
Sinovac Biotech	>50%	-2-8 °C	Limited use in China
Sinopharm	Unknown	-2-8 °C	Approved in China, U.A.E. and Bahrain

the private sector have always responded to the healthcare needs of the country. Similarly, the private sector is prepared to support the government even in this initiative, as and when the government directs us to do so."

Adar Poonawalla, chief executive officer, Serum Institute of India (SII), had earlier said its vaccine would be bought by the government to be offered to beneficiaries.

"We cannot sell to the private market right now. Private players will come in only when the government looks into the matter and the permissions are granted," he said.

Y.K. Mishra, chief of clinical services, Manipal Hospitals, said that so far, the DCGI had not given approval to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. So there was no question of either private or any government agencies using these vaccines. "Once these vaccines get the approval from the authorities in India,

(With inputs from Ramya Kannan in Chennai)

# Cong. questions 'modification' of protocols to approve Covaxin

Leaders express concern over dispensing with Phase 3 trials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Deputy leader of the Congress in the Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma on Sunday expressed concern over the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) granting permission for restricted use of Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine by "dispensing" with mandatory protocols and verification of data.

Mr. Sharma, who heads the Parliamentary Panel on Home Affairs that extensively dealt with the issue, said no country had dispensed with mandatory Phase-3 trials and verification of data, and the issue of granting authorisation needs to be taken carefully.

He said that going by the submission made to the expert panel, Phase 3 trials had not been completed and therefore, the data on safety and efficacy had not been reviewed.

**Frontline workers at risk** "Verification of data and Phase 3 trials are mandatory requirements. The Health Ministry needs to give proper reasons for dispensing with the mandatory protocols and requirements in this case, since it involves the health and safety of those frontline workers who will be vaccinated under the



restricted category," Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu*.

"The DCGI statement is puzzling and the government must reveal the final data on global efficacy trials and the final trials in the U.K., which has been shared officially by the U.K.'s MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority) following a government-to-government agreement signed between the two countries, which should be put in the public domain to avoid any confusion on the proven efficacy of the vaccine," he said.

The Congress leader, however, said that the news of the arrival and roll-out of the nation-wide vaccination drive was "truly uplifting and reassuring" for a country paralysed by the pandemic.

Jairam Ramesh, Mr. Sharma's colleague in the Rajya Sabha, asked Health Minister Harsh Vardhan to clarify

why internationally accepted protocols on Phase 3 trials were being modified.

"Bharat Biotech is a first-rate enterprise, but it is puzzling that internationally accepted protocols relating to Phase 3 trials are being modified for Covaxin. Health Minister Harsh Vardhan should clarify," Mr. Ramesh said on Twitter.

When Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders, including party president J.P. Nadda and Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, accused Congress leaders of being unhappy with "Made in India" vaccines, the Congress hit back.

"Congress party has full belief in our scientific community. Whatever they decide, we are going to follow them, but we want that the best vaccine [be provided] after completing all protocols," party spokesperson Gourav Vallabh said at a press conference.

# PM congratulates scientists for vaccines

Modi terms DCGI approval a 'decisive turning point' in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated India and its scientists and innovators minutes after the Drugs Controller General of India granted approval to the vaccines against COVID-19 manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech.

Calling the development an acceleration on the road to a COVID-free nation, Mr. Modi said it was a "decisive turning point to strengthen a spirited fight!"

Stating that the vaccines are a fitting tribute to the "corona warriors", Health Minister Harsh Vardhan tweeted his gratitude to all

healthcare professionals and frontline workers for their exemplary efforts during these unprecedented times.

"Congratulations to all the scientists and researchers for their untiring efforts. It's now time to reap the benefits of the robust supply chain in

infrastructure we've put in place for quick and equitable distribution of the vaccine. Urge all citizens to trust the stringent protocols followed for ensuring safety, efficacy and immunogenicity," he said.

Calling the approval of Covaxin for emergency use a giant leap for innovation and novel product development in India, Bharat Biotech chairman and managing director Krishna Ella said, "It is a proud moment for the nation and a great milestone in India's scientific capability, a kickstart to the innovation ecosystem in India."

She said while this vaccine addressed an unmet medical need during this pan-

demic, "our goal is to provide global access to populations that need it the most. Covaxin has generated excellent safety data with robust immune responses to multiple viral proteins that persist".

**Roll-out in coming weeks** Responding to the DCGI decision, SII CEO Adar Poonawalla tweeted: "All the risks SII took with stockpiling the vaccine have finally paid off. COVISHIELD, India's first COVID-19 vaccine, is approved, safe, effective and ready to roll out in the coming weeks."

Poonam Khetrapal Singh, regional director, WHO South-East Asia Region, in her statement, said the WHO welcomed the first emergency use authorisation given to COVID-19 vaccine in the Southeast Asia Region.

"This decision taken today by India will help intensify and strengthen the fight against COVID-19 pandemic in the region," she said.

"Vaccination will begin soon," Principal Scientific Adviser K. Vijay Raghavan said. "This is a result of focused work by scientists, national laboratories, regulators, healthcare workers, and most importantly, all our people who have waited patiently." He said full vaccination measures were in place in the country.

**Experts raise questions over 'hasty' nod to vaccines**

They point to lack of data on efficacy of Covaxin against SARS-CoV-2

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

Several experts have raised concern over the "hasty approval" granted to the COVID-19 vaccines despite the lack of adequate efficacy data.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation

on Sunday accorded approval for restricted emergency use of the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), and the indigenously developed vaccine Covaxin of Bharat Biotech.

"I'm completely unaware of any data that suggests that Covaxin has any efficacy against any SARS-CoV-2 strain, let alone the U.K. strain," Gagandeep Kang, Professor, Christian Medical College, Vellore, said in an interview to CNBC-TV18.

so expressed reservations. "At this point, I wouldn't advise Covaxin. All we seem to know is that it's safe and so may not be harmful but efficacy is a different matter and needs to be proved," the expert said requesting anonymity.

**Scientific logic** "In the interest of transparency, we ask that the regulator share detailed rationale or the decision along with disclosure of data... We are baffled to understand what scientific logic has motivated top experts in the SEC (Subject Expert Committee) to approve this vaccine (Covaxin) post haste," Malini Aisola, of the All India Drug Action Network, said in a statement.

However, Randeep Guleria, Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, referred to Covaxin as a "backup vaccine" and added that it is to be used if it was not clear how efficacious the SII vaccine would be.

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13135      Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

A	B	O	V	E	N	S	H	E	A	D
G	O	O	R	N	O	M	S			
R	E	U	N	I	F	I	O	E	V	
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T	A	N	A	R	A	R	A	R	A	
H	E	R	E	B	E	R	A	R	A	
R	E	E	B	E	R	A	R	A	R	
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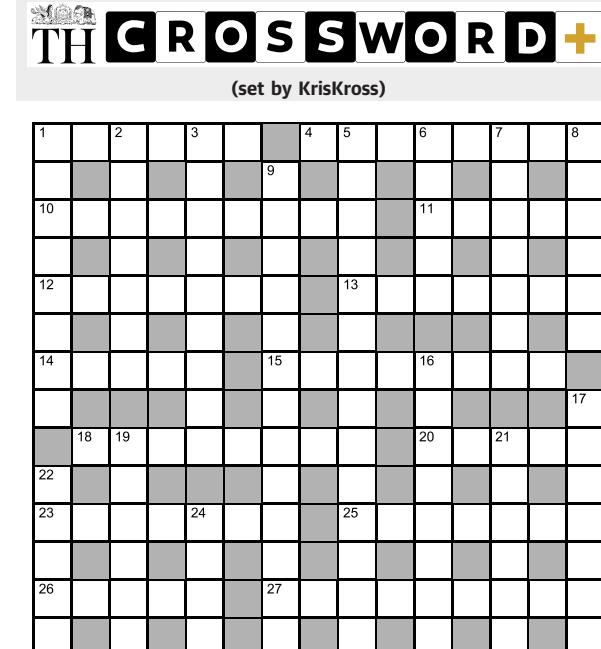
No.SS946 Distribution: www.mightyfingers.com

## FAITH

### Quoteworthy words

There are people who want to keep to the path of righteousness, but do not do so, because of various reasons. Affection for their kin often keeps people away from the path of dharma, said V.S. Karunakarachariar, in a discourse. When someone in the family does something sinful, they do not correct him, but allow him to do as he pleases. Dritharashtra is an example of one who, even when he wanted to do what was correct, did not do so. Dritharashtra was ready to sin, because of his affection for his son Duryodhana. He did not use his authority to put an end to Duryodhana's evil designs, but quietly submitted to all his son's evil plans.

Had he been assertive, war could have been avoided. And yet, there were occasions when he spoke words that should be remembered. Lord Krishna goes to the court of the Kauravas as a messenger of the Pandavas. In the normal course, He should have been welcomed with all the honours due to Him. But Duryodhana was adamant that the Lord should not be welcomed. The welcome should have been grand for more than one reason. Krishna was a messenger and deserved the respect customarily shown to all messengers. Krishna's son Samba had married Duryodhana's daughter Lakshmanaa. And yet, Duryodhana refused to treat Krishna with respect and tried to imprison Him. Krishna then assumed His Visvaroopa and showed that everyone and everything in the world was contained in Him. He granted Dritharashtra eyesight, so that he could see His Visvaroopa. Then when Krishna was about to depart, Dritharashtra said to Him, "Take away my eyesight. Having seen Your Visvaroopa, I have no wish to see anything again in this world." So, even Dritharashtra, who stood by watching Duryodhana tormenting the Pandavas, did say something quoteworthy.



#### ACROSS

- 1 Save somebody from going bad? (6)
- 4 Tough spots one policeman's cap amongst crowds (8)
- 10 Ultimately tragic – poor Lear suffering bodily (9)
- 11 Extraordinary interest in American panel, after judge quits (5)
- 12 A new version of user interface, finally is designed (7)
- 13 Doctor knew I'll get a writing accessory (7)

- 14 Royal wearing hot stuff – future monarch? (5)
- 15 Blocks retrospective notice about cuts (8)
- 18 Insecure at heart – still happy (8)
- 20 Retro song from soldier (5)
- 23 Part of America is a rueful, rebellious continent (7)
- 25 Leading spinner's ball, covered by dew, dismissing #1 (7)
- 26 Ruler to ascend (5)
- 27 Fashionable girl in mask, regularly sets traps (9)
- 28 A muddle over accepting very poor contestants (4-4)
- 29 Gravedigger Mark's back carrying cross (6)
- DOWN
- 1 Romeo, through special licence, gets ring (8)
- 2 Good man leaves lawyer railing (7)
- 3 Be quick, John – knee's beginning to hurt (4,5)
- 5 Debate around clue – "One active set making a product" (14)
- 6 A kid losing love for University is mad (5)
- 7 Area where one is killed by abrupt, strange force (7)
- 8 Partner, extremely chivalrous, rejected Greek nymph (6)
- 9 Fears detention possibly, or an expulsion of sorts? (14)
- 16 Posh criminal to quietly take shelter in compound (9)
- 17 Discard juvenile's case – it's not illegal (8)
- 19 Body of vehicle crushed at the front and behind (7)
- 21 Start to drive with adulterated petrol – a small quantity (7)
- 22 Dancing, she could entertain one visiting Ginza on vacation (6)
- 24 When temperature is hot, bull becomes thin (5)

As we begin a new year, a look at why bullet journaling has gained interest among India's students looking to stay organised through the disruption of the pandemic



# The art of checklists

## TIPS FROM EXPERTS, FOR THOSE STARTING OUT

"Define your need. Articulate what you hope to get out of it before you start. That way you can pick the tools that map to that need." - Ryder Carroll, New York

"You don't have to force yourself to journal every day." - Alma Ali, Delhi

"Start in an old notebook for a month, and let the pages be messy. Once you decide it works for you, start in a fresh notebook." - Sumedha S, Bengaluru

"Start with simple supplies and focus first on finding layouts that you like and that motivate you to write your plans. You can branch out from there and add more decorations and stickers/calligraphy to your taste. During especially busy periods, go back to minimal layouts." - Priyanka R, California

SWETA AKUNDI

The past year has turned our lives upside down, changing our priorities and how we look at the world. Most new year resolutions for 2021 include building a better grip on this new way of life. The bullet journal method might help.

Popularised over the last few years by creator Ryder Carroll, bullet journaling (or BuJo) is a method used for personal organisation, and comprises rapid logging of tasks, notes, schedules and reminders. As Ryder puts it on his website, it is "a mindfulness practice disguised as a productivity system".

He details a blueprint of how you could start journaling to "track the past, organise the present, and plan for the future". A regular journal would involve checklists that you cross out once you are done with the task. Rapid logging is a more immediate version of it, where you note down things you want to remember or tasks you wish to complete in shorthand.

Over the years it has developed a

scheduling language (see box) of its own with additional habit, mood and consumption trackers.

In January 2020, YouTuber Elsa Rhee posted a video on her minimalist method of BuJo. Apart from daily logs, she also creates charts of her habits. She plots against the dates of a month, whether she had stimulants (caffeine, alcohol), dairy, probiotics, gluten, eggs and so on. A similar chart also tracks her sleep, exercise, and mood on a scale of one to 10.

BuJo saw an increased interest this year given how much our lives were disrupted. Ryder believes it is because a lot of our natural boundaries no longer exist.

"We are slightly different versions of ourselves in each (environment) – the office, gym, bar; we use different parts of our minds," he says over email from New York. "Now all those lives overlap, causing a lot of confusion and anxiety. Journaling can help maintain mental and emotional boundaries between our dif-

## The log language

The journal is broadly divided into these sections:

**An index:** page numbers for quick reference

**A future log:** the year at a glance along with long-term goals and important events

**A monthly log:** important tasks for the month, carried over from the last month

**A daily log:** with day-to-day reminders jotted down

## Use these symbols

● Bullets for tasks

○ Upcoming events or past experiences you want to remember

■ Regular notes

■ Ideas you want to remember later

\* Particularly important task

✗ Cross out bullets for completed tasks

Each task or event can also be subdivided into further notes and sub-tasks, in a process known as nesting. The tasks that are still open can be either migrated to the next monthly log, or simply crossed out if they are no longer relevant. You can also create your own language and format, according to what works for you.

## Making it your own

As BuJo took off, the method evolved from being functional to artsy. "In the beginning it was just about functionality, but now it has become about the aesthetics, calligraphy and customisations," says Sumedha.

This was one of the reasons Delhi-based Alma Ali gave up on BuJo the first time she tried, last year. "I saw people doing elaborate things online; most people who post their spreads are very artistic. I tried doing that too, but it got overwhelming. I wanted to feel calm when I came back to it. I did not want it to become a burden or a task that I have to keep up with," she says.

The lockdown made the 21-year-old take BuJo up again and what helped was reminding herself of the core reason she started: "to be more productive, but now it is more about self care for me," says Alma, who now tracks her moods using different colours, and practises gratitude journaling within her BuJo.

As 2020 drew to a close, Sumedha flipped through her journal and realised that for her too, this year was more about introspection than planning.

"I designed BuJo to be as flexible as possible," says Ryder. "It evolves along with its user. It's a purpose-driven approach to life. It helps organise what you have to do, but it also helps keep you mindful of why you're doing it."

Visit [bulletjournal.com](http://bulletjournal.com) for more information.

some gains too.

Where people once boasted sourcing the rarest of whiskeys, today, they boast honey from a remote tribal area and black garlic – it shows how invested we are in this new 'hobby' and makes wonderful pictures for Instagram.

Except, health is not a hobby. It is a lifestyle that needs a great deal of hard work to get right, made harder by the fact that since everyone's bodies are different, we have to walk the path and figure out what works for us. It is also a process, because a healthy body needs to last for life. It is also a daily commitment to a few basics that seems so hard in an obesogenic environment: eating only home-cooked food, with fewer grains and more veggies; moving for a large part of the day; developing a real hobby to keep stress at bay.

This year, before we commit to anything health-related, let us ask ourselves why. When I dug deeper, I realised that all I wanted was to be able to run in order to save my life (if I ever had to!), to eat so I felt light and energised, and to stay focused on a task and not multi-task so I did not end up feeling scattered.

Health in a word is balance, and that's my hope for 2021. What's yours?

## WELLNESS ON SHELF



### Yellow like turmeric

The Divine Foods has added Golden Milk Instant Mix, Glo Diaper Rash Balm, and Glo Soap to its product line. All three are made with curcumin-rich organic turmeric sourced from farmers across South India. The company claims that the natural antibacterial property of turmeric helps ease rashes and that the products are free from artificial fragrances, parabens and mineral oil. The Glo Soap controls acne, pigmentation and sun damage, and is available as a pack of three. At [thedivinefoods.com](http://thedivinefoods.com); ₹525, ₹225 and ₹440 respectively.

### Hair care for men

Men's vegan lifestyle brand Phy has launched The Headspace, a new range of hair styling products which includes styling gel, crème wax and setting clay. These help nourish, condition and repair hair and are free from synthetic polymers, claims the company. At [theephylife.com](http://theephylife.com); ₹395 upward

### Flaking out on onion

ORCO has introduced dehydrated chopped onions with a concentrated pungent and toasty flavour to its product line. The onion flakes are sun dried and hand chopped. They contain no added preservatives or colour, says the company. At [orco.in](http://orco.in); ₹32 for a 100 gm pack.



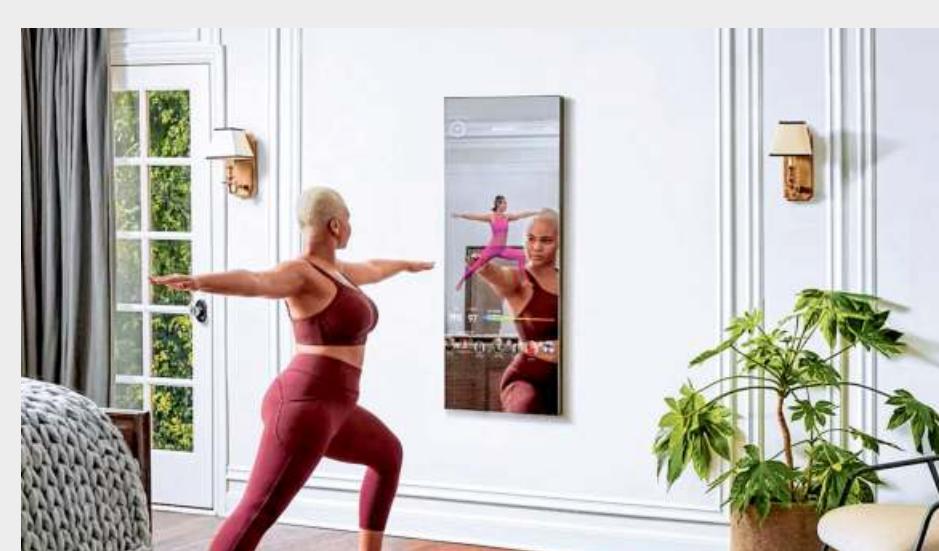
# Training for the future

As we break into 2021, we look at the AI-driven technologies that will forge new paths from our pandemic fitness routines

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

If 2020 was the year of the smartwatch, then 2021 is the year of fitness autonomy. Helping this along are these core technologies and their facilitators catering to users who want to be 'less gadget-oriented but still fairly digital'.

We look back on the AI-driven technologies that helped locked down people look at fitness differently, and how these innovations are a precursor to 2021.



### Virtual Reality

The personal fitness industry was revolutionised when VR was brought into the mix more than eight years ago. Since then we've seen gamified fitness but what about fitted gaming? Oculus welcomed Supernatural in April 2020, a cardio-heavy, on-demand workout adventure. The game serves up daily personalised full-body workouts and expert coaching from real-world trainers. Sweat to music from popular artists and visit beautiful photorealistic landscapes. It lets you track your progress with the companion app, pair your heart rate monitor, schedule workouts, and follow friends for some healthy competition.

What do we see happening in 2021? Experiences like Supernatural will be channelling more social experiences into their repertoire, whether you want to have your trainer hold you accountable or compete with friends.

### Chatbots

You may have encountered fitness chatbots in apps such as Nike Training, Cure.Fit and Sense Bio. These AI bots guide users through different workouts, based on intensity level, and also provide a suitable diet chart to be followed as per the selected fitness goal. Intelligent chatbots can also help optimise personal performance by sending tips and suggestions as per the tracked performance analytics.



One such app Fit N Simple has been doing well in the messenger marketing / fitness crossover. The company started out trying to cut through the noise in this sub-industry. Through its Instagram account, founder Austin Witte observed that personalised and real-time interaction would better engage his audience. Favoured by a number of international startups, ManyChat became Fit N Simple's go-to. "Flow Builder [by ManyChat] was a game-changer for me. When

you have hundreds of thousands of subscribers, it's hard to deliver a customised message. ManyChat's features made sure my subscribers had a real, personalised experience," says Austin.

Artbot.AI, a chatbot server created with gym owners, fitness facilities and fitness trainers in mind. This lets you make a chatbot that can schedule a workout session with a client, allow them to pay you in advance, and also provide any personal information you require.

### Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality as a tech class is not as overwhelming as its big brother, Virtual Reality. AR has made its way into many home workouts because it feeds back real-time information about what's going on in the user's body while working out, as well as helping track how far they've come. Admittedly an AR fitness regimen, while fun, can take an extra level of engagement upfront to help people power through the tough first stages before exercising feels rewarding on its own.

AR glasses such as Google Glass have been a virtual friend to users through third-party apps like Race Yourself, which lets users keep track of time, distance, and calories with a quick glance at the Glass screen – it's all very Ready Player One – helpful for even the most novice runner. The app has some in-built scenarios, too, such as racing against giant boulders, zombies, fire, virtual friends, and even an oncoming train.

Love working out in front of the mirror but without the hassles of a wearable? Mirror, an AR-fuelled 'nearly invisible home gym' that Lululemon acquired in 2020, offers more than 50 genres of 5-60 minute classes ranging from absolute beginner to expert levels. Advanced camera technology and proprietary algorithms help deliver in-workout adjustments based on the user's goals, preferences, and personal profile.



## COULD IT BE THAT...



# We're eating for Instagram?



SUNALINI MATHEW

A difficult question to ask ourselves is always: Why am I doing this?

Why do I want to run a marathon? Why am I eating green soup for dinner? Why am I trying to meditate? If the answer to any of these is an external reason – your boss likes running and it's the current equivalent to an office smokers' networking group, for instance – then you may be putting on yet another mask.

Often, we mould ourselves to what society's current celebrated norm is. The last decade has been about fitness and eating right (sometimes equated with eating exotic), and so we go the distance to prove to ourselves and our loved ones that we really are conforming, but in a cool sort of way.

As social creatures who belong to a collectivist society, we also want to please – first our parents, then our partners, and now, our children. Health is the safest way to do this. It has everyone's approval and there are



Fabric of all colour Some of the outfits styled by Querala

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

PRIYADESHINI S

Wearable. Affordable. Attractive. This was the approach artist Ji Jo Kuriakose and designer Ajmal S took when they created their recently-launched fashion wear label Era. "We identify as gay and wanted to include the LGBT community and represent diversity," says Ji Jo, founder of Queerela, an LGBTQ organisation based in Kerala.

Ji Jo and Ajmal, who has 20 years of experience in the fashion industry and has worked with online boutiques, found the unhurried days of the pandemic good time to ideate. Ajmal was also yearning to make the transition from ideas to commercial ventures. "We were looking to generate an alternative source of income," he says.

The duo came up with a pret line suitable for a diverse group of people and roped in models to represent its pluralism. "Our 15 models, including Ajmal and I, represent diversity and we hope that opportunities in modelling and fashion in Kerala will soon become more inclusive," says Ji Jo.

Induja Prakash, a plus-size model who ran a home-stay in Manali before the pandemic forced her to relocate to her home state of Kerala, is thrilled that the fashion line talks about body shaming and social stigma. Wearing the label, to her, means actively condoning the bias. "The zero-size model concept is unhealthy and is the main rea-

## An ERA for all

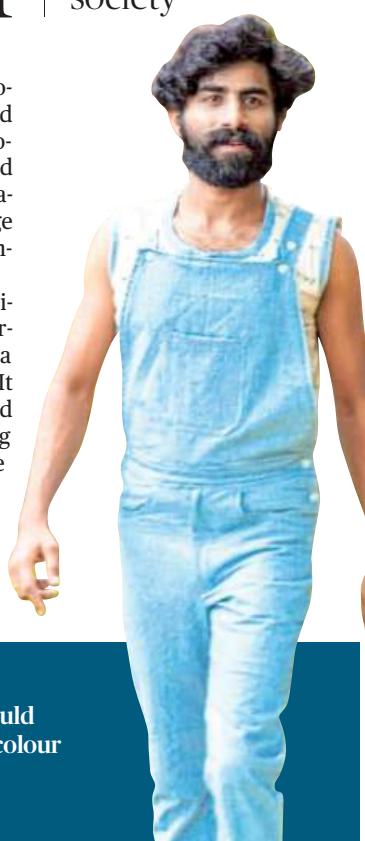
Two trans persons based in Kerala bring out a fashion label that encourages inclusivity in society

son behind body shaming. Modelling is about confidence and should not be about one's colour or body," she says, pleased about the photoshoot for the label – it features a diverse range of people and condemns inequality and social prejudice.

Theatre artiste Younas Mariyam from Malappuram was surprised to be asked to wear a dungaree during the shoot. "It was fun. I loved the design and the fabric," says Younas adding that trans men and women are assessed critically for their dressing. He is overwhelmed by the compliments he got; the most precious being from his "orthodox family".

Modelling is about confidence and should not be about one's colour or body

INDUJA PRAKASH



The line also has a local touch as the duo sourced much of the fabric from local vendors and garment manufacturing units and networked with tailors. Once the ensemble was ready, the shoot took place at a resort in Kumarakom. These images form their catalogue, which is posted on their Instagram handle. All transactions – from orders to delivery – are online.

Ji Jo and Ajmal approached their designs with a practical eye. "We consciously chose to keep away from extreme fashion," says Ji Jo. "We do bespoke clothing as well as the templates in our catalogue," says Ajmal. For the shoot, Ji Jo explains that models chose their garments. Advocate Maya Krishnan, for instance, wished to wear a sari while advocate Ferha Azeem chose to wear a gown. The response, says Ji Jo, has been good. Customisation decides the price, he says, adding that "as of now, we have made outfits in general reference sizes." He recalls a client from Bengaluru who wanted a kurta that he had modelled in but preferred it embroidered.

By conflating fashion with a social cause, the two hope they can design customised clothing for a varied group of people. "We are looking ahead at the New Year. Our label will usher in more inclusive thinking," says Ji Jo.

The Era fashion line is retailed through its Instagram handle @Eraforall.

### A new option for restaurants online

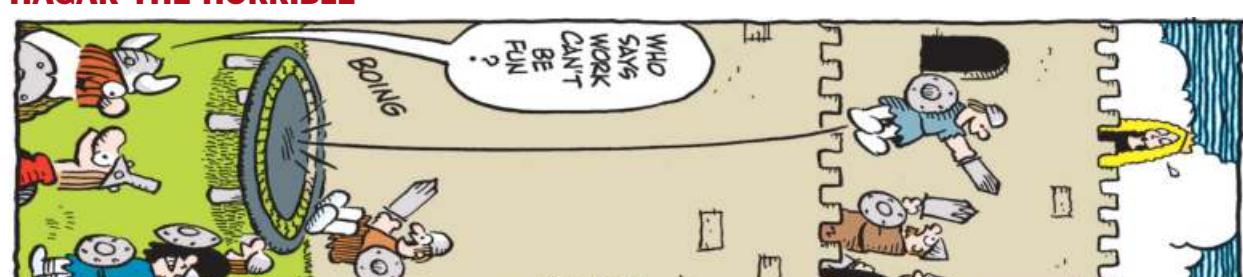
Gurgaon-based commerce and fintech platform DotPe has availed itself of Google Pay's Spot Program to enable hyperlocal discovery and online ordering for restaurants and its other offline partners. It aims at empowering restaurants to share their online catalogue enabled by DotPe directly with their customers, via DotPe's Spot on Google Pay. According to a statement by DotPe, customers can use the Google Pay app to discover nearby restaurants, access their online menus – including for pick-up and home delivery – and pay via DotPe's Spot. The idea is to help restaurants benefit from hyperlocal discovery and get more orders, without relying on any third party aggregator app. Shailaz Nag, co-Founder and CEO, DotPe, says, "Since our inception, democratising technology by tapping into open platforms has been our primary focus. By utilising our digital transformation solution, our restaurant partners can now tap on to the huge hyperlocal consumer base of Google Pay. We are sure about observing a noteworthy surge in business of our partners, given the importance of hyperlocal discovery and convenience ordering for the offline retail industry in the current times."



### POOCH CAFE



### HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



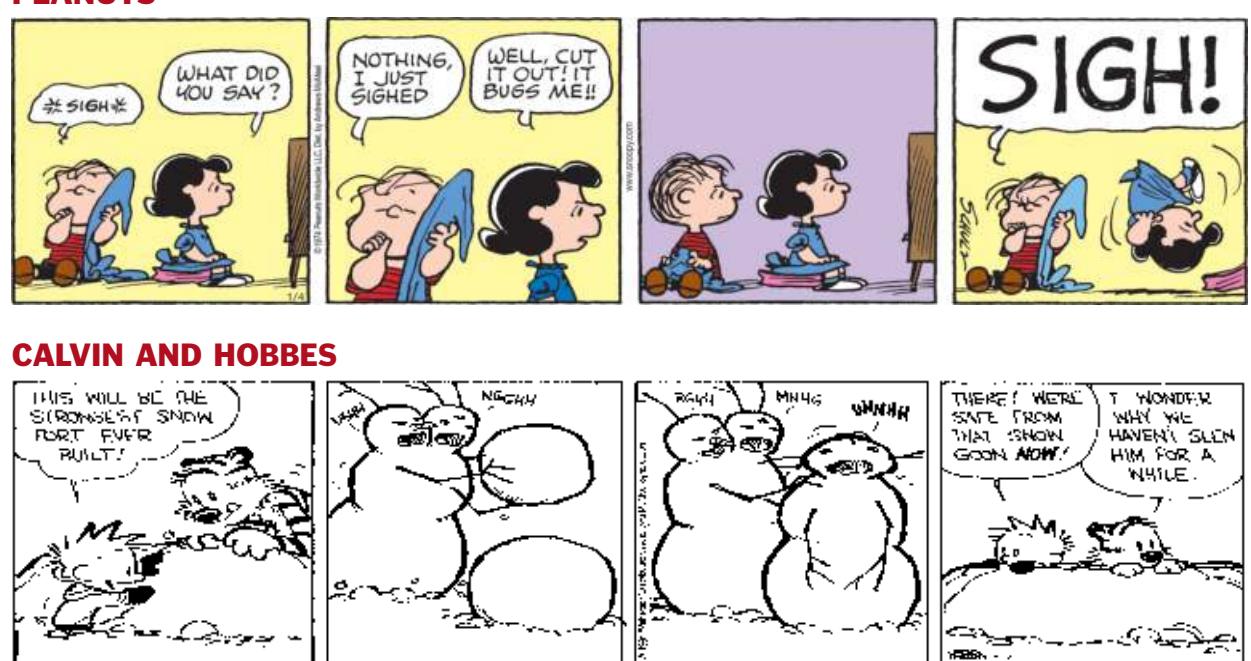
### TIGER



### PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBES



# Keeping up with the times

From learning video editing to creating slide shows and presentations, Government school teachers from Hyderabad have got a taste of their own medicine



Digital room  
A photo of a teacher conducting a science experiment online  
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

NEERAJA MURTHY

For someone whose computer knowledge was limited to sending emails, 57-year-old Yarabala Sreedhar grappled with a strange new reality. At the onset of pandemic, the Physical Science Government school teacher at Himmayathnagar, Hyderabad, had to pick up digital skills and record lessons for Class X students.

Sreedhar admits he was a 'reluctant student' and resisted learning as he is set to retire from service in June 2021. However, with some tutoring from PDL Ganapati Sarma (another Government teacher), he challenged himself to learn the new medium. A week of training prepared the teacher with 32 years of experience, for video lessons. Now, he not only conducts weekly online classes but also shoots video lessons for a digital library, launched by the District Education Office (DEO) in Hyderabad.

He is not alone. Coping with the digital mode of teaching has been a lesson of a lifetime for teachers, more so for Government school teachers and students who were hit hard due to a lack of resources. Although most students do not have smartphones and laptops, teachers have been putting in efforts to connect with them digitally.

Anuradha Potluri's day begins at 5 am. By 5.45 am, the English teacher at the Government High School in Yousufguda, Hyderabad, receives her first 'good morning ma'am' message on her virtual classroom. Most of her students come from economically-backward sections and are first generation learners. Seeing their interest in learning, she started taking classes.

"I begin classes at 6 am as their parents leave for work by 9 am after which the phone would not be available for the students," she says.

### VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

"We didn't think the pandemic will continue for so many months," says Swaraj Kumar, in-charge of the digital library project. The idea was conceptualised by Collector Sweta Mohanty and its aim was to take lessons to the students wherever they were. WhatsApp groups created for Government school students was the first step to provide digital education. "Earlier 30% students used to attend these classes but when people started getting back to their jobs after the lockdown, there was only 7 to 10% attendance and most students were from poor background without any gadgets," adds Kumar.

The website: [www.deohyderabad.telangana.gov.in/](http://www.deohyderabad.telangana.gov.in/) has video lessons for class IX and X students. Every chapter has been divided into small topics and has eight to 10 video lessons.

Until now eight chapters have been completed and 800-900 videos uploaded. Private school students can also login by filling details.

Elsewhere at Borabonda, B Sreenivasa Rao explains conductivity of electricity through a video. He connects a bulb to graphite rods immersed in acid to show how electricity is conducted.

"When the bulb is inserted in alcohol and glucose, the bulb doesn't glow and the current is not carried by the solution," he is seen explaining.

Rao installed KineMaster app on his phone and learnt its usage by watching YouTube videos. "It is entirely a new learning experience for all, he says, adding "We struggled initially but it is a challenge and an opportunity to make us better."

His home was converted into a studio when the project took off in June. "I am well equipped with digital devices, so making visual presentations and animated lessons was not a tough task," says the Physical Science teacher. Around 10-15 teachers from Mathematics, Physical Science, Biological Science and Telugu bring out a 15-minute video lesson in English, Telugu and Urdu.

The videos work even with poor network connections. Unlike long sessions, the crisp and easy-to-understand matter is structured like a template, prepared by a team of experts to make matters simpler for students.

Often-perceived to be the toughest subject, Ganapati Sarma, a teacher with Government High School, Mudafort in Secunderabad, invested in a digital writing pad to explain Math concepts. He provides videos to the library and also takes online classes for his students in the afternoon so that they can also watch the T-Sat digital lessons (previously Mana TV) on television. "Teaching Mathematics online is challenging as it is abstract compared to other subjects," he points out. Ganapati, who uses GeoGebra software to make the concepts interactive, motivates other teachers with his interest in learning new skills.

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# 12 GOP Senators to oppose Biden win

The lawmakers will seek the creation of a commission to conduct 10-day audit of election results

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Congress convened its new session on Sunday, kicking off an explosive week in Washington as Republican lawmakers vow to challenge Joe Biden's election win, pro-Trump protesters gather and voters in Georgia decide who controls the Senate.

The rebel push by a group of 12 Senators loyal to President Donald Trump to block formal certification of Mr. Biden's November victory is all but certain to fail, but has raised tensions on Capitol Hill as lawmakers return to work.

In the House of Representatives, top Democrat Nancy Pelosi faces a possibly tricky battle for reelection as Speaker – an office that places her only two heartbeats from the presidency.

The 80-year-old Ms. Pelosi's Democratic Party holds a slim majority in the 435-seat chamber and she is facing no open challenge, but she will need her caucus to remain firm.

Then on Monday, Mr. Trump stages one of his big,



**Last-ditch move:** Ted Cruz campaigning in Cumming ahead of the runoff polls in Georgia for control of the Senate. ■ REUTERS

boisterous rallies in Georgia to campaign for two Republican candidates in a fiercely fought pair of runoff elections that will determine the balance of power in the Senate.

Republicans hope he can fuel a surge in in-person voting, but the President – who narrowly lost to Mr. Biden in Georgia – has fanned confusion by tweeting that the races are “illegal and invalid.”

The special elections take place on Tuesday, with Republicans David Perdue and

Kelly Loeffler facing Democratic challengers Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock.

Wednesday's vote to certify the November election results, which Mr. Biden won handily with 306 Electoral College votes to 232 for Mr. Trump, would usually be a dry, pro-forma exercise.

#### Pro-Trump rally

But Mr. Trump has infused it with unprecedented drama as he continues to insist, without foundation, that the election was stolen from

him, and as scores of Republican lawmakers back his efforts. “An attempt to steal a landslide win. Can't let it happen!” he tweeted.

He has urged thousands of his supporters to come to Washington on Wednesday for protests. Similar past events have led to sporadic violence.

Eleven Senators, led by Mr. Cruz, said they will demand the creation of a special commission to conduct an “emergency 10-day audit” of the election results. They join Senator Josh Hawley of Missouri, who said earlier that he planned to raise objections on Wednesday.

Beyond the 12 Senators, more than 100 Trump loyalists in the House have vowed to join the challenge, thereby forcing both houses of Congress to debate the objections raised before confirming Mr. Biden's victory.

With Democrats controlling the House and many Republicans expected to vote to certify Mr. Biden's election, the bid seems certain to fail.

The manoeuvre places

Vice-President Mike Pence in an awkward position: law requires him, as presiding officer of the Senate, to tally each state's votes and announce the result – his boss's loss.

On Saturday, Mr. Pence's spokesman said he “welcomes” efforts “to raise objections and bring forward evidence before the Congress and the American people on Jan. 6th,” though he opposed a legal bid that sought to allow him to invalidate the result.

The attention-getting initiative has sharply divided Republicans.

Senator Mitt Romney, the party's 2012 presidential candidate, on Saturday dismissed it as “nonsense,” saying: “The egregious ploy to reject electors may enhance the political ambition of some, but dangerously threatens our Democratic Republic.”

The move represents a clear defiance of powerful Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, who has urged members to respect the Electoral College result.

# China amends defence law to boost war preparedness

Xi-led CMC to get greater power in mobilisation of resources

ANANTH KRISHNAN



Xi Jinping

China's President Xi Jinping has signed an order that has amended China's National Defence Law, giving the Central Military Commission (CMC), which he heads, greater power in mobilising resources to protect a new and broader definition of what constitutes the national interest.

The revised regulations on military equipment, which are effective as of January 1, focus on “war preparedness and combat capabilities”, the official Xinhua news agency reported on Sunday, adding that they “define the basic tasks, contents and management mechanisms for military equipment work under the new situation and system.”

The document, which State media said comprised 100 stipulations in 14 chapters, follows “the general principle of the CMC exercising overall leadership, theater commands responsible for military operations and the services focusing on developing capabilities.”

Draft amendments released last year noted that “when China's sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, and security and development interests are under threat, the country can conduct nationwide or local defense mobilisation.”

The phrase “development interests” was a new addition to the law, with experts noting this also included the protection of China's economic activities and assets overseas, such as those under the Belt and Road Initiative, as a reason for defence mobilisation.

**Expanded scope**

The amendment broadened the scope of key security fields beyond land borders, maritime and air defence, to include outer space and electromagnetic networks.

After Mr. Xi assumed the role of General Secretary of the Communist Party in 2012 and as President the following year, a number of measures have restructured the Party-State apparatus, handing back greater political control to Party bodies that previously had left decision-making to the government machinery. In 2016, Mr. Xi pushed sweeping reforms of the PLA and brought its various departments under more direct control of the CMC, which he heads. Seven military regions were reorganised into five integrated theater commands. The Western Theater Command, the largest, is responsible for the border with India.

The revised regulations

would push Chinese military development “in two major aspects”, according to Song Zhongping, a military expert in Beijing, who told the Party-run *Global Times* the amendments would push faster research and development as well as improve management of existing military equipment. Mr. Song said the theater commands would be given a greater role “to provide the direction for the future development of weaponry based on the demand of winning a future war.”

The change comes amid a push for closer civil-military fusion, with a target to make the PLA a “world class” military, or on par with the United States military, by 2049, when the People's Republic of China turns 100. The South China Morning Post reported the amendment underlines the need “to build a nationwide coordination mechanism for the mobilisation of state-owned and private enterprises to take part in research into new defence technologies covering conventional weapons, as well as the non-traditional domains of cybersecurity, space and electromagnetics.”

The new moves, the *Post* said, have “expanded the power” of the CMC “to mobilise military and civilian resources in defence of the national interest, both at home and abroad” and would also “weaken the role of the State Council” in “formulating military policy” by “handing decision-making powers to the CMC.”

“The CMC is now formally in charge of making national defence policy and principles, while the State Council becomes a mere implementing agency to provide support to the military,” Zeng Zhiping, a former PLA colonel who is a military law expert at Soochow University, told the paper.

# U.K. set for tougher virus restrictions

Despite opposition, PM urges parents to ‘absolutely’ send young pupils to schools

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday he was “reconciled” to the prospect of tougher restrictions to combat spiralling coronavirus cases, as a row flared over whether schools should reopen.

“It may be that we need to do things in the next few weeks that will be tougher in many parts of the country,” Mr. Johnson told the BBC. “I'm fully, fully reconciled to that.”

**Highest daily rise**

Britain recorded 57,725 new cases on Saturday, its highest

total of the entire pandemic. Opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer urged the Prime Minister to immediately impose national lockdown measures. “It's no good the Prime Minister hinting that further restrictions are coming into place in a week or two or three,” he said, adding the virus was “clearly out of control”. “So I say bring in those restrictions now, national restrictions in the next 24 hours.”

Much of Britain is already under regional lockdown, although primary schools are set to reopen in most of the country when the Christmas holiday ends on

Monday.

However, around one million four to 11-year-olds will learn remotely after the government announced primary schools in London, where case rates are particularly high, would remain closed.

Mr. Johnson told parents elsewhere that they should “absolutely” send their young children to school when term begins. “I understand people's anxieties but there is no doubt in my mind that schools are safe and that education is a priority.”

“We've really fought very hard throughout this pandemic across the country to

keep schools open,” he added.

But Jerry Glazier, national executive member of the National Education Union, said on Sunday that “schools are now playing a significant part in the spreading of the infection” and called for them all to be closed for at least two weeks. “Schools are unsafe for the kids and unsafe for the education workers... Many teachers are very anxious about going back into the workplace.”

Mr. Johnson said that public health experts had highlighted the long term health and social costs of children being kept out of school.

# Scotland must wait a generation for new vote

Sturgeon had called for a referendum

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

Another Scottish independence referendum should not take place for a generation, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday, as Scotland's leader renewed calls for a fresh vote in the wake of Brexit.

“Referendums in my experience, direct experience, in this country are not particularly jolly events,” the Prime Minister told BBC's Andrew Marr Show.

“They don't have a notably unifying force in the national mood, they should be only once in a generation.”

Scotland voted to remain part of the United Kingdom in 2014.

Recent polls have shown consistent support for independence.



Boris Johnson

the time called it a once-in-a-generation vote, but now argues that Britain's departure from the European Union, which a majority of Scots opposed, has changed the game.

Recent polls have shown consistent support for independence.

# 45 more held over attack on Hindu temple

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PESHAWAR

Pakistani police have arrested 45 more people for their alleged involvement in the vandalism of a Hindu temple by a mob led by members of a radical Islamist party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

With the latest arrests, the number of accused arrested in the case has risen to 100. Over 350 people have been named in the FIR after the temple in Terri village in Karak district was vandalised and set on fire on Wednesday by a mob protesting against its expansion work.

The arrested people were produced in the anti-terrorist court and remanded to three-day police custody.

Moazzam Ali Jatoi, an official with the Levies Force, which serves as police and paramilitary in the area, said the attack took place near the Machh coal field, about 48 km east of the provincial capital Quetta.

Mr. Jatoi said armed men took the coal miners to nearby mountains, where they opened fire on them. He said six of the miners were dead on the spot and five who

# IS gunmen kill 11 Shia miners in Pak.

Shia cleric says protests over the incident would be organised across the country

ASSOCIATED PRESS

QUETTA



**On the boil:** Members of Shia Hazara community burning tyres to protest the killing of miners in Quetta on Sunday. ■ AFP

also seen spreading out in the mountains to search for the perpetrators.

#### Sparks protest

News of the killings spread quickly among the Hazara community and members took to the streets in Quetta and surrounding areas to protest, blocking highways with burning tires and tree trunks. Officials quickly closed the affected roads to traffic.

The violence was largely condemned across the country with Prime Minister Imran Khan saying the perpetrators would be taken to task and the affected families would be taken care of.

Shia cleric Nasir Abbas said protests over the incident would be organised across the country.

# Iraq rally marks 1st anniversary of Soleimani's killing

Crowds chanted anti-American slogans and demanded that U.S. troops withdraw from the country

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD

Chanting anti-American slogans, thousands of Iraqis converged on a landmark square in central Baghdad on Sunday to commemorate the anniversary of the killing of a powerful Iranian general and a top Iraqi militia leader in a U.S. drone strike.

Roads leading to Tahrir Square were closed off and security was tight as the crowds gathered in response to a call by powerful Iran-backed militias for a rally marking the occasion and demanding the expulsion of U.S. troops from Iraq.

**You killed our guest**

“No, no to America!” shouted some in the largely maskless crowd. “You killed our



**In mourning:** Iraqis gather to mark the anniversary of the killing of General Soleimani in Baghdad. ■ REUTERS

guest. There is no place here for your Embassy,” read some of the banners.

Protesters at one point set fire to a large U.S. flag, drawing cheers from the crowd.

The killing of General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis at Baghdad's

airport pushed Tehran and Washington perilously close to all-out conflict and sparked outrage in Iraq, leading Parliament to pass a non-binding resolution days later calling for the expulsion of all foreign troops from Iraq.

Sunday's rally was being held amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. in the final days of President Donald Trump's administration.

#### U.S.-Iran tensions

Already, America has conducted B-52 bomber flyovers and sent a nuclear submarine into the Persian Gulf over what Mr. Trump's officials describe as the possibility of an Iranian attack on the anniversary of the strike that killed Soleimani and al-Muhandis.

Carrying Iraqi and militia flags and posters of the two men, thousands of Iraqis marched toward Tahrir Square for the rally Sunday, demanding the withdrawal of U.S. troops in implement-

ation of the parliamentary resolution. The event was organized by mostly Iran-backed militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

“We call upon the government and the parliament to expel the occupying foreign forces, especially the brutal American forces, the infidels, the immorals, who killed the heroes and leaders of victory,” said Muhammad Shubir al-Husseini, a protester.

Abbas Ali, a 27-year-old protester carrying a poster of Soleimani, said he was there because it was a day “to remember those who sacrificed their souls for Iraq.”

Soleimani headed the elite Quds Force of Revolutionary Guard, responsible for Iran's foreign operations.

rocket attacks on U.S. facilities in Iraq, including near the U.S. Embassy. No known Iran-backed groups have claimed responsibility.

On Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Twitter: “New intelligence from Iraq indicate that Israeli agent-provocateurs are plotting attacks against Americans – putting an outgoing (President Donald) Trump in a bind with a fake casus belli.”

“Be careful of a trap, @realDonaldTrump. Any fireworks will backfire badly, particularly against your same BFFs,” Mr. Zarif wrote, in what appeared to be a

veiled threat against Israel.

Mr. Steinmetz said the remarks showed that Iran, after mounting U.S. sanctions billed as curbing its nuclear programme and involvement in regional conflict zones, was “under pressure -economic pressure, and pressure in terms of national security”.

“We hear this nonsense by Zarif, that Israel would set off terrorist attacks against the U.S. - this really istotal nonsense,” Mr. Steinmetz told Kan public radio.

“But on the other hand it is a warning sign - a warning sign that Iran is taking aim at Israel...”

# Israel dismisses Iran charge it seeks to trick U.S. into war

ASK US

**Q.** I am 87. My gross income for 2019-20 (April-March) from SB and FD interest alone was about ₹3 lakh. Also, my daughter gifted me ₹60,000. Am I liable to pay tax?

AHMAD

**N. Sree Kanth replies:**

**A.** Individuals whose total income does not exceed the maximum amount which is not chargeable to tax i.e. basic exemption limit in a particular year, need not file their respective ITR for that year. For super senior citizens, the basic exemption limit is ₹5 lakh, as your income does not exceed the limit, you are not required to pay any tax or file ITR.

**Q.** I am 72. I have not filed any ITR for the past 10 years. I have a PAN card and my total income is ₹80,000 by way of FD interest. My FDs are worth only ₹10 lakh. Need I file ITR?

K.V. KRISNAMURTHY

**A.** Individuals whose total income does not exceed the maximum amount not chargeable to tax i.e. basic exemption limit in a particular year, need not file their respective ITR for that year. For senior citizens, the basic exemption limit is ₹3 lakh, as your income does not exceed the limit, you are not required to file ITR for the year. However, if any TDS has been deducted by the bank or institution, you can file and claim refund.

(*N. Sree Kanth is partner, GSS & Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai*)

**Q.** My sons have bought properties in India, invested in fixed deposits in Indian banks in their names and in those of their children and also taken life insurance policies from LIC and private companies. Since they have become U.S. citizens, what will happen to the property, deposits and policies?

MARUTHI D.

**K. Nitya Kalyani replies:**

**A.** Properties, bank deposits and insurance – proceeds of all these can be repatriated on pre-mature closure/ maturity or alienation by Indians who have become citizens of other countries within the annual limits specified from time to time. The procedures and income tax formalities are fairly simple.

As for insurance, policy proceeds will be paid in the name of the policyholders in Indian currency into an Indian bank account, regardless of their current nationality. For this, please ensure insurance firms are provided with KYC and details of a compliant bank account even before the claim date. The claim documents are something that your insurance company or its intermediaries would be able to help you with.

(*K. Nitya Kalyani is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history*)

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

# Home in on the right rate option

In home loans, the nagging question remains: should the borrower choose fixed rates of interest or opt for floating rates?

JOYDEEP SEN

The decision to choose between a floating rate and fixed rate home loan has always been an important one for borrowers. This topic has been discussed widely and if you do a Google search, you will get some inputs on this. Having said that, it needs a proper perspective. First, let's get the basics clear.

Floating rate means that the interest rate you are paying now is a function of the rate environment today. Subsequently, as interest rates in the economy move up or down, the rate you pay will move up or down accordingly.

Hence the name 'floating' i.e. it floats with some reference benchmark. A fixed rate home loan is a tricky term. While from the name it seems that the interest rate is fixed, there may be a clause in fine print that the loan provider may raise the rate at some point, triggered by some development.

This may be referred to as the so-called fixed or floating-fixed rate home loan, where the interest rate is not fluctuating as floating, but may fluctuate under certain conditions. Then there is the fixed rate loan, which may be referred to as either fixed or fixed-fixed rate

loan, provided you go through the document or consult a legal professional.

From the loan provider's point of view, who would be a bank or an NBFC, they would be more comfortable in offering a lower rate of interest in a floating rate loan, than fixed, because when interest rates move up, which will happen because the economy goes through cycles, they can increase your rate.

In a fixed rate loan, in particular a fixed-fixed rate loan, the provider is stuck with the contracted rate of interest. Hence, in a fixed rate loan, from their own margin perspective, they would rather fix the rate on the higher side.

#### Borrower's perspective

Now the big question is, from your (i.e. borrower's) perspective, which one should you choose? If your loan is for a short tenure, say five years, floating rate is preferable as you are availing of a lower rate to start with.

Bear in mind, interest rates may move up. Even then, since the tenure is not too long, and given that economic cycles take time to play out, it is expected that for a better part of your loan tenure, you would be paying

a rate lower than the fixed one. Currently, banks are offering floating rate loans only and not showcasing fixed rate EMIs as the differential is significant.

That is, fixed rate loans are at a much higher rate than floating rate loans and it does not make sense to offer it to customers. NBFCs on the other hand, are offering both, fixed and floating. This helps you evaluate

If the fixed rate loan is so-called fixed and not real fixed, you may be under the impression that you are buying peace of mind, by assuming EMIs will not move up. But you never know

where you would break even if interest rates were to move up.

The flip side is, if the fixed-rate loan is so-called-fixed and not real fixed, you may be under the impression that you are buying peace of mind, by assuming EMIs would not move up. But you never know.

Now, if your loan is for a long tenure and you start with floating rate, the interest rate cycle

may re-

verse and you may end up paying as much as for a fixed rate loan. If that happens, you may shift to a fixed rate loan so that you know for certain what you will end up paying. Although, there would be charges/fees applicable for the switch. But if the loan amount is not too small, it is worth it. Nowadays, information is easy to access online; when the rate cycle reverses after, say a year or two, you can track fixed rates across providers and optimise by shifting.

#### Current situation

A change in rules for floating rate loans were made about a year ago. The RBI circular of September 2019 stated that all new floating rate loans offered by banks from October 2019 onwards should be marked to an external benchmark.

A pet peeve of banking loan customers, and rightfully so, used to be that banks are quick

to raise loan rates when interest rates move up, but slow to reduce when rates ease. The options for a bank in using external benchmarks are the RBI repo rate or the 3-month/6-month treasury bill yield. It was also stated that the interest rate under external benchmark shall be reset at least once in three months. An external benchmark is one the fixing of which is not decided or influenced by the bank.

For example, repo rate i.e. the rate at which RBI lends to banks for one day, is decided by the RBI, hence external. With external benchmarking, transmission of rates will be faster on both sides i.e. up and down.

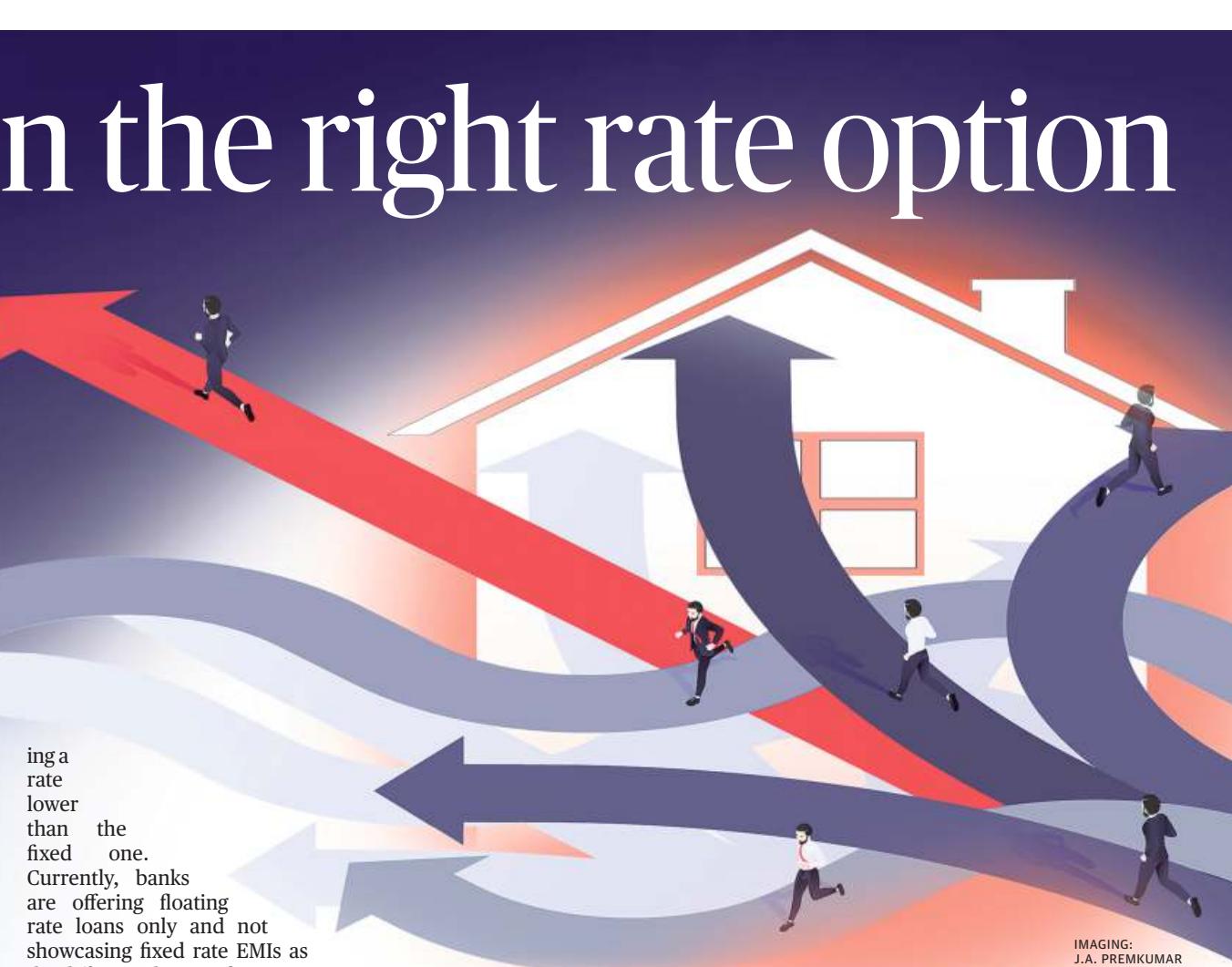
The spread maintained by banks is currently on the higher side; with the repo rate at 4% and the lowest rate being at 6.75% and most of the rates being upwards of 7%. The RBI circular stated that while banks are free to decide the spread ov-

er the external benchmark, 'credit risk premium may undergo change only when borrower's credit assessment undergoes a substantial change, as agreed upon in the loan contract.' Banks are protecting their margin. If interest rates were to move up in future, at the same spread, the rate would be that much higher.

Interest rate cycles will move over a long tenure, and nobody can time them.

Rather, when rates actually move, you can compare the options between fixed and floating, subject to charges. As of now, a floating option is better as the rates are lower with one bank offering 6.75%. You are starting off with an advantage of a low rate and you are aware it may move up, instead of being under the illusion of a so-called fixed rate loan.

(The writer is a corporate trainer in debt markets and an author)



IMAGING: J.A. PREMKUMAR

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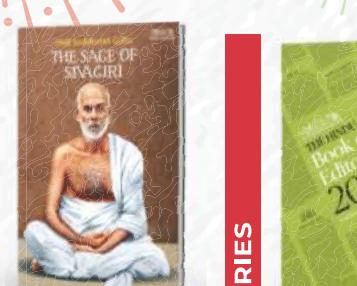
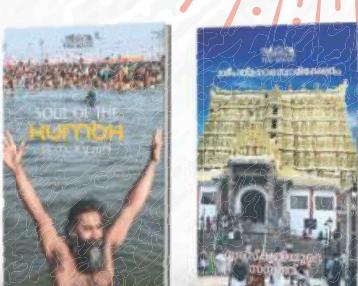
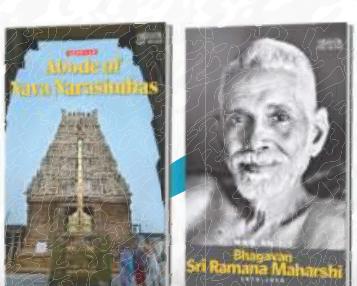
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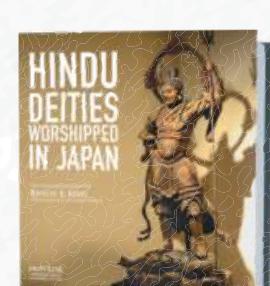
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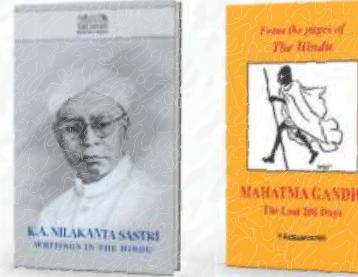
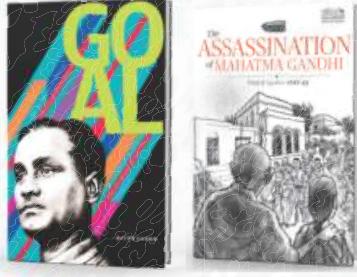
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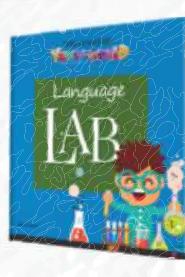
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