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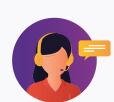
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Government of Rajasthan Department of Medical, Health and Family Welfare

(I.E.C.), Jaipur

Telephone No: 0141-2222817, Email: directoriec-rj@nic.in I.E.C./STORE/2021-22/451 Date: 25.11.20
NIB No. I.E.C./STORE/2021-22/245 Dated 07-08-2021
EXTENSION for INVITATION OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL RFP Date: 25.11.2021 THROUGH E-BIDS

With above referred bid, all the prospective Bidders are hereby informed that the department has extended the last date of bid submission for RFP upto 2.00 PM or 12.01.2022. For detail information visit SPPP, EPROC and department's website UNB No: MHS2122SLOB01844

> (Meghraj Singh Ratnoo) Director (IEC) Medical and Health Departmen Rajasthan, Jaipur

DIPR/C/11922/2021



कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता चतुर्थ वृत्त, लोक निर्माण विभाग, रूद्रपुर, (उधम सिंह नगर)

Phone/Fax: 05944-240921, E-mail: sepwdusn@gmail.com

राष्ट्रीय प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक निविदा (e-tendering) महामहिम राज्यपाल महोदय, उत्तराखण्ड की ओर से अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, चतुर्थ वृत्त, लो०नि०वि० रूद्रपुर (उधम सिंह नगर) द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्यो हेतु ई–टेण्डरिंग द्वारा टू–बिड सिस्टम द्वारा के अन्तर्गेत निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा

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		मा० मुख्यमंत्री घोषणा सं० 311/2021 के अंतर्गत विधानसभा क्षेत्र गदरपूर में भजुवा नगला से बांसखेडी होते हुए बेरिया बरहेनी मार्ग तक मार्ग का पुनः निर्माण एवं		5000.00 + 18% GST	120 दिन	09 माह	केन्द्र / राज्य सरकार के विभाग / उपक्रम में मार्ग हेतु श्रेणी बी एवं उच्चतर में पंजीकृत

नोट- उपरोक्त कार्य की निविदा स्वीकृति की प्रत्याक्षा में आंमत्रित की गयी है। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता



DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT OF N.C.T OF DELHI

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (PROJECT)W-VI CHANDRAWAL WW-II, CIVIL LINES DELHI-110054 PH: 011-23814133, E-mail:- eepw6.djb@nic.in SHORT NIT No. 03 (2021-22) Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211687

S. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Money (Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	fee	of tender through e- procurement solution				
1.	Boring and Installation of tubewells at Coronation Waste Water Treatment Plant facing Model Town Colony and other Suitable locations Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211687	2,11,17,586/-	Exempted	27.11.2021 9:00AM onwards	1500/-	09.12.2021 upto 3:00 P.M.				
	SHORT NIT No. 04 (2021-22) Tender ID- 2021 DJB 211699									

SHORT NIT No. 04 (2021-22) Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211699									
S. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e- procurement solution	fee	Last date/ time of receipt of tender through e- procurement solution			
1.	Boring and Installation of tubewells at Southern Side of Coronation Waste Water Treatment Plant and other Suitable locations Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211699		Exempted	27.11.2021 9:00AM onwards	1500/-	09.12.2021 upto 3:00 P.M.			
	SHORT NIT No. 05 (2021-22) Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211700								

	SHORT NIT No. 05 (2021-22) Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211700								
S. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Tender fee (Rs.)	Last date/ time of receipt of tender through e- procurement solution			
1.	Boring and Installation of tubewells at Coronation Waste Water Treatment Plant facing Coronation Park and other Suitable locations Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211700		Exempted	27.11.2021 9:00AM onwards	1500/-	09.12.2021 upto 3:00 P.M.			
	SHORT NIT No. 06 (2021-22) Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211701								

S. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Money (Rs.)	in e- procurement solution	fee (Rs.)	of tender through e- procurement solution
1.	Boring and Installation of tubewells along with Delivery Mains at Wazirabad WTP and other Suitable locations. Tender ID- 2021_DJB_211701	1,90,42,030/-	Exempted	27.11.2021 9:00AM onwards	1500/-	09.12.2021 upto 3:00 P.M.
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Sd/- (S.P. Singh ISSUED BY PRO (WATER) EE(Project)W-V Advt. No. J.S.V. 675/(2021-22)

U. T. Administration of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu Public Works Department, WD-II, Diu. No. Tender Notice No.64/2021-2022

e-TENDER NOTICE

The Executive Engineer, Public Works Department, Work Division-II, Diu invites tenders from eligible contractor / parties to participate in the following

- 1. Construction of Retaining Wall and Road at Simbor in Diu District
- 2. Construction of Retaining Wall along sea side at Mithabava, Ghoghla, Diu. 3. Repairing & strengthening of old fishing pile jetty and platform from passengers Jetty upto bearthing platform near Gomtimata at Vanakbara Diu

The last date for submission of bids: 09.12.2021 at 14.30 hrs. For further details and downloading of tender document please visit our

https://www.ddtenders.gov.in Sd/-

(Executive Engineer) PWD, WD-II, Diu.



Tender applications are invited for purchase of various items against tender No. 1&2 from the Manufacturers or their sole authorized distributions agents. The bidders can place distribids as per terms & conditions contained on https://episcore.gov.in/episcore/app

Se. No	Equipment/Item Name	Quantity	END	Bid submission date	Bid Opening Date	Deptt Name
499	Pre-Bid cases	Contact of the last	Packago	11010		- 1111
L.	Adenteine Dearmane Kit (ADA) & Nile Acid Kit	As per technical specification	1,24,000/-	14-12-2021	15-12-2021	Biochemistry
2.	Pandatric Cytrocopy Set with Uniteroretioscope	01 No.	1,10,0004	-60-	-do-	Pited. Surgery

Tender List can also be downloaded from nebsite waxe.pgime_ndu.in and can be applied on website new.nbmeure.gov.ln. In place of Farnest Money Deposit Bid Security only "Bid Security Declaration" may be submitted by the Bidders or per Bule 170(in) of GFR 2017. The tenders shall be opened on the nest date of 0.00 PM in the presence of the authorized intending tenders. Tenders not submitted on the presembed from, not accompanied with Bid Society Declaration shall be summarily rejected straightness. The underlighed most reso the right to accompanied with Bid Society Declaration shall be summarily rejected straightness. The underlighed most reso the right to accompanied with Bid Society Declaration shall be summarily rejected straightness.

CONFERENCE" WITH INTENDING BIDDERS FOR ITEM Sr. No. 182 shall be held on 06-12-2021 from 08-00 P.M. ONWARDS IN THE PREPS. OFFICE, PGIMER, CHANDIGARDI The intending helder are free to join Pre-held Conference through sides conference. For more details corners: 0172-2750409 at Procurement Branch (Import).

NOTE I. The terms and Conditions of the original Norice Intuing Tender (NIT) available on PGIMER Website will remain some However on switching over to e-tendering on o-Procurement, the hide will be received in electronic form on e-Procurement website and no hid will be received in Physical form.

NOTE I. If was of the trader operation dates harrow as he a holiday in PGIMER. Characters their has some shall be operated on past NOTE 2. If any of the tender opening states happens to be a holiday in PGIMER, Chandigarh, then the same shall be opened on next

The Institute has adopted amended Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT) which is analysis on e-Procurement website (https://epescurc.gov.in/epescurc/app) and Website: www.gelmer.edu.in. Therefore the bidders are requested to go through the Instructions Carefully before submitting bids.

PROFESSOR IN-CHARGE (EP)



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, **RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SAMBALPUR** e-Procurement No. 3129 / Dated: 20.11.2021

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur on behalf Odisha State Rural Roads Agency invites Percentage (%) bids through e_Procurement from eligible class of experienced bidders for construction of roads and CD

w	works including maintenance for 5 years of rural roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana PMGSY-III, Batch-I							
	1 Name of work	:	Construction of road and CD works including five year maintenance under PMGSY-III, Batch-I Package no. OR-03-245					
	2 Class of Contractor.	:	"A" and "B" Class					
	No. of packages.	:	1 No. of Package					
ľ	4 Estimated cost	:	Approx. 206.24 Lakh (Information in DTCN will be Final)					
	5 Bid submission fee.	:	Rs. 10,000/- (Non-Refundable) per set of package					
Г	6 Mode of submission of tender.	:	Only through online in website. www.pmgsytenders.gov.in.					
Г	7 Su	ımı	mary of key dates are provided below :					
Г			ility of Tender Last date & time Last date & time Date & Time of					

0 Wode of Subi	wode of Submission of tender Only through online in website. www.pmgsytenders.gov.in.										
7	Summary of key dates are provided below :										
Officer Identification on-line for bidding for seeking of submission of open							Date & Time of opening of tender				
	No.	From	То	clarification	Original documents	Technical Bid	Financial Bid				
Chief Construction	PMGSY-	29.11.2021	14.12.2021	08.12.2021	17.12.2021	15.12.2021	Will be				
Engineer, Rural,	Online-	From	Up to	Up to	Ву	At 11.00	intimated				
Works Circle, Sambalpur	RWCSBP- 27/2021-22	11.00 A.M.	05.00 P.M.	5.00 P.M.	5.00 P.M.	A.M.	later				

*Special conditions 1- EPF registration is mandatory before drawl of agreement. 2- Rate quoted by the contractor shall be excluding GST. 3. Original Bid Security declaration form, Bid submission fee and original affidavits should be submitted at the O/o Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur Or O/o Executive Engineer Superintending Engineer of Concern Rural Works Division. *Details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.pmgsytenders.gov.in

*Subsequent modification/ corrigendum/ Addendum if required shall be appeared in the website only.

Sd/- Chief Construction Engineer Rural, Works Circle, Sambalpur OIPR-25091/11/0032/2122

matrimonials



GUJARATI

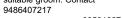
NRI GROOM

Gujarati Hindu Baniya Boy, MS, Software Engineer on Work-visa, Dec'92, 5'5", 66 kgs. Wheatish, Horoscope believer. Looking for American Citizen / Green card / Work-visa girl, Family oriented, Cast no

Contact: 9427492881 sarjakshah92@gmail.com

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Suitable match for post graduate Sikh saini turbaned vegetarian boy 28 /6'8" Canada PR WhatsApp 6283708428







Medico Match for Punjabi Hindu Khatri meritorious Girl, 5'-4", March 1994, MD (Medicine) Working as SR in Govt. Medical College, From Status Family, Bureau Please Excuse Whatsapp:9812433300

0040593356-1

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PUNJABI beautiful girl 32 yrs/169 cm at Delhi NCR, lawyer in Multinational Co. seeks professional boy. 9810601196

GENERAL

Sunni Muslim khan girl 30/5.2 B.Tech SBI Employee settled in Mumbai seeks alliance from Educated upper caste boy. 9833838972

MALYALEE KERALITE

Professionally Qualified Hindu Ezhava Anizham Nakshatram Girl 27vrs 164cms B.Com, B.Ed. M.A English Born & Brought up outside Kerala D/O late Father, Mother(Rtd) Lt Col Residing @ Pune invites Proposals from parents of Suitable Working Boys (Preferably working outside Kerala) Mob No- 8087649982, 9765968280

Hindu Maruthuvar/Vilakkuthalai Nair .fair.tall .26vrs engineer seeks suitable groom. Contact

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DOCTORS

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I arrive at a conclusion not an assumption.

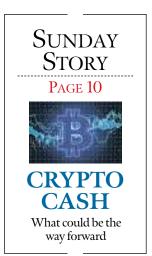
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Stand-up comedians in India prepare for a lot of things. Over the last decade, is an FIR also among them?



GOVT & POLITICS

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WHAT THEY SAY IN

COURT: KOVIND PAGE 9

PM seeks review of overseas travel, states tighten checks, Delhi wants flights stopped

OMICRON VARIANT: AVIATION MINISTRY MONITORING SITUATION

Mumbai orders quarantine; Karnataka to trace, test arrivals since Nov 12 from South Africa and two other countries

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

INTHE light of growing concerns regarding the new Covid variant first detected in South Africa, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asked officials to review the lifting of international travel restrictions. A day earlier, the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced the resumption of international scheduled commercial flights from December 15.

after a 21-month gap. The PM held a meeting

Saturday morning with top Health Ministry officials, where he was briefed on the new variant Omicron and its characteristics, its impact in other countries, and its implications for India, In a statement, the PMO said Modi highlighted the need to monitor all international arrivals, with focus on countries identified as 'at risk'. "The PM spoke about the need to be proactive in light of **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES SEEING TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS **Countries** First Dose 37 Botswana South Africa 28 24 Zimbabwe 25 Mozambique 19 11 Namibia 14 11 Congo 8.8 2.3 Eswatini 22 21 27 Lesotho 27 Malawi 5.6 Source: Ourworldindata Figures in % **INSIDE PAGES 5, 13**

MORE COUNTRIES GUJARAT RELEASES 'AT RISK' NATIONS' LIST STOP FLIGHTS

Flights restarting Dec 15 THE CIVIL Aviation

Ministry is reviewing the decision regarding reopening of international travel, scheduled for December 15, after a 21-month gap. A decision would be taken based on how the situation evolves and in consultation with the ministries of Health, Home and External Affairs.

Farmers defer march to House, Tomar asks them to return home

SKM presses for MSP guarantee; Govt says relief, withdrawal of cases up to states

HARIKISHAN SHARMA& **AMIL BHATNAGAR** NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

THE SAMYUKT Kisan Morcha, spearheading the year-long protest by farmers at the gates of Delhi against the three new agriculture laws, said Saturday that it was suspending its march to Parliament following the Prime Minister's announcement that the laws will be repealed in the winter session of the House starting Monday.

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, meanwhile urged farmers to return to $their homes, saying \, there \, was \, no \,$ point in continuing the agitation

UP Dalit family murder: Two cops



Farmer leaders at Singhu border on Saturday. Amit Mehra

following the announcement of the decision to repeal the farm

He said the farmers' **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

RELATED REPORT

House starts tomorrow, TMC to stay away from Opp meet called by Cong

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

IN THE first signs of strain in ties with the Congress, the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress, which is trying to gain a national footprint, indicated Saturday that it was not keen on coordinating its moves in Parliament with the Congress.

The TMC is unlikely to attend a meeting of Opposition floor leaders called by Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of the Opposition



in Rajya Sabha, on Monday. Although not comfortable with the TMC's expansion drive **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday. PTI

VIPs hired 'fake suits' gang to grab prime Bengaluru properties: CID probe

JOHNSONTA

BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 27

AN ALLEGED gang which obtained "fake decrees" from smallcauses courts to illegally grab properties - by forging documents and creating a fictitious rental dispute between a "fake owner" and a "fake tenant" - was also hired by politically connected persons to grab some prime properties in Bengaluru, according to a probe by the state CID.

The evictions racket with as many 118 cases, allegedly involving the same set of lawyers and fake litigants, was unearthed last year following the intervention of the Karnataka High Court in a case filed by Shah Harilal Bhikabhai and Company, a private firm against whom an eviction order was obtained by putting up fake tenants and owners for a north Bengaluru property

> The High Court ordered an **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

in a local court.

suspended as Opp mounts attack upper caste men, including

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 27

WITH THE Opposition mounting pressure on the Yogi Adityanath government over the murder of four members of a Dalit family in Prayagraj, of whom a minor may have been gangraped, police have suspended two of its personnel who allegedly were forcing the family to compromise with the accused over a land deal.

The accused include several

Akash Singh, Babli Singh, Amit Singh, Ravi, Manish, Abhay, Raja, Ranchu, Kuldeep, Kanha Thakur and Ashok.

The administration also scrambled to contain the damage from charges that the family had been attacked earlier and was not provided help despite an FIR, with the promise of security and an arms licence to their relatives.

The bodies of the four — two children and their parents were found Thursday morning at their house. A case was lodged

under IPC Sections for gangrape and murder, as well as under the POCSO Act and SC/ST Act, against 11, of whom eight have been ar-

Police are investigating whether the daughter was sexually assaulted, as her clothes were dishevelled.

In a complaint, a family member named in-charge of the police station that the Dalit family had approached for protection, Ram Keval Patel, and Constable Sushil Kumar Singh.

Ahmedabad

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4







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EXPRESS AUDIO

NFHS, TMC expands base, Covid travel rules

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Discussing the highlights of the National Family Health Survey, why 12 Congress MLAs in Meghalaya have joined the TMC, and new restrictions for international travellers in India.

to obtain fake decrees, involved "VIPs" who

hired the "fake suits" operatives to grab dis-

ing "VIPs" but case documents in at least one

2018 case involving a former MP associated

with both the Congress and BJP has been

and preserved as per the orders of the

Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka," states an

October 7 order of a small-causes court in a

"fake decree" case identified by the CID as

involving the alleged gang after their serv-

ices were hired. The former MP is linked to as

many as four cases identified as being part

ing politicians and VIPs who used the gang to

claim prime properties. The preliminary

probe has revealed the involvement of VIPs.

The CID is currently pursuing cases where

evictions have been attempted or executed

by the gang itself. The probe is being con-

ducted in a step-by-step manner," said

worth several hundreds of crores were

grabbed by VIPs and others by using the

in east Bengaluru in places like

Krishnarajapuram, Benson Town,

Banaswadi. The properties targeted in these

areas measured up to 20,000 square feet

when the property price was around Rs

5000 per sq ft. The gang was paid around Rs

70 lakh for facilitating a fake decree," police

gang was to create a fake rental agreement

owner and a fake tenant and to file a case in

the small-causes court for eviction of the

"tenant". The court would then be informed that the litigants had reached a

compromise and that the "tenant" had

agreed to leave the property. This was done

to obtain a court decree directing the "ten-

ant" to leave the property as agreed. Using

- for a targeted property -- between a fake

The modus operandi of the alleged

Investigators estimate that properties

"A large number of properties targeted by the gang at the behest of VIPs are located

sources familiar with the investigations.

"The CID is yet to file FIRs in cases involv-

of the "fake decrees" racket.

services of the alleged gang.

sources said.

seized in connection with the probe.

The CID is yet to file FIRs in cases involv-

"The entire record of this case is seized

puted prime properties.

FROM PAGE ONE

House starts tomorrow, TMC to stay away from Opp meet called by Cong

that has seen it poaching its leaders - from Assam to Goa, Meghalaya to Bihar — the Congress decided to not let the unease come in the way of Opposition unity in Parliament to take on the BJP government.

But sources in the TMC said the Congress, which is battling splits and internal dissensions in many states, is not in a position to lead and coordinate Opposition efforts in

They said the ties of the Congress with its electoral allies like the DMK, RJD, Left parties, JMM and even the Shiv Sena, with whom it shares power in Maharashtra, should be viewed differently from its ties with the TMC, against whom it fought Assembly elections just months ago.

"The Congress is in a mess. In Meghalaya, it has split, in Goa all but four of its MLAs remain, there were high profile dissensions in Punjab, Madhya Pradesh... a party which is in such a situation... what are they going to discuss with us... what are they going to coordinate," a senior TMC leader said.

Asked about Opposition unity, another TMC leader said "where was Opposition unity when they fought against us with the Left just 5-6 months ago... we were fighting our biggest battle against the BJP, where

The Congress declined any immediate comment on the TMC call to skip the meeting called by Kharge.

Reached for comment, Derek O'Brien, leader of TMC in Rajya Sabha, said: "The issues in this session are self-selective. Be it repeal of the three farm laws, promulgation of ordinances to ensure that directors of the ED and CBI could have longer tenures, making a mockery of federalism, extending the jurisdiction of the BSF, fresh revelations in the Pegasus snooping row, price rise... everybody is on the same page as far as these issues go."

Another TMC leader recalled that the Congress had stayed away when Mamata Banerjee led a march along with leaders of the Shiv Sena, AAP and the National Conference to the Rashtrapati Bhavan in November 2016 against the Centre's demonetisation move, "Where was the Congress then? Where was Opposition unity?" the

On Friday, the Congress asserted that it was the central pillar of the Opposition and had always discharged its responsibility as the main Opposition party.

Addressing a press conference, Anand Sharma, Congress deputy leader in Rajya Sabha, said: "We have long experience, both in governance and now for the last seven years and more in Opposition. We have a constitutional duty, which we recognise, we are conscious of that as the main Opposition party of this country; there are expectations of the people that we will take up issues which concern our citizens.'

Farmers defer march

to House, Tomar asks them to return home

remaining demands too had been fulfilled since the Prime Minister had announced that a committee would be constituted to discuss crop diversification, zero-budget farming, and making the MSP system more transparent and effective.

He said the committee, which will also have representatives from farmers, will hold deliberations. The government, Tomar said, will propose repeal of the farm laws on the very first day of the winter session of Parliament.

On November 19, the Prime Minister announced the government's intention to repeal the three farm laws — Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

The farm unions, on the other hand, have pointed to their other demands, saying unless these too are fulfilled, their agitation will continue. These demands include legal guarantee of MSP, withdrawal of cases registered against farmers and compensation to those who died during the agitation.

The SKM said it had written a letter to the Prime Minister, demanding MSP legal guar-

"Minimum Support Price based on the comprehensive cost of production (C2+50%) should be made a legal entitlement of all farmers for all agricultural produce, so that every farmer of the country can be guaranteed at least the MSP announced by the government for their entire crop. (The Committee formed under your Chairpersonship had made this recommendation to the then Prime Minister in 2011 and your government had also announced this in the Parliament)," the SKM said in its letter dated November 21.

The protesters, the SKM said, will be staying at the Delhi border till there is a legal guarantee for MSP. A meeting will be held on December 4 to review government action, farmer unions said.

"When we announced the plan (to march to Parliament), the repeal had not been announced. They have assured us that the laws will be repealed in Parliament. We will wait for now. We have suspended and postponed the march. We have written to the PM about MSP, rehabilitation, compensation and withdrawal of pending cases, and a response is awaited," BKU leader Darshan Pal said.

Leaders of the SKM urged the government to initiate discussions with farmer

On the demand for withdrawal of cases registered against farmers, Tomar said: "As far as cases registered during the protest are concerned, these come under the jurisdiction of state governments and they will take a decision on the basis of the severity of the case concerned. The issue of compensation too comes under state governments. State governments will decide on the issue of

compensation as per their policy.' He said the farmer organisations had de-

PM seeks review of plans to ease travel curbs, Delhi says stop flights

the new variant... He also asked officials to review plans for easing of international travel restrictions," the statement said, adding that he stressed on precautions like masking and social distancing.

A senior official in the Aviation Ministry said while a review regarding international travel was on, no decision had been taken so far. "We are monitoring how the situation evolves and will take a decision in consultation with the ministries of Health, Home and External Affairs," the official

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Saturday urged the PM to stop flights from countries where the new variant has been reported, as states announced checks for travellers coming from abroad.

In a tweet, Kejriwal sought a ban on the flights from countries with Omicron, saying the country had "recovered" from the pandemic with "great difficulty". Delhi was hit badly in the second wave.

Gujarat said that in line with a directive sent by the Centre, passengers from countries categorised as 'at risk' by the Union Health Ministry will have to undergo Covid-19 test upon arrival in the state if they are not fully vaccinated. "Those who are fully vaccinated will also be screened and allowed to proceed if they do not show any symptoms of the infection," state Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Manoj Aggarwal said.

Tamil Nadu announced that four Health Department officials had been deployed to monitor precautionary measures at the international airports in Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Tiruchirappalli. Overseas passengers undergo RT-PCR tests at the Chennai airport, the state said, adding that from October 21

manded that stubble burning by farmers be

decriminalised and the Centre had accepted

The relative said the two put pressure on

Patel and the constable have been sus-

On Friday, AICC general secretary

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra visited the family.

The Samajwadi Party, BSP and AAP attacked

the Adityanath government Saturday over

the incident. While the SP called it "anti-

Dalit", Mayawati claimed that a BSP delega-

tion led by Babulal Bhanwra had visited the

the family to compromise and police helped

UP Dalit family

mounts attack

pended, a police officer said.

the accused.

murder: Two cops

suspended as Opp

till date, 55,090 people had been tested, of whom three were Covid positive.

Karnataka said international arrivals originating from South Africa, Botswana and Hong Kong will undergo mandatory RT-PCR test and be allowed to leave the airport only if negative. The international travellers who arrived in Bengaluru between November 12 and 27 from these countries will also be tracked and tested, and those who test positive will be placed under institutional isolation in a hospital for 10 days

Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar said all passengers coming from South Africa to the city would be quarantined, and their samples sent for genome sequencing. She said they might impose similar restrictions for passengers from other affected coun-

The Aviation Ministry Friday unveiled plans for the resumption of scheduled international flights to India in a calibrated manner, with staggered reopening for countries considered 'at-risk'. These include Europe, including the UK, in addition to South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and

At the Saturday meeting, Modi was given an overview of the genome sequencing efforts regarding the virus, and he talked about broad-basing the same. "He directed that intensive containment and active surveillance should continue in clusters reporting higher cases, and the required technical support be provided to states which are reporting higher cases,'

Health Ministry officials were directed to work closely with state governments to

spot after the incident, and found that "da-

AAP said it would hold protests across all

the districts of UP Sunday, and called the in-

cident a result of the state government's

"negligence and a police-criminals nexus"

"This is bigger than the Hathras case," AAP

leader Sanjay Singh said, adding that the BJP

government was driven by "casteist hatred".

"Eight people out of the 11 named have been

and teams have been deployed to trace and

arrest them. One accused is admitted in a

hospital and is not able to walk. We will

question him as well. We will probe the case

curity had been accepted and that as soon as

they apply, the process of granting them an

arms licence would be completed. "The dis-

trict administration has also announced

compensation for the family," he said.

Tripathi said the family's demand for se-

from all possible angles.

arrested. The remaining two are in Mumbai

Prayagraj DIG Sarvashresht Tripathi said,

ising people".

ensure proper awareness

Modi also underlined the need to increase second dose coverage in the country, and ensure this was done on schedule. While 83% of the target population has received its first dose in the country, those fully vaccinated are almost half of that, at

Preliminary tests indicate Omicron, or the B.1.1.529 variant, has multiple mutations -- 30 in the region that encodes the spike protein, which is responsible for the virus's entry into human cells. Some of the mutations are associated with higher transmissibility and immune evasion.

The WHO characterised it as a 'variant of concern' on Friday, which effectively means that Omicron has so far shown one or more changes from the existing variants: increase in transmissibility; increase in virulence of change in clinical disease presentation; and decrease in the effectiveness of diagnostics, vaccines and ther-

The WHO has asked countries to undertake four specific steps regarding Omicron: enhance surveillance and genome sequencing efforts; submit complete genome sequences to the publicly available database; report clusters associated with Omicron; and improve the understanding regarding the potential impact of Omicron on Covid-19 severity, diagnostics and effectiveness in public health measures. With 8,318 cases in the past 24 hours and an active caseload of 1.07 lakh, India has been seeing a consistent fall in its Covid count. The weekly positivity rate has been less than 1% for the last 13 days, and is currently at 0.88%. - WITH ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU,

AND ENS AND PTI INPUTS

The family members have said the vicple of months ago naming the accused as part of a "land mafia" and said they had threatened to kill them. No action was reportedly taken on the FIR.

"It seems that the murders were committed over a land dispute," a police officer

VIPs hired 'fake suits' gang to grab prime Bengaluru properties: CID probe

the state government handed the investigation to the state CID earlier this year.

evictions racket. It has found that some of the 118 cases, filed in the small-causes court

in-depth probe into the evictions racket and

So far, the CID has filed 60 FIRs over the

the "fake decree", the alleged gang would then seek police support and evict whoever was in possession of the targeted property. It is alleged that this racket began in 2013

with disputed properties being targeted at the behest of those cut off from property rights. The alleged gang later moved to obtaining "fake decrees" for anyone hiring them, sources said.

Properties belonging to the Bengaluru city corporation have also been targeted by the alleged gang. An official of the BBMP filed an FIR on September 4 about an attempt to grab a property in central Bengaluru through the gang. The CID has taken up this case for investigation with 60 other cases.

The High Court continues to monitor investigations into the "fake decrees" racket and the CID presented a probe update to the court in a sealed cover on November 16. The High Court has directed the CID to "complete the investigation expeditiously" and to submit a status report.

Govt forms Central Vista oversight panel to expedite project

ANISHA DUTTA NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

THE CENTRE has formed a high-level 'Central Vista oversight committee' to monitor and expedite the pace of its ambitious infrastructure project as the government rushes to meet

The committee will be set up for two years. It will be headed by former finance secretary Ratan PWatal and include former Deputy CAG member PK Tiwari, former director at infrastructure firm L&T Shailendra Roy, IIT-Delhi faculty member Professor Mausam, and a Joint Secretary of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs as the convener.

'As the project moves forward, complexities in the implementation are likely to increase. Further, various aspects relating to the project, including development of cultural spaces and seamless coordination between various stakeholders, would need close oversight," the order issued by the Directorate of Estate under the Urban Affairs ministry stated. monitor the pace of execution of various projects of Central Vista with respect to targeted milestones to ensure their timely completion, the order noted. It will meet regularly and undertake site inspections for an independent review. It has also been directed to submit its reports and recommendations to the ministry

on a regular basis. "The Central Vista Project has been envisaged as a state-of-the-art integrated re-development project comprising a new building for the Parliament, Common Central Secretariat buildings, Executive Enclave, additional buildings for National Archives, new IGNCA building, etc. It is an important building project in the country which would recast, rebuild and modernise the Government of India's infrastructure and streamline and synergise administrative functioning in the central government within the tight time frames," the order said.

This comes at a time when some phases of the project, including the PMO and the Prime Minister's residence, have faced delays.

AMID NEW COVID VARIANT CONCERNS

Better prepared than second wave, DDMA meeting on Monday: Sisodia

SUKRITA BARUAH NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

WITH THE WHO designating B.1.1.529 as a 'variant of concern", Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia Saturday told The Indian Express that the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) will meet on Monday "to discuss what needs to be done"

Speaking to The Indian Express, he said: "We have to be on high alert regarding the new variant and the DDMA will be meeting on Monday to discuss what needs to be done. We cannot take things for granted, we have learnt many lessons from the past. We hope we are in a better position to deal with any possible surge. Certainly, in terms of management and infrastructure, we are in a much better position than before the second wave."

The variant was announced by scientists in South Africa Thursday, and was detected in two more countries, Israel and Belgium, Germany, Botswana, Hong Kong and the UK are the other countries where the variant has

Asked whether there should be delibera-

tion on putting a pause on campaign activities by all parties across poll-bound states, Sisodia said: "I think saving people's lives should be the first priority no matter what."

ILBS head Dr S K Sarin, who has worked closely with the Delhi government on Covid response and preparedness, has urged caution "for at least the next six months, till June 2022". His remarks came on a day CM Arvind Kejriwal urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to stop flights from countries where the new variant has been detected.

"We know very little, I can only say that this has been declared as VOC, our concern for vigilance must be genuine, especially with regard to travelers from countries which are exposed. As a policy, there should at least be quarantine and isolation for them upon arrival. And we should implement our own self lockdown - meaning keeping our masks on and being extremely vigilant - for at least the next six months, till June 2022, till the variant of concern hopefully dies down," said Dr Sarin.

At the peak of the most recent wave, scenes of crowded hospital corridors and patients desperate to get admission had become

common, particularly at large government

At the time, Lok Nayak Hospital was the largest centre for Covid treatment. According to medical director Dr Suresh Kumar, preparedness for an escalation in the Covid situation has been an ongoing process. "After the second wave, we have been continuously working to prepare ICU beds and oxygen supply, so in that sense we are ready. People need to be more vigilant and careful with Covid-appropriate behaviour and not become lax with wearing masks," he said.

The hospital also has a genome sequencing lab, which is crucial for detecting new variants. "Given that the positivity in Delhi has been so low, the number of samples we have been getting for genome sequencing has consequently also been low. We have not received any fresh directions on this," he said.

In November (till the 27th), Delhi has had a total of 946 new cases and five deaths. There are currently 290 active cases, with 138 admitted to hospitals.

According to Dr Jugal Kishore, head of Community Medicine at Safdarjung Hospital, the capital is in a relatively safe position.

Tripura man kills 5, including daughters, cop

DEBRAJ DEB

AGARTALA, NOVEMBER 27

a late night rampage Friday, killing his brother, two minor daughters, a passer-by and finally a policeman who tried to restrain him, the police said. One of his daughters was an infant of just one year. Pradip Debroy, 40, a resident of Khowai district, was overpowered after a police team turned up and took him into custody. The authorities booked him at Khowai police station and produced him before a local court

ATRIPURA man wielding an iron rod went on

The police are unsure why Debroy went on a spree. "He didn't have any history of psychological problems, nor did he have any disturbance till 8 pm last evening or so. He even visited a medicine shop. We are investigating the issue", one officer said.

A senior Tripura Police official said Debroy, who resides in Ramchandraghat area, around 50 km from Agartala, went into "an uncontrolled fit of aggression" at around 11.30 pm on Friday and killed his minor daughters - oneyear-old Aditi and seven-year-old Mandira with an iron rod.

 ${\tt Ahmedabad}$

5 GUJARAT

Two foreign cargo ships collide, no casualties reported

AVINASH NAIR

AHMEDABAD, NOVEMBER 27

TWO FOREIGN cargo ships collided in the busy shipping lanes of the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat Friday night, official sources said. No casualties were reported in the accident that happened between the coast of Okha in Devbhumi Dwarka and Mandvi

The accident happened between MV Atlantic Grace – a 50,000-DWT oil/chemical tanker sailing under the flag of Hong Kong – and a 19,000-DWT bulk carrier MV Aviator sailing under the flag of Marshall Islands. While MV Atlantic Grace was headed to Fujairah (the UAE) from Kandla, MV Aviator was headed to Kandla port.

"Until now, there has been no report of any casualties in the accident. No oil slick has been reported so far. But the tanker has breached the hull of the bulk carrier. Luckily, this breach is above the water level," said a government official monitoring the situation. Indian Coast Guard ships, including a pollution control vessel, are on stand-by in the vicinity and the situation is being closely monitored.

"We will need tugs to conduct the salvage operations. This is a delicate operation conducted



The accident occurred between MV Atlantic Grace and a 19,000-DWT bulk carrier MV Aviator. Courtesy: PRO Defence Gujarat

mid-sea where we have to ensure there is no further damage to the hull or the vessel does not tilt," the official added. Tugs and a team of salvage experts reached the site Saturday.

The Gulf of Kutch is one of the most important shipping routes for India as a large portion of the imported crude arrives at the ports of Kandla and Mundra. An accident in these shipping lanes could also cause irreversible damage to the unique Marine National Park in Jamnagar. "This is a very important shipping lane as over 35 percent of the crude oil imported into India comes through

the Gulf of Kutch," the official added.

When asked how the two cargo vessels travelling in the opposite directions collided, despite the presence of the state of art Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) system in the Gulf of Kutch, the official said, "It is too early to comment, but it seems to be a human error at this point in

Under the VTS system, multiple radars and port-monitoring stations, including those belonging to the Indian Coast Guard, are integrated and keep a close watch on all movements happening in the Gulf of Kutch.

Kin of leopard attack victim gets compensation Chhota Udepur District Vadodara: Two days after a 70-

year-old woman was killed in a leopard attack at Lagami village of Chhota Udepur, the district administration Friday handed over a cheque for Rs 4 lakh compensation to the victim's

Collector Stuti Charan, in presence of officials of the district forest department, handed over the cheque for Rs 4 lakh compensation to Sengla Dhanak, the son and legal heir of the victim, Kuchli Dhanak,

who was killed in the leopard attack at Mor Dungar forest

area on November 24. Dhanak's body had been found with injury marks on her face, abdomen, and leg. The forest department is yet to capture the leopard. ENS

Woman cop of Vadodara rly police attacked, 1 booked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE VADODARA, NOVEMBER 27

GOTRI POLICE station in Vadodara city on Saturday booked an unidentified person for allegedly assaulting a woman police constable attached to the railway police, who was on her way to report for duty on Friday night. The constable, Payal Gamiti, 26, was walking from her residence in the police line in Akota area when an unidentified person allegedly injured her in her leg with a knife.

Gamiti, who is attached to the Vadodara railway police station, has stated in her FIR that she was leaving for duty with a colleague at around 8.15 pm on Friday when an unidentified person accosted her near Dinesh Mill area.

"The attacker came walking from behind and first grabbed my hair and immediately slashed me with a knife on my left thigh... My colleague and I immediately screamed for help and the man escaped." Gamiti told the police.

Gamiti has said that although she does not know the attacker, she could "recognise him" as being a man, who had previously threatened her around six months ago. Gamiti was rushed to SSG hospital following the attack on Friday night.

Police Inspector SV Chaudhari of Gotri police station said that the accused could possibly be a "stalker". The undentified man was booked under various IPC sections as well as under the Gujarat Police Act.

Omicron Covid variant: 12 nations on state's 'at risk' list

Mandates RTPCR testing of passengers from the 12 countries

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE AHMEDABAD. NOVEMBER 27

FOLLOWING THE Central government advisory Thursday recommending mandatory testing of all international passengers arriving from countries that have reported Omicron (B.1.1.59), the new Covid-19 variant, the Gujarat health department has released an 'at risk' list of 12 countries and regions. The samples of Covid-19 positive passengers arriving from the countries/regions on the list would be sent for wholegenome sequencing.

The list includes the UK, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel. While most of these countries were part of the 'at risk' list of the Central health ministry even on October 20, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel were added by the state government-issued circulars dated November 26 and 27.

Both the circulars, issued by Additional Director of Health Department Nilam Patel, mandates RTPCR testing of passengers from the 12 countries/regions upon their arrival in Gujarat.

On Saturday, the UK Health Security Agency reported two cases of the Omicron variant, while one was reported in

COVID CASE TRACKER								
Places C	onfirmed	Deaths	New cases					
Ahmedabad	2,29,276	3,411	10					
Amreli	10,888	102	0					
Anand	9,650	49	0					
Aravalli	5,469	79	0					
Banaskantha	13,660	162	0					
Bharuch	11,454	118	0					
Bhavnagar	21,737	301	0					
Botad	2,217	42	0					
Chhota Udepur	3,398	38	0					
Dahod	9,590	38	0					
Dang	866	18	0					
Devbhoomi Dwarka	12,937	82	0					
Gandhinagar	20,858	205	0					
Gir Somnath	8,562	67	0					
Jamnagar	36,646	478	1					
Junagadh	20,545	272	0					
Kheda	10,411	48	1					
Kutch	12,570	145	2					
Mahisagar	8,313	72	0					
Mehsana	24,293	177	0					
Morbi	6,505	87	0					
Narmada	5,982	15	0					
Navsari	7,255	25	1					
Panchmahal	11,743	70	0					
Patan	11,623	129	0					
Porbandar	3,856	19	0					
Rajkot	58,756	725	0					
Sabarkantha	9,345	157	0					
Surat	1,44,021	1,959	8					
Surendranagar	8,123	136	0					
Tapi	4,449	24	0					
Vadodara	78,116	788	4					
Valsad	6,464	55	1					

148

New

Cumulative

discharge:

8,16,999

3,41,81,161

Cumulative

10.092

Other states

4,56,99,094

Total

Israel. According to Ahmedabad airport official, while there are no direct flights from South Africa to the city, the new state government guidelines do not change much as international travellers are required to furnish a negative RTPCR report upon arrival.

The WHO, in its statement Friday, had noted that "several labs have indicated that for one widely used PCR test, one of the three target genes is not detected (called S gene dropout or S gene target failure) and this test can, therefore, be used as a marker for this variant, pending sequencing confirmation.' However, a health official of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) added they would not be using S gene target failure as a marker and will only be relying on wholegenome sequencing results to determine whether a positive case involves the Omicron variant or not, with sequencing results taking anywhere between one week to 15 days.

The new rule also becomes significant in light of the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat programme, scheduled for January 2022.

Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC) director Chaitanya Joshi said the lab has not seen any increase in the number of samples being sent for whole-genome sequencing, which otherwise ranges between five to 20 a day. Samples from the state are sent to GBRC and NIV Pune for wholegenome sequencing.

Gujarat reported 28 new cases of Covid-19, including 10 from the AMC jurisdiction, Saturday.



साच इमानब्र, काम ब्मब्र



Shah to inaugurate expansion project of Amul today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE AHMEDABAD, NOVEMBER 27

LINION MINISTER for Home and Cooperation Amit Shah will inaugurate AmulFed Dairy's new milk powder factory, poly film manufacturing plant and other projects set up at an investment of Rs 415 crore in Gandhinagar on Sunday.

The milk powder plant built at an investment of Rs 257 crore will have a capacity of 150 tonnes per day. The plant is designed to run round-the-clock to enhance the milk handling capacity of the dairy to 50 lakh litres per day from the existing 35 lakh litres, an official release stated.

Shah will also inaugurate a new Amul butter plant, built at an investment of Rs 85 crore, which triples AmulFed Dairy's butter manufacturing capacity from 40 tonnes per day to 120 tonnes. The plant will also help the dairy effectively handle a higher quantity of milk fat, especially when milk procurement soars during peak

The expansion doubles the plant's production capacity from 20.000 tonnes per annum to 40.000 tonnes, making it the biggest poly film manufacturing plant in India. The latest expansion has been undertaken at a

5 arrested in connection with illegal lion show

PRESSTRUSTOFINDIA JUNAGADH, NOVEMBER 27

FIVE PERSONS have been arrested in connection with the illegal lion show in which cattle was used a bait to lure a lion at a village in Gir forest of Gujarat's Junagadh district, an official from the forest de-

partment said on Saturday. An FIR was recently lodged against 12 unidentified persons after a video of the illegal "show"

went viral on social media. "The cattle used for the purpose was an ox that was brought from a neighbour. The department on Friday arrested five persons, who helped the main ac-S K Berwal said.

farm on which the "show" was organised belonged to one Dinesh Joshi the main accused in the case who is absconding, Berwal said.

The action was taken on the basis of a video, in which a group of people can be seen purportedly gathered to watch an Asiatic lion kill a cattle tied to a pole during the illegal show organised on

In the video, the lion is seen feasting on the animal as onlookers watch the killing from a distance, with some of them recording the show on their mobile

MANY MISSING RABIES VACCINE DOSES

Wrong immediate treatment to animal bite wound rampant: Study

SOHINI GHOSH AHMEDARAD NOVEMBER 27

NEARLY 60 per cent of patients wounded after animal bite at a tertiary hospital in Ahmedabad had taken wrong immediate treatment -- by either not doing anything or applying items like tobacco, chilli powder, talcum powder, toothpaste and even tea on the wound, a study claimed.

The study, which analysed prevailing practices of wound treatment for animal bites, becomes significant as following an animal bite, it is advisable to wash the wounds and disinfect it as soon as possible as the rabies virus enters the human body through the wound and if not cleaned and disinfected, the virus can persist and multiply at the site of the wound.

The study by Dr Bhavna Puwar, assistant professor in community medicine depart-

ment of NHL Municipal Medical College, affiliated to AMC-run SVP Hospital involved analysis of 1,225 records of patients between January and June 2016 as well as interviewing 155 patients.

The analysis of the 1,225 patient records showed that 45 per cent of them missed one or more doses of the anti-rabies vaccine (ARV) after the first dose, including 14 per cent of the 1,225 patients missing all three doses after the first dose. According to Dr Puwar's

findings, working age men appeared to miss doses in higher proportion than women, which she suggests, could be linked to the fact that being earning members of the family, time taken in getting the vaccine dose "may affect their work and

Meanwhile, among the 155 patients who were interviewed. it was found that about 33 of

only water and another 28 of them used soap or an antiseptic to clean the wound, thus indicating that 61 of the 155 took the right measure when it comes to immediate treatment. Maharashtra Chhattisgarh (52). However, 61 others did nothing before coming to the hospital

on the wound instead. As per the 2018 Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD) report of Gujarat, 17 deaths due to rabies were reported across the state, with 12 of those deaths reported from the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation jurisdiction.

and the remaining 33 suc-

cumbed to myths and false-

hoods and applied item such as

tobacco, snuff, chilli powder etc

Eight of the total 16 deaths due to rabies in 2017, as per the MCCD report of Gujarat, were also reported from AMC.

As per all-India MCCD report of 2019, Gujarat recorded a total of 27 rabies deaths, against the total 625 deaths due to rabies reported across India. Uttar Pradesh (182) reported the highest number of rabies deaths in the country followed West Bengal

As per the "draft national action plan for eliminating dog mediated Rabies in India" document of September 2020 by the Health Ministry, it has been stated that while "different studies quotes different figures of Animal Bites incidence and deaths due to rabies in human," the WHO -APCRI (Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India) 2004 study for rabies "estimated 17.4 million animal bites and 20000 deaths /year due to Rabies in

The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) meanwhile has recorded an "increase in animal bites from 4.2 million in 2012 to 7.4 million in 2018 with dogs.

HC suspends life term of three more convicts in 2002 Gulberg massacre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE AHMEDABAD, NOVEMBER 27

THE GUIARAT High Court, in an order dated November 25, suspended the life sentence awarded by a trial court to three remaining convicts of the 2002 Gulberg massacre and released them on bail as their appeals against the sentence remain pending before the Gujarat HC. With this, all 11 convicts who were sentenced to life imprisonment in the case, stand released on bail pending their ap-

The three convicts --Yogendrasinh alias Lalo Shekhvat, Bharat Telli Bhalodiya and Krishnakumar Kalal – had moved applications before the HC seeking suspension of sentence and release on bail pending final decision on their appeal, in 2020 and 2021. A total of 24 people were convicted by the sessions court in June 2016, including 11 who were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Advocate Kshitii Amin, representing the three convicts, primarily submitted that the role alleged to have been played by Shekhvat and Bhalodiya are "less grievous' in comparison with the role alleged to have been played by other convicts -- Lakhansinh alias Lakhiyo Bhuriyo Lalubha Chudasama and Prabhudas Sharma -- and almost cused-convict Bharat Laxmansinh God Rajput.

Since the HC had already suspended the sentence of Chudasama, Sharma and Raiput and have enlarged them on bail pending their appeals, the present accused-convict applicants too must thus be released on bail and their sentences suspended pending appeals, Amin argued.

In the case of Kalal, it was submitted that his role in the crime was almost as grievous or "similar" as the other co-accused who stand released on bail after suspension of their sentence pending appeals.

As per witness accounts, Kalal was part of the mob that had "entered into the society from the front side with sickle" and was a part of a mob "armed with burning rags and had burnt the rickshaw of Gulam Master and destroyed nearby shops" but advocate Amin had submitted that the same is not supported by other witnesses. According to the deposition of another prosecution witness, Kalal was part of the mob and "had dragged Ahsan Jafri and shouting and assaulting him", but this deposition too was not supported by another prosecution witness, according to Amin.

As submitted during the proceedings, based on witness depositions, Shekhvat, along with of the mob that had entered into the society from the back side with a sword but no weapon was

recovered. "Only allegation against the present applicant (Shekhvat) is that he has instigated the mob. According to the applicant, the witnesses stated about the involvement of the applicant before the SIT in the year 2008... none of the testimonies of the said witnesses, could be said to be reliable or trustworthy.'

Witness deposition for Bhalodiya had attributed him for being part of the mob that had assaulted two persons with "deadly weapons near Ankur Cycle Store,' but it was the case of advocate Amin that while witness accounts narrate Bhalodiya seen with a sword, "but no overact is attributed" to him.

The division bench of Justices AJ Desai and Samir Dave took into account the parity of the other eight accused convicts who were earlier released on bail following suspension of their sentence pending appeal and also considered the fact that the respondent prosecuting agency SIT could not "establish more role of the applicant (three accused-convicts) than the role played by those accused persons, who have been enlarged," on bail earlier by the HC.

Exams for classes 9-12 to have 30 % objective questions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE AHMEDABAD, NOVEMBER 27

THE GUIARAT government has increased the share of objective questions to 30 per cent in the examinations for general stream students of classes 9-12.

With this, exams conducted in future will contain 30 per cent objective questions, the government said Saturday.

Making the announcement, education minister Jitu Vaghani said. "In the interest of students in the state, the government has decided to increase the quantum of objective questions to 30 per cent in the examination papers. This will lower the stress among students."

The quantum of objective questions in the examinations for students of classes 9-12 is currently 20 per cent, while the rest 80 per cent are descriptive questions. This decision by the state government will touch 29.75 lakh students of general

This arrangement is for the current academic year, the minister said adding that the move will help students prepare for competitive exams.

GST hike on textile fabrics: An upset

Resident docs at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital join protest

POSTPONEMENT OF NEET PG COUNSELLING

Ahmedabad's BJ Medical College (BJMC) joined the call by resident doctors for an indefinite strike in protest of postponement of the National Eligibility Entrance (Postgraduate)(NEETPG)counselling on Saturday. BJMC is affiliated with Ahmedabad Civil Hospital.

Ahmedabad: Resident doctors of

According to a press note issued by the Junior Doctors' Association of BJMC on November 26, the resident doctors plan on withdrawing their services from out patient departments (OPDs) and routine pro-

ciation submitted a memorandum to the PG director of BJMC and to the medical superintendent of Ahmedabad Civil Hospital. The memorandum demands

cedures. On Saturday, the asso-

fast-tracking of NEET PG counselling on an urgent basis. The resident doctors have asked for medical officers to assist in their work until the new batch joins.

The association has also sought an implementation of the bond plus senior residency scheme for the batches of 2019, 2020, and batches that arrive henceforth. ENS



Ahmedabad audience were part of a Gujarati play 'Adbhut' (incredible) themed on mental health, directed by Manoj Shah, with Radio Jockey Devaki as the solo protagonist. Every member of the audience is handed out a card with their lines as they become a part of the play and read them out. Written by Satchit Puranik and music by Amit Bhavsar, it is being performed at Scrapyard from Friday to Sunday. Express

Weed Blanket

Aquatic weed cover the surface of the Sabarmati river near the water aerodrome project in Ahmedabad. Nirmal Harindran

Lion safaris in Gir should be minimal, cused organise the show," deputy conservator of forest (Junagadh), reduce human-animal interaction, says HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA AHMEDABAD, NOVEMBER 27

THE GUJARAT High Court has raised concerns over tourists thronging the Gir forest for lion safaris, and opined that the Asiatic lions should be allowed to live in peace and interactions between humans and big cats should be reduced in the inter-

The division bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and Niral R Mehta asked the government to frame a policy in this matter after studying measures adopted by

Let the lions and lionesses live in peace, why do you harass them? If anyone wants to have a look, they can go to the zoo. Don't meddle with nature'

- JUSTICE JB PARDIWALA

other countries in this regard.

While hearing a Public Interest Litigation filed by an NGO opposing the proposed tourism zone in Girnar sanctuary of Gujarat, Justice Pardiwala observed that safari activities in said, adding that too much med-Gir sanctuary should be minimal and the government should come out with a policy to reduce interactions between humans

and animals. "What do you get out of it? Let them live in peace," he said.

Justice Pardiwala further said he personally believed that humans should not meddle into the animal kingdom.

"Let the lions and lionesses live in peace, why do you harass them? If anyone wants to have a look, they can go to the zoo. Don't meddle with nature," he dling will force lions to walk into

Citing a recent report of a lion being lured with a live cow for a show, Justice Mehta said that over a period, such shows will reduce the hunting skills of big they and cats, then pose a big problem to humans.

that the lions used in safaris were essentially caged animals, who have already lost their hunting

The government submitted

The matter was kept for further hearing on December 3.

'Surat jewellery industry best example of local going global'

GOYAL AT GEMS AND JEWELLERY EXHIBITION

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

UNION TEXTILE. Commerce. and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal praised Surat's jewellery industry for embodying the values of local products going global.

Goyal was virtually addressed a gathering at the Surat Gems and Jewellery Exhibition on Saturday.

"It is said that the progress is impossible without change and those who cannot change their mindset cannot change anything. The time has come that we have to change our thinking. Both change and development are interrelated to each other. In the coming time, we have to modernize our thinking. As PM Narendra Modi said 'local goes global' and I believe that Surat Gems and jewellery industry is

the best example of it," he said. The three day event of Gems and Jewellery Exhibition at the Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry hall at Sarsana in Surat was inaugu-

Over 108 jewellery manufacturers of Surat exhibited diamondstudded gold, silver, and platinum jewellery, and over 8,000 have booked their visit to the three-day event

rated on Friday by Union Minister of State for Textiles and Railways, Darshana Jardosh.

Over 108 jewellery manufacturers of Surat exhibited diamond-studded, gold silver, and platinum jewellery, and over 8,000 people from Gujarat and other parts of the country have booked their visit to this three-

Goyal urged manufacturers to "focus on four points."

"First is to get the patent of our best design product, followed by increasing the value of the product, diversify our export and manufacture different

products made from Gold, Silver, Platinum, and synthetic diamonds," he said. "We have to also focus on

fashion jewellery and try to find the best market in the world. We should collaborate with the businesses of other countries so that India can play an important role in fusion jewellery. Finally, more importance should be given to lab-grown diamond industry, and there are more possibilities in exports. It will also help startups and generate more employment," Goyal added.

The Union Minister further said, "The gems and Jewellery business also plays an important role in the economy of the country. Your product has obtained the tag of premium products in the world market, including, Dubai, USA, Europe, Singapore, Hong Kong etc. In the first seven months of this year, the exports of jewellery sector is over 23 billion dollars, which is double that to the last year. Your role will also help India become the fastest-grow-

ing economy in the world."

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE SURAT, NOVEMBER 27

THE TEXTILE traders of Surat are up in arms against the Central government following the decision to hike the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on textile fabrics from 5 percent to 12 percent. Various trade associations are planning widespread protests saying the move will adversely impact an industry that is already facing stiff competition from the imports of Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The industry representatives are also planning to call on Union Minister of Textile, Commerce, and Industry Piyush Goyal, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and, hopefully, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, from next week, to submit their requests to continue with the old GST regime. A member of a textile indus-

try trading body, on the condi-

tion of anonymity, even has

warned of indefinite strikes if

their requests are not looked

into by the Central government.

The Federation of Gujarat Weavers Association (FOGWA) had called a meeting with over 70 small associations to discuss the future course of plan. Similarly, the Federation of Textile Traders Association (FOSTTA) and the Textile Processing Unit Association had called a meeting of its members to decide further action. All three parent bodies of

the textile industry, along with the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), had jointly carried out a meeting in which it was decided to oppose the GST duty hike that will be effective January 1, 2022. "The value chain in the tex-

tile industry begins from the manufacturing of fibres, then to varn, followed by fabric and processing, and then garmenting and value-addition. Currently, the GST structure on different segments of the textile industry is 18 percent on the raw materials and thread, followed by 12 percent on yarn manufacturers, 5 percent each on textile weavers (power loom industry), textile traders, processing units, and value-addition on the finished fabrics. The new notification says 18 percent GST duty on raw materials and threads, and 12 percent on yarn manufacturers, weavers. traders, processing units, and value addition," explained FOGWA president Ashok Jirawala. The move will impact these

Surat industry mulls widespread protests

segments that employ lakhs of people. "The textile industry is the largest employment generating sector in the country. The power loom industry consists of around 24 lakh loom machines, of which around 7.5 lakh alone are in Surat. The GST hike will definitely affect the power loom industry, which is also a key player in the economy of Surat. The consumers will end up paying around 20 percent more than the current cost. This will also result in lower demand and consumption," he added.

"There are a lot of women in Surat who financially support their families by doing valueaddition such as stone and mirror work, hand-made embroidery, etc on the finished fabrics. If the 12 percent hike is not reversed, these women will lose their livelihood and their family will also suffer," cautioned FOSTTA Secretary Jay Lal.

FOSTTA chairman Manoj Agrawal warned against malpractices of tax evasion following the GST hike the finance ministry notified on November

He added that they have written to the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers of Rajasthan and Odisha, from where a large workforce is em-

ployed in the sector. 'The entire textile industry has a large workforce from Odisha, Rajasthan, UP, Bihar, etc. We have written to Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik on November 19 to take interest as over 5 lakh people from the state work in the textile industry in Surat. We have also made representations to Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot on November 25, during his Surat visit, as lakhs from his state work in the trading, packaging and embroidery units of

The traders have also requested Gujarat BJP president and Navsari MP CR Paatil to in-

Surat," he said.

tervene in the issue.

Agrawal added that all the associations of the textile industry will attend a meeting Monday with the Federation of Indian Art Silk Weaving Industry (FIASWI) in Surat to decide the future course of ac-

Surat CAIT president Pramod Bhagat backed the industry demand against the revised GST structure. "The industry will suffer a great loss as the demand would drop after the hike. The textile industry is also at a disadvantage from the imports from Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as India has a free trade agreement with them. Naturally, cheaper fabrics will be in higher demand," he

He further added that they have support from different traders' association bodies in Delhi, including the Delhi Hindustan Mercantile Association, against the GST hike. "We are having a meeting with the trade bodies of Delhi and FIASWI national body tomorrow (Sunday) to discuss this issue," he said.

Poverty index: UP, Bihar, MP dists tail list

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

THREE DISTRICTS in Uttar Pradesh has nearly 70 per cent and above population who are multidimensionally poor, and Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh combined have the top 10 districts with highest poverty ratio among states, according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report prepared by the NITI Aayog.

Kerala is a standout state with lowest percentage of population being multidimensionally poor at 0.71%, with nine out of its 14 districts having poverty ratio of less than 1%. Kottayam is an outlier district with not even a single poor

This is based on data analysed from the first ever MPI report, which puts the all-India poverty ratio at 25.01%. The MPI seeks to measure poverty across its multiple dimensions and in effect complements existing poverty statistics based on per capita

consumption expenditure. It has three equally weighted dimensions - health, education, and standard of living - which in turn are represented by 12 indicators such as nutrition, school attendance, years of schooling, drinking water, sanitation, hous-

LAGGING BEHIND Bahraich ■ Highest poverty ■ Lowest poverty Poverty Ratio (%) Balrampu Kishanganj Jhabua | 68.86 Alirajpur Araria Madhepura Mahe 0.08 Kannur 0.44 – Palakkad 0.62 Purba Champaran Alappuzha 0.71 Ernakulam 0.10 Pathanamthitta 0.83 Kollam 0.72 Kottayam 0 Source: NITI Aayog National MPI Report

ing, bank accounts, among others. Among states, Bihar has the highest proportion of people – at 51.91% of its population — who are

multidimensionally poor. Eleven Bihar districts have poverty ratio above 60%, with highest rate of 64.75% in Kishanganj, followed byAraria (64.65%), Madhepura (64.43%), Purba Champaran (64.13), and Supaul (64.10%).

The lowest ratio was in Patna at 29.20%, followed by Bhojpur (40.50%), Siwan (40.55%), Rohtas (40.74%), and Munger (40.99%).

Three districts in Uttar Pradesh has poverty ratio of nearly 70% and more: Shrawasti (74.38%), Bahraich (71.88%), and Balrampur (69.45%). Lucknow has the lowest poverty ratio in the state at 12.16%, followed by Kanpur Nagar (14.34%), Gautam Budh Nagar (17.08%), and Ghaziabad (17.47%).

Other key districts in UP have variations in poverty ratios such as 40.79% for Unnao, 34.10% for Rai

Broader powers, effective deterrent

GIVING BROADER powers to the SFIO and CEOs of public sector banks, the Centre wants to prevent wilful defaulters like Jatin Mehta, Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi from fleeing the country. The SFIO has even probed a few of these cases and powers to request LoCs directly instead being routed through other agencies or ministries may have prevented some wilful defaulters from leaving the country.

Bareli, 35,33% for Mathura, and 33.59% for Agra. Overall poverty ratio in the state is 37.79%, according to th MPI report.

Nine out Kerala's 14 districts had poverty ratio of less than 1%, with Kottayam's ratio at zero per cent, followed by Ernakulam (0.10%), Kozhikode (0.26%), and Thrissur (0.33%). The highest ratio in the state is in Wayanad district at 3.48 per cent. The overall poverty ratio in Kerala is

Union Territory of Puducherry has among the lowest multidimensional poverty in each of its four districts: Yanam at 5.18%, Karaikal at 3.13%, Puducherry at 1.30%, and Mahe at 0.08%. Overal poverty ratio in the UT is 1.72%.

This baseline report of the na-

tional MPI measure is based on the reference period of 2015-16 of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), and provides analysis of the headcount ratio and intensity of multidimensional poverty at the national, state/UT. and district levels. The MPI uses the globally accepted methodology developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the UN Development

Three districts in Madhya Pradesh has poverty ratio above 60 per cent: Barwani (61.60%, Jhabua (68.86%), and Alirajpur (71.31%). Districts with lowest poverty ratio in the state include Indore (10.86%), Bhopal (12.91%), and Jabalpur (19.50%).

Programme (UNDP)

Matter of pride that Kerala has lowest poverty levels: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 27

CHIEF MINISTER Pinaravi Vijayan on Saturday said it was a matter of "pride" that Kerala was ranked the lowest in the NITI-Aayog's first ever multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) released this week.

The government think Multi-dimensional Poverty (MPI) Index listed the state as the one with lowest poverty of 0.71 per cent across India, followed by Goa with 3.76 per cent, Sikkim with 3.82 per cent, Tamil Nadu with 4.89 per cent and Punjab with 5.59 per

In a Facebook post on Saturday, Vijayan said: "It is a matter of pride that the activities done by the Government to ensure the welfare of the people despite several challenges including devastating floods (of 2018) and natural calamities. has laid the foundation for this

Uniform Mass: Crisis in Kerala Catholic Church over directive

SHAJU PHILIP THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 27

KERALA-BASED Syro-Malabar Catholic Church has plunged into a crisis over the implementation of a uniform method of offering Mass, the top procedure of worship in the Christian world.

Bishops and priests in several dioceses in Kerala and elsewhere in the country came out on Saturday against the directive of Church head Cardinal George Alencherry to implement the uniform Mass code from November 28.

For several decades, dioceses under the Syro-Malabar Church have been following different modes of celebrating Mass. While a section of priests offers Mass facing the people, another does so facing the altar. In certain other dioceses, the Church follows a mix of both. Bishops and priests have been divided over the conduct of Mass. As per the uniform mode of offering Mass, priests and bishops across the Church in all dioceses have to perform the ritual facing the altar throughout the service.

O-1005

Name of the Work

Time for completion

Mode of Submission of tender

BLGR-

details

www.tendersorissa.gov.in

2. No. of work

Further

After several rounds of deliberations, in July this year, Pope Francis approved the uniform mode of offering Mass and directed the Kerala Catholic Church to implement it at the earliest.

However, in a severe setback to Alencherry, who was mired in shady land dealings in the past, his subordinate and Ernakulam Archbishop Antony Kariyil issued a directive to priests and people of his diocese that status quo (facing the people) will continue as far as offering Mass. Kariyil also claimed that he had the Vatican's consent to issue such a directive.

The showdown between Alencherry and Karivil reached a flashpoint after the former claimed there was no such directive from Rome to Kariyil. Subsequently, Kariyil released the letter from the Vatican, embarrassing Alencherry.

 $Church \, sources \, said \, the \, issue$ would trigger protests in many dioceses on Sunday where priests are not willing to follow the Church directive.

Earlier, there was a divide among the bishops in the Catholic Church over liturgical

Construction of Bridge under Biju Set

Tender should be submitted online in

13.12.2021

Bid

Chief Construction Engineer

R.W.Circle, Bolangi

OIPR-25118/11/0020/212

The date

qualified

bidders

Yojana for the year 2021-22

10 (Ten) bridge works.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER

RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BOLANGIR

e-Procurement Notice

on-line for bidding

14.12.202

Any Corrigendum/ Addendum will be displayed in the above e tende

29.11.202

can

IPI award for NDTV, The Week journalists

EXPRESS NEWS

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

THE INTERNATIONAL Press Institute (IPI) India on Saturday announced the Award for Excellence in Journalism for this year to Sreenivasan Jain and Mariyam Alavi NDTV and Lakshmi Subramanian and Bhanu Praksh Chandra of The Week, according to a media release issued by IPI.

Jain and Alavi won the award for a report on exposure of the untruthfulness of cases of forcible conversion registered against young men belonging to Muslim community who had married Hindu women in Uttar Pradesh in the name of 'love jihad', the release stated. In the print category, Subramanian and Chandra's report tracing Indians trapped in refugee camps in the civil war-torn regions of Syria and Iraq was selected for the award, it stated.

K

Trial in a day: Convict in POCSO case gets life term

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE PATNA, NOVEMBER 27

IN WHAT may be the fastest verdict by an POCSO court in the country, a court in Araria has completed the full trial in a case and delivered its verdict and punishment to the convict in one day, according to a press note issued by the directorate of prosecution under Bihar's Home Department.

On October 4 this year, the court of special judge (POSCO) Shashi Kant Rai conducted trial, recorded statements of witnesses, heard arguments and counter-arguments, convicted

quantum of sentence, the release said. The matter pertains to the rape of an eight-year-old girl on July 22. The FIR against the convict was lodged the next day. During the October 4 hearing, special judge Rai sentenced the convict to life in prison and ordered him to pay a fine of Rs 50,000. The court has also ordered a compensation of Rs 7 lakh be paid to the victim from the victim compensation fund.

the accused and pronounced

"Bihar has now made a national record by conducting trial in a single day by giving life sentence to the convict till his last breath," the release said.

Kashmiri traders beaten up, forced to chant *Jai Shri Ram* in Ranchi

Ranchi: A group of Kashmiri traders were allegedly attacked and forced to chant Jai Shri Ram and Pakistan murdabad in Ranchi's Doranda on Saturday morning, about two weeks after a similar incident was reported in the area. Police said three suspects have been arrested and an FIR has been regformed a team to investigate Ranchi.

why two similar incidents have occurred against Kashmiri people. In the current incident three persons have been ar-Ranchi Senior Superintendent of Police Surendra Iha said.

The complaint was filed by Rizwan Ahmad Wani who lives in Iharkhand's Doranda, istered over the case. "We have and sells winter clothing in showing it as received by the **ENS** trust.

ED opposes Deskhmukh secy plea in money laundering case

OMKAR GOKHALE MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 27

THE **ENFORCEMENT** Directorate (ED) on Friday opposed and sought dismissal of a plea by former Maharashtra minister Deshmukh's private secretary Sanjeev Palande, seeking to quash money laundering and corruption case against him lodged by the Central agency.

Palande and Deshmukh's personal assistant (PA) Kundan Shinde were arrested by the ED in June after the agency conducted searches at the residence of Deshmukh in Nagpur.

The ED probe had claimed that Deshmukh, while in office as the home minister of Maharashtra, "received illegal gratification of approximately Rs 4.7 crore in cash from various orchestra bar owners" between December 2020 and February 2021 through nowdismissed Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze. According to the ED, Deshmukh's family "laundered Rs 4.18 crore and

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY-e-TENDER NOTICE Tender No: 47/2021-22/KWA/PHC/D2/TVM JJM 2021-22:-

Providing FHTC's & connected works and pipe line extensions in various wards of Venganoor Grama Panchayath (Phase-3). EMD: ₹200000/-. Tender fee: ₹10000/-. Last Date for submitting Tender: 22.12.2021, 03:00 pm. Phone: 0471-2322303.

Website: www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in KWA-.IB-GL-6-595-2021-22 Sd/-, Superintending Engineer, PH Circle, Thiruvananthapuram

Classifieds

PERSONAL

Change of Name My Old Name was Yogeswari Pradan, Now My New Name is Jogeswari Pradhan.

:Address : Salunkisahi, Phulabani Town, Kandhamal Odisha 762001

I, Lalit Kumar S/O Kirpa Ram Sharma born on 27-10-1989 residing at C 404 Sweet shukra apartment Sargasan Gandhinagar 382421, have changed my name to Lalit Sharma 11-2021 at Nadiad. 0050187804-1

BUSINESS

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Authorized Officer

(Aspire Home Finance Corporation Ltd.)

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(Government of India Company)
CIN: L67200MH1972GOI016133 IRDAI REG. NO. 112
Regd. Office: 'Suraksha', 170, J. Tata Road, Churchgate, Mumbai-400 020.
Tel: +91-22-22867000 Fax: +91-22-22884010 E-mail: investors.gic@gicofindia.com, Website: www.gicofindia.com

NOTICE TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF 49TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 49th Annual General Meeting (49th AGM) of the members of General Insurance Corporation of India will be held on Tuesday, the 21st December, 2021 at 3.00 p.m (IST) through Video Conferencing/Other Audio Visual means to transact business, as set out in the Notice of the 49th AGM being sent through

In view of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs ("MCA") has vide its Circular dated 05th May, 2020 read with circulars dated 08th April, 2020, 13th April, 2020 and 13th January, 2021 (collectively referred to as "MCA Circulars"), permitted the holding of AGM by the Companies through Video Conferencing/Other Audio Video Means (VC/OAVM), without the physical presence of the members at a common venue. Accordingly, in compliance with the applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 read with the said circulars and SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirement) Regulations 2015, the Corporation has decided to convene its 49th AGM through VC OAVM and the shareholders can participate through VC/OAVM.

The Notice of the 49th AGM alongwith the Annual Report for the financial year 2020-21 is being sent only by electronic mode to those members whose email addresses are registered with the Corporation Depositories in accordance with the aforesaid MCA Circulars and SEBI Circular dated 12th May, 2020 and 15th January, 2021. Members may note that the notice of the AGM and the Annual Report for the financial year 2020-21 will also be available on the Corporation website www.gicofindia.com, websites of the Stock Exchanges i.e BSE Limited and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com respectively. Members can attend and participate in the AGM through Video Conferencing Other Audio-Visual means (OAVM) facility only. The instructions for joining of the AGM are provided in the Notice of the AGM. Members attending the AGM through VC/OAVM shall be counted for the purpose of reckoning the quorum under Section 103 of the Companies Act, 2013 The Corporation is providing remote e-voting facility ('remote e-voting' to all its Members to cast their votes on all the resolutions set out in the Notice of the AGM. Additionally, the Corporation is providing the facility of voting through e-voting system during the AGM (e-voting). Detailed procedure for 'remote e-voting'/ 'e-voting' is provided in the Notice of

Members who have not yet registered their email addresses are requested to register the same with their DPs in case the shares are held by them in electronic form and with M/s KFIN Technologies Private Limited in case the shares are held by them in physical form.

Members are requested to intimate changes, if any, pertaining to their name, postal address, email address, telephone/mobile numbers Permanent Account Number (PAN), mandates, nominations, power of attorney, bank details such as name of the bank and branch details, bank account number, MICR Code, IFSC Code etc., to their DPs in case the shares are held by them in electronic form and to M/s KFIN Technologies Private Limited in case the shares are held by them in Physical form.

For General Insurance Corporation of India

Place: Mumbai

Date: 28.11.2021

(Satheesh Kumar) **Company Secretary**

KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD.

(A Government of India Undertaking) Head Office, Udhampur Srinagar Baramulla Rail Link "USBRL" Project, Satyam Complex, Marble Market, Extn-Trikuta Nagai Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir-180 011 India Tel: +91-191-2480778

Notification No. KR/HO/JK/P-R/03/2021 dated 18/11/2021

KRCL invites applications for the following posts on Contract basis to work at Udhampur – Srinagar - Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL)

Sr.	Name of The Post	Fixed Remuneration	No. of Post				Essential Qualification
No.		(In Rupees)	SC	ST	OBC	GEN	& Experience
01	Jr. Technical Assistant (S&T)	₹ 30,000/- P.M.	03	02	04	09	Full Time Engineering Degree (B.E/B. Tech) in Electronics / Electrical & Electronics / Electronics & Telecommunication / Communication/ Instrumentation with not less than 60% Marks from a recognized University approved by AICTE

The details of Post, Date, Time and Place of walk-in interview is as follows:

ı		., = 410, 111110 411411 1400 01	
	Category	Date of Interview	Place and Time of Walk-in Interview
l	SC	13/12/2021 & 14/12/2021	"USBRL Project Head Office, Konkan Railway Corporation Limited.", Satyam
l	ST		Complex, Marble Market, Ext-Trikuta Nagar, Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir
l	OBC		UT.180011
l	GEN	15/12/2021 to 17/12/2021	Reporting time: @ 09:00 hrs. to 13.00 hrs.

Candidates should see the details notification, eligibility criteria, date and time of Walk-in-Interview on the KRCL website www.konkanrailway.com at the link → Recruitment → Current Notification and may report directly for walk-in-interview at the

Chief Engineer/Works & Planning

PADMANABH ALL Registered Office: Email: investor@padma Corporate Identity N	N.H.8, Palsana mabh.in Websi umber : L17110	, Dt. Surat 39431! te: www.padman GJ1994PLC0235	5 abh.in 40
Extract of Un-Audited Finance	ial Result fo	r Period Ende	d 30/09/2021 Corresponding 3
Particular	Ended 38/09/2021	Ended 30/09/2021	Months ended on 30/09/2020
Total income from Operations	76867513.00	141790514.00	83208506.00
Net Profit ((Loss) for period (before tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(430921.00)	216432.00	3285935.00
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(430921.00)	215432.00	3285935.00
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(430921.00)	8472.00	3048290.00
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)	(430921.00)	8472.00	3048290,00
Equity Share Capital	54133000.00	54133000.00	54133000.00
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet	22702700,00	22702700.00	20888042.00
Earnings Per Share (of Rs. 101- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) - 1. Basic : 2. Oiluted :	(0.08) (0.08)	(0.00) (0.00)	0,54 0,56

Note: The above is an extract of the detailed format of Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Financial Results are available on the websites of the Stock Exchange at http://www.bseindia.com and the listed entity at http://www.padmanabh.in. For Padmanabh Alloys & Polymers Limited

Place : Surat Date: 25/11/2021 Chetankumar Mohanbhai Desai (DIN: 00051541)

Aspire Home Finance Corporation Limited ASPIRE Motilal Oswal Tower, Rahimtullah Sayani Road, Opposite ST Depot, Prabhadevi, Mumbai-400025 Email :- info@ahfcl.com. CIN :- U65923MH2013PLC248741 POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY/IES)

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Aspire Home Finance Corporation Ltd. under the Securitisatio and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & in compliance of Rule 8(1) of Enforcement of Security Interest Act. 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued demand notice/s on the date mentioned against each account calling upon the respective borrower/s to repay the amount as mentioned against each account within 60 days from the date of notice(s)/date of receipt of the said notice/s The borrower/s having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/s and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/les described herein below in exercise powers conferred on him her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned against each account. The borrower/s in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and an dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Aspire Home Finance Corporation Ltd., for the amount and interest thereon as per loan agreement. The borrowers' attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Loan Agreement No. / Name of the Demand Date of

INO	borrower/ Co borrower/ quarantor	& Amount	Taken	Property/les mortgageu	
1	LXSUR00217-180064313 / Randhir Kumar Narayan Mahto & Aarti Kumari Randhir Mahto	20-07-2021 for Rs. 1157256/-	25-Nov-21	Row House No - 134, Shiv Sagar Residency, Type - D, Behind Sarvottam Hotel, Near Sai Kutir Residency, Canal Road, Bardoli Road, Dastan, Palsana, Surat, Gujarat – 394310	
2	LXSUR00215-160015804 / Jogandar Bakesih Singh & Indravatidevi Yogendra Singh	20-07-2021 for Rs. 367684/-	24-11-2021	Flat No - 108, Nilkanth Residency, Opposite Decent Hotel, National Highway No - 8, Near, Palsana Chokdi, Chorasi, Surat, Gujarat - 395010	
3	LXSUR00216-170046352 / Sureshkumar Jayshankar Gaud & Phulkumari Suresh Gaud	20-07-2021 for Rs. 625179/-	24-Nov-21	Flat No - A-411, Viraj Complex, Near Sachin Railway, St. Road, Chhotukaka Ni Wadi, Paligam, Sachin, Surat, Gujarat - 394327	
4	LXSUR00315-160012581 / Shivshankar Pruthvi Sinh & Pritysingh Shivshankar Tomer	22-02-2021 for Rs. 544259/-	25-11-2021	Flat No B - 203, 2Nd Floor, Block No 138/B, Shivam Residency, Near Srp Compound, Ganesh Residency, Navagam, Kamrej, Surat, Gujarat - 394180	
5	LXSUR00216-170023054 / Mohanlal Lilaram Sirvi & Kailashkumar Mohanlal Sirvi	29-08-2017 for Rs. 592674/-	25-Nov-21	Flat No 201, Vinayak Residency, Shree Nivas Green City Vibhag 2, Kadodara Bardoli Road, Kadodara, S No. 133/2B, Block No. 108, 109& 120 Plot No.1To5 Nr Sai Residency Surat Gujarat 394327	
6	LXNAV00416-170035724 / Bholabhai Gopalbhai Chotaliya & Jayshreeben Bholabhai Chotaliya	24-06-2019 for Rs. 1196304/-	25-11-2021	Building No C-16, Flat No 303, Mansarovar Residency, Near Girnar Hotel, Chorasi, Surat, Gujarat - 394185	
7	LXSUR00116-170033358 / Kalpeshkumar Ashokbhai Dodiya & Alpeshkumar Ashokbhai Dodiya	23-10-2019 for Rs. 346586/-	25-11-2021	Flat No 112, Building No C, 1St Floor, Shivam Residency,Kamrej, Plot No 313 To 324, Shiv Nagar, Near Swapnavilla, Opp Krishna Residency, Chorasi, Surat, Gujarat – 394185	
8	LXSUR00216-170050683 / Maheshkumar Sureshbhai Gohil & Bhanuben Sureshbhai Gohil	23-10-2019 for Rs. 576296/-	25-11-2021	Flat No 212, Shivam Residency, Shiv Nagar, Kamrej-Va Dada, B/H Bhagavan Mandir, Kamrej, Surat, Gujarat - 394125	
9	LXKAD00417-180064868 / Shitalukaprasad Sobhnath Shaw & Sunita Devi Shitalukaa Prashad Shaw	15-11-2019 for Rs. 1045274/-	25-11-2021	Plot No 39, Anurag Row House, Mauje Tatithaiya Kadodra, Palsana , Surat, Gujarat - 384327	
10	LXSUR00316-170035225 / Umesh Balmiki Prasad & Rimpudevi Umesh Prasad	15-11-2019 for Rs. 435895/-	25-11-2021	Flat No A/313, Kamrej Shivam Residency, Rs No 360, Block No 347, Near Gopal Nagar Society, Kamrej, Surat, Gujarat – 394150	
11	LXSUR00216-170046316 / Jayraj Pravinsinh Jadeja & Damyantiben Pravinsinh Jadeja	19-12-2019 for Rs. 559631/-	25-11-2021	Flat No A 210, 2nd Floor, Shivam Residency, Shiv Nagar, Kamrej - Van Road, Dada, Kanrej, Surat, Gujarat – 394180	
12	LXSUR00516-170035410 / Dinesh Dwarkadas Maheshwari & Somani Dinesh Maheshwari	19-12-2019 for Rs. 413444/-	25-11-2021	Flat No 215, Rajdeep Residency, Block No.121, Vallabha Nagar, Vareli , Surat, Gujarat - 394305	
13	LXSUR00217-180053458 / Raghubhai Chibabhai Chauhan & Hansaben Raghubhai Chauhan	24-01-2020 for Rs. 559147/-	25-11-2021	Flat No 303, 3rd Foor, Shivam Residency, R.s.no.360, Block No C, Kamrej-Vav Road, Dada, Block No.347, B/H Bhagavan Mandir, Kamrej, Surat, Gujarat - 394150	

EXPRESS NETWORK

EMERGENCE OF OMICRON VARIANT

Control of the contro

AMITABH SINHA

PUNE, NOVEMBER 27

A LITTLE more than a quarter of health workers in Africa have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19 till now. That is roughly the coverage of first doses in the entire population of South Africa

The emergence of Omicron variant of SARS-CoV2, first reported from South Africa earlier this week, has brought spotlight on inequalities in accessing vaccines. While the developed world struck advance deals with manufacturers to secure billions of doses even before the vaccines were approved, poorer countries have been dependent primarily on inadequate and erratic supplies from Covax facility set up by the World Health Organization and some other international agencies. Nowhere is the inequality starker than in Africa. Just about 11 per cent of the population has had at least one dose of the vaccine, and only 7.2 per cent is fully vaccinated, according to Our World In Data

Europe and North America, on the other hand, have got more than 50 per cent of their population fully vaccinated, while the first dose coverage is over 60 per cent. In Asia, close to 50 per cent people are fully vaccinated now.

A recent report from WHO said less than 10 per cent nations in Africa – or just about five countries — are likely to achieve their year-end target of vaccinating 40 per cent of their populations. Most African countries missed a

Dependence on Covax

MOST OF Africa has been

almost entirely dependent on supplies from Covax, or vaccine diplomacy from countries like China, India and Russia. Covax facility, in turn, is dependent on contributions, either in form of doses or money to buy them, from other countries. So far, Covax facility has delivered 537 million doses in over 100 countries, of which 330 million has gone to Africa.

September target to vaccinate at least 10 per cent of their populations. A total of 227 million doses have been administered in Africa. That is less than 20 per cent of doses administered in India Over 900 million doses have been administered in Europe, and more than 450 million in the US.

"We have enough vaccines that, if they were distributed appropriately, can protect those who are most at risk for severe disease and our frontline workers," Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead for Covid-19 at WHO, was recently quoted as saying.

"Too many vaccines are going wasted and too many vaccines are not being used most appropriately ... frankly this inappropriate use... is prolonging the pandemic,"

VACCINATION COVERAGE CONTINENT-WISE

Continents	First Dose Coverage (% of population)	Second Dose Coverage (% of population)					
Africa	11	7.2					
Asia	62	48					
Europe	62	58					
North America	64	54					
South America	72	56					
Source: Ourworldindata							

Karnataka tightens curbs as more Covid clusters appear

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 27

STUDENTS ARRIVING from Kerala and Maharashtra will mandatorily need a negative RT-PCR report, the Karnataka government decided on Saturday at an emergency meeting with experts. The meeting came in the wake of four clusters of Covid-19 infections reported from four educational institutions in the state over the past week

Saturday's meeting was convened by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai with members of the state technical advisory committee and state officials after outbreaks were reported from a Bengaluru city school, a nursing college in rural Bengaluru, a nursing college in Mysuru, and a medical college in the Dharwad.

In addition to a mandatory negative RT-PCR report from students arriving from Kerala and Maharashtra, "those students who have come from Kerala 16 days ago must undergo a fresh RT-PCR test. This will apply especially to nursing students and those at hostels... At all hostels, a second RT-PCR test must be done seven days from arrival," Karnataka Revenue Minister R Ashok said. He said there will be a strict vigil in the border regions of

Kerala and Maharashtra. The state has written to the Centre seeking booster doses for frontline workers and a decision is expected soon, he added.

A total of 281 students and faculty at the SDM College of Medical Sciences in Dharwad tested positive for Covid over the past two days. Another 48 nursing students in Mysuru tested positive, and in Bengaluru rural, 12 nursing students from Kerala at the Spurthy College of Nursing were diagnosed.

On Thursday, 33 students, all minors, and a staff member at a private boarding school too tested positive for the viral illness

Two SA citizens in Bengaluru test positive for Delta variant

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 27

TWO CITIZENS of South Africa who arrived in Bengaluru tested positive for Covid-19, briefly sparking concerns over the new Omicron variant detected in that country before a genome sequencing test found that they had the Delta variant.

The development, however, prompted CM Basavaraj Bommai to call a high-level meeting on Saturday. Bommai said authorities would intensify screening of international passengers at the airports and make the RT-PCR test report compulsory for those arriving from Kerala and Maharashtra. K Srinivas, the Deputy Commissioner of Bengaluru Rural district under which Kempegowda International Airport falls, said: "Two South African nationals who arrived to Bengaluru on 11 and 20 November respectively were tested positive for Covid-19 and were traced living in Bengaluru. They have been isolated and are under treatment. We have found them to have the Delta variant.' About 84 people arrived in Bengaluru in November from 10 high-risk countries and 94 of

Only vaccinated people can use public transport in Maharashtra

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 27

THE MAHARASHTRA government on Saturday issued fresh Covid restrictions, which mandated that only fully vaccinated citizens would be allowed to access public transport in the state.

The new guidelines also said that all domestic travellers entering the state should either be fully vaccinated or carry an RT-PCR test report valid for 72 hours. "... the State Government is now considering to open up economic, social, entertainment and cultural activities with fewer restrictions especially for fully vaccinated persons," the order signed by Maharashtra Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte said.

The order said that all people connected with "the organisation of any programme, event or show" should be fully vacci-

All visitors to malls, gatherings and such places should also be fully vaccinated, it said.

All public transport shall be used only by fully vaccinated people, adding the Universal Pass created by the state government or the CoWin Certificate with a valid photo ID proof will be sufficient, the order said.

anti-terror cases

DEBRAJ DEB

AGARTALA, NOVEMBER 27

OVER THREE weeks after Tripura booked 102 social media users under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for sharing content online over the alleged vandalism in October along with alleged fake news and rumour mongering, Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has instructed Director General of Police V S Yadav to review the cases and submit a report.

DGP Yadav has further directed the Crime Branch, which is

now investigating these cases. A senior official of the Chief Minister's Office told The Indian Express, "There was a conspiracy to disturb law and order in Tripura few days back by posting fake photos and videos of arson in mosques on social media. In order to bring the situation under control and maintain communal harmony, Tripura Police filed cases against 102 people including some journalists and lawyers."

Requesting anonymity, the official said police will take action against everyone who deliberately tried to disturb communalharmony, and cases will be dropped if there isn't enough ev-

On November 3, Tripura Police served notices to Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, asking them to block accounts of 102 users who allegedly posted content that "have potential to flare

MLAs. During the interaction, a



Tripura CM Biplab Kumar Deb

up communal tension". The accused included 68 Twitter users.

An investigation of these Twitter handles by The Indian Express revealed they included nine journalists, seven political workers, five students, two activists, and seven profiles were affiliated to different religious organisations. The content on a majority of these suggested they were critical of the government. After serving the notice to Twitter, Tripura Police said 47 Twitter posts and one YouTube post were removed. As on November 17, 44 of 68 Twitter profiles were still available while 24 were pulled down or suspended by Twitter

Police also said that at least one post by Indian American Muslim (IAM) Council had links with a terror outfit of Pakistan and was allegedly supporting Taliban and lobbying with foreign organisations against India in connivance with Pakistan's spy agency.

"There are at least 14 links which have originated from outside India revealing that the conspiracy hatched outside India as well for promoting hatred between religious groups and creating disturbances", the statement said. They later sent a list of 94 tweets accused of similar charges.

2 weapons used in Bikru ambush seized in MP

MANISH SAHU LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 27

OVER A year after the Bikru inci-

dent in which eight policemen, Deputy Superintendent of Police rank officer, were killed during an attempt to arrest gangster Vikas Dubey in July last year, the Kanpur Police on Saturday claimed that two weapons allegedly used in the shootout by assailants have been seized in Madhya Pradesh.

a semi-automatic rifle and a .12 bore rifle - were seized from Madhya Police and belonged to prime accused Vikas Dubey, who was later gunned down in an encounter in Kanpur.

The Madhya Pradesh police recovered the weapons from two local criminals, who claimed to have purchased them a few months ago, police added.

Two days ago, a team of the Kanpur Police went to Bhind in Madhya Pradesh and brought the semi-automatic rifle after completing legal formalities. "We will soon bring the other weapon. too. The weapons will be sent to a forensic laboratory for ballistic examination," said station house officer, Choubeypur police station, KM Rai. The incident dates back to July 3 last year, when a police team came under heavy gunfire near Dubey's residence at Bikru. Eight policemen died in the ambush. Of the 21 people named in the FIR, the police gunned down six accused, including Dubey, in alleged encounters over the weeks.



during the Hyderpora encounter, in Ramban district of J&K. PTI

'Will continue fight for Art 370'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE JAMMU, NOVEMBER 27

FORMER JAMMU and Kashmir chief minister and National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah on Saturday reiterated his party's resolve to continue fighting for restoration of Article 370, stating that "today our bad luck is that we have to fight even for getting back the body of an innocent(person)".

Omar, who visited the family of Amir Magray at Thatharka, later addressed a public meeting in Gool and said that he had gone to Srinagar to work since he could not find a job here. Even today, he added, Amir's father lives under police protection since he had

fought against militancy. Amir, along with a Pakistani militant, was among four people, including a doctor and the owner of the building, who were killed by police in an encounter in Handwara last week. While bodies of the building owner and the doctor were exhumed in Handwara and handed over to their families following protests, Amir's body remained buried there, as police called him an associate of the slain Pakistani militant.

"Today, a father, who had fought against militancy and the gun in the past, asks for the body of his son so that he can give him a burial as per rites," Omar said. He also asked whether August 2019. when special status to the erstwhile state was withdrawn, "was

UP, BIHAR NUMBERS ENCOURAGING

a youth from Gool, gets buried in Handwara and no one knows where his grave is".

Pointing out that today if his father wants to offer fatiha on his grave, he will perhaps be unable to trace it, Omar, without naming anyone, asked, "Where are our leaders who keep on talking about Jammu? Is Gool not a part of

Stating that a "strange situation" has arisen after August 2019, Omar said he does not understand which direction the present rulers are taking J&K, or what their intentions are. He asked the Centre what it has done for the people of I&K after August 2019 regarding employment, new development

PUNJAB ASSEMBLY ELECTION

Kejriwal non-committal on AAP's CM pick Singh Cheema and other party

MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA MOHALI, NOVEMBER 27

them came from South Africa.

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal was non-committal on naming Bhgawant Mann as the chief ministerial face for Punjab Assembly elections at a public meeting in Mohali on Saturday and, in a snub to those demanding he be made the CM face, said that the priority of the workers should be to ensure that Punjab is saved and not to make someone minister or MLA.

Kejriwal made the comments when faced with vocifer-

Elephant deaths: Five TN officials 'detained' in Kerala, say cops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COIMBATORE, NOVEMBER 2

FIVE FOREST officials from Tamil Nadu, who had gone to Palakkad to enquire about the speed of the train that nowed down three elephants, near Ettimadai on the outskirts of Coimbatore on November 26, were reportedly detained at Palakkad railway station on Saturday, police said.

The loco pilot and co pilot, both from Kerala, were questioned about the incident earlier. The forest peronnel from Tamil Nadu, who went to Palakkad railway station, were reportedly detained by railway police there. Hearing about this, some political outfits staged a protest.



Kejriwal

ous demands from the party supporters who interrupted his comments by raising slogans in favour of Mann.

The public meeting being held by Kejriwal in Mohali was attended by state president and Sangrur MP Bhagwant Mann, state in-charge Jarnail Singh, Leader of Opposition Harpal

demand was made by an elderly person that no candidate from outside Punjab would be acceptable to the supporters of AAP. Kejriwal was about to make

his speech at the event when the discussion on CM face came up. "I assure you that the CM candidate will be from Punjab itself," said Keiriwal as more slogans were raised. When they did not abate. Mann had to take up a mic and request for silence.

Kejriwal resumed his speech and virtually delivered a snub by referring to another demand for an MLA ticket. "Are we to put Puniab back on rails or we are to make someone minister or MLA," Kejriwal said.

On Saturday, the AAP leader also joined a protest by temporary teachers in Mohali and promised to regularise their jobs if the party is voted to power. The teachers have been protesting for months demanding that permanent jobs and a hike in salary.

"Teachers are nation builders. I solved their problems and now the teachers are solving the problems of the whole of Delhi's children and mine as well," he

After protests, CM says will act against Old Goa construction **EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**

PANAJI, NOVEMBER 27

GOA CHIEF Minister Pramod Sawant on Saturday said his government will act on the allegedly illegal structure in Old Goa that has sparked protests. Activists and residents demanding the demolition of the structure in the Old Goa heritage precinct, meanwhile, continued their fast on its fourth day on Saturday

He said that the permissions for the construction of the bungalow — built on the land that was partly bought by Manish Munot, husband of BJP spokesperson Shaina NC and party by Survarna Lotlikar, wife of former Goa Forward Party (GFP) treasurer Suraj Lotlikar – was granted prior to the term of his government.



Activists say the bungalow construction is illegal.

"From what I have understood he had obtained a construction license and permission at the time....But now since everyone is protesting against it, our government will act on it," Sawant said.

Sawant said that the government will take action as per the law and since the matter is pending in Supreme Court in an SLP filed, the government will also have to factor in the legal bearing of its action. Sawant also pointed a finger at a "former minister" who had "sinned". GFP President Vijai Sardesai, meanwhile, wrote to Deputy Chief Minister and TCP minister Chandrakant Kavlekar that the permissions were granted in 2016 before he was made TCP minister and the construction took place in 2019 after he was dropped from the BJP gov-

In a jibe at Sardesai, former deputy CM and TCP minister, Sawant said: "... it is a private plot, a third party has purchased it, a person who was close to a political party... There is no need to burden me with this sin. Those who have sinned have been seen in photos and videos,

Aircel-Maxis: Chidambaram summoned on December 20

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI. NOVEMBER 27

A DELHI Court Saturday issued summons to former Union minister P Chidambaram, his son Karti Chidambaram and others on December 20 after taking cognisance of the Central Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement Directorate chargesheets in the Aircel-Maxis case. CBI and ED had alleged that the Congress leader, as finance minister during the United Progressive Alliance regime, granted approval to the deal beyond his capacity — benefitting certain persons - and received kickbacks.

The case had been revived around two years ago after a judge had adjourned the matter sine

were seeking adjournment and not addressing arguments on point of cognisance. All the accused mentioned in

dine, noting that both agencies

the CBI and ED chargesheets have to appear before the court on December 20. Special Judge MK Nagpal noted that there was sufficient evidence to summon Chidambaram and the other accused persons in the corruption and money-laundering cases by CBI and ED, respectively.

On the CBI chargesheet, the court observed that that it appears that the former minister who was at the time the finance minister had granted FIPB approval to M/SGCSHL for US\$ 800 million in furtherance of a "well hatched criminal conspiracy between all the accused persons"

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

INCREASED USE of contraception across the country has been a major contributing factor in preventing unwanted pregnancies, and in turn the decrease in India's Total Fertility Rate to below replacement level, NFHS-5 data show.

In five years between NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NHFS-5 (2019-20), use of modern contraceptives for family planning has increased from 47.8 per cent to 56.5 per cent, data show

While 30 of 36 states/UTs have shown an increase in contraception use, experts point out that improvement in Uttar Pradesh and Rihar's numbers have been particularly encouraging, given their Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate has almost doubled: from 23.3% in NFHS-4 to 44.4% in NFHS-5. "The decrease in fertility is the

function of three main factors: use of contraception, increase in age of marriage, and abortions," Dr Niranjan Saggurti, director, Population Council of India, said. "In Bihar, age of marriage continues to remain low, with 43% girls married under the age of 18 in NFHS 4. which decreased marginally to 41% under the age of 18 in NFHS-5. But what has been successful is increase in modern contraceptive use. This points to push in family planning schemes by the state government. But what is most significant in Bihar's case is the increase in education, which

has translated into increased use of contraception and increased family planning."

8.7 per cent point rise in contraception use in 5 yrs: NFHS data

Saggurti points out that for UP. the good news has been that the age of marriage has increased. Twenty-one per cent women under the age of 18 were married, NFHS-4 had found, which has decreased by 5 percentage points in five years — 16 per cent girls under 18 were married in UP, the re-

cent survey reported. "UP has also shown a very good balanced contraception method mix, with a shift from sterilisation to reversible contraception," Saggurti said.

In its contraception mix, 40% is now sterilisation and 60% is use of reversible contraceptive methods. In UP, contraception use has increased from 31.7 per cent in 2015-16 to 44.5 per cent in 2019-20. UP has also shown a marginal decrease in female sterilisation of 0.4 per cent. The date show Bihar (21%), Goa (35.3%), Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (24%), Nagaland (24%) and Arunachal Pradesh (20.6%) have reported the highest increase in contraception use in NFHS-5 over

NFHS 4. Rajasthan has also shown

a significant increase in contra-

ception use of 9 per cent. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh. Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Haryana and Goa have 60 per cent or more contraception use.

Puniab and Ladakh have reported the highest decrease, while Meghalaya (22.5%) and Manipur (18.2%) have registered the lowest

contraception use in the country. "Data show women want smaller families. While the use of contraception has increased, indicating improving success of India's family planning programme, women would have even less pregnancies if they had increased access to contraception and increased agency to make decisions," Alok Vajpeyi, head of Knowledge Management at the Population Foundation of India,

Prof K. James, director, International Institute for Population Sciences, the Health Ministry's partner organisation that carried out the survey, said if TFR correction occurs in four states - Bihar, UP, Madhya

Pradesh and Rajasthan — it will

put India on a definite course cor

rection for population control. "One of the most important contributing factors for decreasing TFR is the use of modern contraceptive methods," James said. "Despite the fact that age of marriage of women has not increased significantly in the country, with some states having as much as 30-40 per cent women marrying under the age of 18, family planning programmes are showing results. Once countries attained 60 percent contraceptive use, they reach replacement levels

"Family planning has been the most enhanced programme... because of continuing concerns of over-population. But what these results have shown is that it can he achieved with increased contraception...'

EXPRESS NETWORK

Congress calls for House condolence resolution on deaths of farmers amid stir

MANOJCG

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

WITH THE government set to introduce the bill to repeal the three contentious farm laws in Parliament, Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Saturday demanded that the House pass a condolence resolution for the farmers who lost their lives during the year-long agitation.

The government is expected to introduce the bill on the opening day of the winter session on Monday.

On Saturday, Chowdhury wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla conveying his demand for a resolution. "I would sincerely request you that as a mark of respect towards our annadata (farmers), the House may unanimously pass a condolence resolution for the farmers who lost their lives during the farmer agitation. The passing of the resolution in the House will convey our gratitude for the sacrifice that our farmer brethren have given to the nation," he wrote.

Farmer unions Opposition leaders say hundreds of cultivators have died during the agitation, which reached Delhi's borders in November 2020, Farmers from across states were protesting against the three agriculture laws that the govern-

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

TRINAMOOL CONGRESS MP and

Goa in-charge Mahua Moitra

Saturday responded to BJP pres-

ident J P Nadda's criticism of the

TMC saying they were not an-

Nadda had said Thursday

that new parties had come

knocking on Goa's doors ahead

of Assembly elections slated for

should ask them what they have

done in West Bengal? Today,

West Bengal is number one in

human trafficking, in crimes

against women, absence of law

and order and crime rate." he

ence in Panaji Saturday, Moitra

said: "How do I care?... He is the

national president of another

party. They had the chance in

Bengal, they were there morn-

tions. What happened? I wish

him all the best... why should

we answer to what another

She said TMC would contest

party's president says?'

ing and evening making accusa-

Addressing a press confer-

had claimed.

swerable to another party.

PANAJI, NOVEMBER 27

We are not answerable

to another party: Moitra

on Nadda's salvo in Goa



Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury

ment said were necessary to reform the industry.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in an address to the nation on November 19, announced that the three farm laws will be repealed as his government was unable to explain their benefits to the farmers.

During the Budget Session of Parliament in February this year, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi had surprised everyone by asking Opposition members to stand up to observe two-minute silence as a tribute to the farmers who died during the agitation.

His move then had not go down well with the Speaker. Three BJP members later moved a breach of privilege notice against Gandhi's move, saying that asking members to observe silence without the permission of the Chair was contempt of the

In a separate letter to the Speaker, Chowdhury on Saturday also urged the Speaker to initiate the process of appointment of Deputy Speaker -- a post that has been lying vacant since the constitution of the 17th Lok

TMC Goa in-charge Mahua

all 40 seats in Goa without any

She also claimed Chief

Minister Pramod Sawant was a

"puppet" controlled by BJP's gen-

eral secretary (organisation)

Satish Dhond. "There is no

Mukhya Mantri in Goa. There is

a Maha Mantri... He is Satish

Dhond. The BJP should answer

how Mr Dhond, who is not even a minisyter, is entering govern-

Goa BJP chief Sadanand

Tanavade dismissed the remark.

"Does she (Moitra) even know

Satish Dhond? Somebody tutors

her and she just says what she is

ment meetings'

told." he said.

Moitra in Panaji, Saturday.

Need to take everyone on growth path: Govt on farm laws repeal

LIZ MATHEW NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

EVEN THOUGH "only a group of farmers are protesting" against the farm laws, the government "has tried to sensitise the farmers" and "explain the merits" but as India "celebrates the 75th Year of Independence—"Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav", the need of the hour is to take everyone together on the path of inclusive growth and development", explains government as its reasons behind the repeal of the farm laws in the Bill that is to be tabled in Parliament

In the Farm Laws Repeal Act, 2021, circulated on Saturday evening, the government says the three laws -- the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act -- were enacted as a part of the

Government's endeavour to im-

on Monday.

The justification for the repeal

The government justifies repeal of the contentious farm laws as a move to show its willingness to be inclusive. In its statement on objects and reasons, it tries to justify the laws by listing their benefits and advantages. With elections to several states, including the politically crucial Uttar Pradesh, due next year, the government seems to be hoping that this move would help stop the farm agitation, which had triggered reactions in several parts of the country. The explanation also reflects the government's optimism that the move would lead to a positive response in the upcoming polls.

prove the condition of farmers including small and marginal farm-

"These enactments were made for the overall socio-economic development of the farmers and rural sector after extensive consultations with various stakeholders following the felt need and demand of the farmers' organisations, suggestions and recommendations of the experts, professionals, agricultural economists, expert committees over the years," says the statement on the objectives and reasons for the Bill.

It says although various Governments during the last three decades have tried to initiate such reforms, but, they were "not in comprehensive way".

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in an address to the nation, announced that the three laws, which triggered protests among the farmers in Punjab, Haryana and parts of UP, would be withdrawn.

"Even though only a group of farmers are protesting against these laws, the Government has

on the importance of the Farm Laws and explain the merits through several meetings and other forum," it says, adding: "Without taking away the existing mechanisms available to farmers, new avenues were provided for trade of their produce. Besides, farmers were free to select the avenues of their choice where they can get more price for their produce without any compulsion. However, the operation of the aforesaid farm laws has been stayed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. During the Covid period, the farmers have worked hard to increase production and fulfil the needs of the nation." The statement also lists the Narendra Modi government's several interventions to support farmers, including small and marginal farmers by providing quality seeds, credit, insurance, procurement and market support.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has announced the Bill to repeal the acts will be brought in on the first day of the winter session. The session begins on November 29 and is scheduled to conclude on December 23.

RSS-affiliated

farmers' union

seeks rollback of

import duty cuts

BHARATIYA KISAN Sangh, the

RSS-affiliated farmers' union,

has accused the government of

easing imports at a time when

farmers have an opportunity to

Saturday, the group demanded

a long term import-export pol-

icy for agricultural produce and

asked the government to roll

ted a memorandum on this to

Commerce Minister Piyush

minimum support price (MSP)

in any state. And when the time

comes for the market itself to of-

fer the price, then prices are con-

trolled by easing imports. Maize

is a good alternative to soybean

meal as poultry fodder. But by

the government is annoying

maize farmers," said the state-

ment, quoting from the memo-

BKS General Secretary Badri

Narayan Chaudhary, also said

soybean meal is derived from ge-

netically modified crops which

could "threaten the non-GM tag

that India enjoys in the interna-

The communique, signed by

randum.

tional market"

The outfit said it had submit-

"Maize is not bought at the

back the import duty cuts.

In a statement issued on

sell produce at a good price.

DEEPTIMANTIWARY

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

President Ram Nath Kovind with CJI Justice NV Ramana and Law Minister Kiren Rijiju in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI **Judges must be** discreet about what they say

in court: Kovind

ANANTHAKRISHNANG NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

CALLING UPON judges "to exercise utmost discretion in what they say in courtrooms", President Ram Nath Kovind Saturday quoted the saying by an American judge that "history teaches that the independence of the judiciary is jeopardised when courts become embroiled in the passions of the day, and assume primary responsibility in choosing between competing political, economic and social pressures".

Speaking at the valedictory session of the Constitution Day celebrations at the Vigyan Bhavan here, organised by the Supreme Court, Kovind said: "In Indian tradition, judges are imagined as a model of rectitude and detachment more akin to sthitpragya (steady wisdom)... We have a rich history of legions of such judges known for remarksfull of sagacity and conduct beyond reproach, which have become the hallmark

for the future generations." Stressing that "there is no doubt that you have set for yourself a high bar", the President said: "Hence, it is also incumbent upon judges to exercise utmost discretion in what they say in courtrooms. Indiscreet remarks, even if made with a good intention. give space for dubious interpretations to run down the judiciary."

Justice Frankfurter of the US Supreme Court said in the 1951 case Dennis versus United States, he said: "Courts are not representative bodies. They are not designed to be a good reflex of a democratic society. Their essential quality is detachment, founded on independence. History teaches us that the independence of the judiciary is ieopardised when courts be-

Odisha govt should rethink University

Amendment Act: Education minister

come embroiled in the passions of the day, and assume primary responsibility in choosing between competing political, economic and social pressures."

Kovind also touched upon what Chief Justice of India N V Ramana said at the Constitution Day event on Friday, regarding 'attacks on the judiciary... particularly (in) social media". The President said: "It pains me no end... to note that of late there have been cases of some disparaging remarks against the judiciary made on social media platforms.'

In his address at the valedictory event, the CJI referred to pendency of cases, and said: 'Legislature does not conduct studies or assess the impact of the laws that it passes. This sometimes leads to big issues." Justice Ramana also said "rebranding the existing courts as commercial courts, without creating special infrastructure, will not have

any impact on the pendency". The CJI urged Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, present at the event, to expedite the process of filling judicial vacancies.

Rijiju said there was a need to balance fundamental rights with fundamental duties. He said several people trampled on rights of others for their own rights, adding that it must be discussed why a law passed by Parliament or Assembly could not be implemented because some s feel it affects their rights.

"When the Supreme Court decides something, it is the law of the land. When Parliament or an Assembly passes a law, it also becomes the law of the land. How can we see a situation where the Supreme Court or High Court or Parliament or Assembly passes a law, and yet there is difficulty in implementing it," he said, without going into specifics.

UP election a fight between forces for and against India, says Yogis Singh, who also attended the

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 27

CHIEF MINISTER Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said the electoral fight in the upcoming UP Assembly polls would be between pro-India and anti-India forces. Addressing BJP booth chiefs

in Janupur district, he claimed that every Indian was disrespected by the comparison drawn by SP chief Akhilesh Yadav between Vallabhbhai Patel with Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

"It is natural that the 2022 elections in UP have become a centre of attraction in the country and the world... All the anti-BJP and anti-India people are uniting. And on the other hand, under the guidance and leadership of Prime



UP CM Yogi Adityanath visits a temple in Balrampur district on Saturday. PTI

Minister Narendra Modi, every worker works to protect self-respect and pride of India. The whole fight has been divided into two parts - anti-nationals and pro-India," said the CM.

Defence Minister Rajanth

viding the state and country. "To mislead people of the state, unnecessary issues are being cre-Jinnah in this poll? He was taken

event, wondered what "these

people" wanted to achieve by di-

ated. What was the need to bring out of a bottle. Jinnah can be the father of Pakistan, but not India's. What do they want to achieve by dividing the state and country?' asked Singh

Referring to Congress leader Manish Tewari's book '10 Flashpoints; 20 Years', the defence minister said, "The Congress government did not take effective action against terrorism after the 26/11 Mumbai attack. Not just me, even senior Congress leader Manish Tewari has said this in his new book."



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav addresses a public meeting in Sandila, UP, Saturday. Twitter

Send Bill for replacing NEET to President, TN CM urges Governor

ARUN JANARDHANAN CHENNAI. NOVEMBER 27

CHIEF MINISTER M K Stalin on Saturday urged Governor R N Ravi to send the Undergraduate Medical Degree Courses Bill, 2021 - which aims to change the state's eligibility criteria for admission into undergraduate medical courses – for President Ram Nath Kovind's assent immediately.

The bill, passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly in September, allows for admissions into undergraduate courses in medicine, dentistry, Indian medicine and homeopathy on the basis of Class 12 marks, instead of the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET). The legislation, which aims to restore the admission criteria that the state had before the introduction of NEET, also provides for 7.5% horizontal reservation for the students of government schools.

It was to be sent for the assent from President Kovind. A statement from the state



Saturday and urged the Governor to immediately send the Bill

government

said the CM

Stalin visited

Raj Bhavan on

for Presidential assent considering the impact on medical admissions in the state. The legislation was intro-

duced in the backdrop of a series

of suicides by medical aspirants

who could not clear NEET. The bill was an outcome of recommendations from a government appointed committee led by Justice A K Rajan – a retired judge of the Madras High Court -- to look into the impact of NEET in the state. The key question to be analysed was whether the NEET is an equitable method for

selection of students. The state's main contention is that NEET, a common entrance exam, puts at a disadvantage students from rural areas and those from lower economic groups and backward classes.

BJP supporters moved down farmers, party trying to instill fear: Akhilesh

PRESSTRUST OF INDIA LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 27

SAMAJWADI PARTY president Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday hit out at the ruling BJP, accusing it of trying to instill fear among people and alleging that its supporters mowed down farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri last month.

Eight people, including four

farmers, were killed in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence on October 3. The farmers were mowed by vehicles, one of which allegedly belonged to a BIP leader.

Addressing a public meeting in Sandila in Lucknow, Yadav said, "Farmers had come out to demand the withdrawal of farm laws and BIP's MoS for Home's supporters crushed them under

processes and investigations

that follow. To address that, the

Centre inserted Section 134A in

(Amendment) Act, 2019, which

deals with "Protection of Good

Samaritans". It says that a Good

Samaritan will not be liable for

any civil or criminal action for

any injury to or death of the vic-

tim of an accident involving a

motor vehicle, where such injury

or death resulted from the Good

Samaritan's negligence in acting

or failing to act while rendering

emergency medical or non-

medical care or assistance etc.

willing to give an initial grant of

Rs 5 lakh for it, states have not

However, despite the Centre

Vehicles

Motor

the tyres of a jeep."

"The British had fired from the front at the Jallianwala Bagh and the BJP people mowed down farmers from behind," Yadav said. "They think they can do politics by making people afraid. The British ruled by dividing and they (BJP) think they can rule by making people afraid. This time, no one will get afraid and we will wipe them out," he said.

AISHWARYA MOHANTY BHUBANESWAR. NOVEMBER

UNION MINISTER of Education Dharmendra Pradhan on Saturday urged the state government to rethink the contentious Odisha Universities (Amendment) Act, 2020, which was passed in the Assembly in November last year.

The amended Act brings the appointment to important academic and administrative posts in state universities, including the re-



Dharmendra Pradhan

cruitment of teaching staff, under control of the Odisha government.

The legislation altered the committee's composition for the selection of VCs of universities. and said that the teachers' recruitments will be done by the Odisha Public Service Commission. Selection to these posts were previously done by the universities.

"From the administrative point of view, you can implement a unitary system to keep a check on how the state government's education budget is being spent, what disciplines must be taught... but for academic excellence, it is necessary that Universities are given their freedom," Pradhan said while delivering the keynote address on the 79th Foundation Day of Utkal University in Bhubaneswar. "The NEP is preparing a bigger launching pad for academic excellence. Keeping this in mind. Odisha government should rethink its decision."

States yet to avail of Centre's Good Samaritan scheme

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

THE CENTRE'S Good Samaritan scheme, meant to encourage and felicitate those helping road accident victims, has received a tepid response from the states more

than a month since its launch. The Road Transport and Highways Ministry announced this scheme so that taking a road crash victim to hospital is not just hassle-free but there is also the incentive of a reward and recognition.

Historically, Indians are reluctant in taking victims to hospital because of associated legal even opened bank accounts to get the money. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, which sent out a reminder last month, will send another one to states to operationalise the scheme, sources said. The Centre also wants to felicitate the top ten Good Samaritans in Delhi during the Road Safety Month next year.

The scheme entitles any person, who helps save a life by taking a road crash victim to the hospital, to a reward of Rs 5,000 per accident. The new law is that the "Good Samaritan" is free to not disclose their name to the hospital or law enforcement authorities; they can also choose not to take part in any legal process involving the accident. to keep a record of the Good "Any individual who has saved the life of a victim of a fa-

tal accident involving a motor vehicle by administering immediate assistance and rushing to hospital within the golden hour of the accident to provide medical treatment would be eligible for the award. An individual Good Samaritan can be awarded maximum five times in a year." the ministry said. Golden hour is the critical one hour period from the accident.

To popularise the scheme, states have to publicise it adequately. It is meant to penetrate to the district level where the local administration is supposed

Samaritans and enter their details in a Central website on a monthly basis "The point of the scheme is

not the money but the awareness among the people that taking an accident victim to hospital is encouraged in order to save a life,' said a senior ministry official. "We are in talks with states, but nothing has happened so far."

India witnesses around 5 lakh road accidents and 1.5 lakh deaths from them every year. As per several government assessments and independent studies, a large number of deaths occur because the victims did not get medical help within the golden hour.

'BEIJING JANATA PARTY': KHARGE ATTACKS BJP ON CHINA INCURSION

New Delhi: Congress Saturday stepped up its attack on the government over the reported Chinese incursions with Rajya Sabha Opposition Leader Mallikarjun Kharge calling the BJP "Beijing Janata Party".

Kharge took a dig at some BJP leaders for sharing an image of Beijing Airport and passing it off as the model for Jewar airport. "In Arunachal Pradesh, BJP govt let's China to build villages. In Uttar Pradesh, BJP govt showcases Chinese airport as its own. In Ladakh, BJP govt... cedes our territory to Chinese. BIP has transformed into Beijing Janata Party!," Kharge tweeted. **ENS**

AV CTODY

DITYA SINGH'S first serious foray into the world of cryptocurrencies happened over a failed payment. The owner of a recruitment firm that he runs with his brother, Singh says that sometime in 2015, one of their European clients wouldn't pay the commission and eventually stopped taking calls.

When we finally got through to the client, he gave us an option to pay in Bitcoins. We had our doubts but since there was no other way to get our commission, we agreed. That's when we realised that there is a whole market around Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies," he says, refusing to reveal his investment or other personal details.

The deeper he dug, the more drawn he was to this decentralised financial system that existed beyond the control of governments and banks. "I also watched a lot of videos related to crypto currencies but they were mostly in English and I realised that discussion in Hindi about the fundamentals was missing in India," he says, adding that he soon began posting videos on YouTube.

The idea clicked. Aditya's YouTube channel, Crypto India, has 1.97 lakh subscribers now and he is routinely invited as an "expert" by news channels.

Singh's story mirrors that of others across India, many of them from Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns, mostly aspirational young investors excited by the opportunities of this newest financial frontier - from Kanha Mohanty, 24, an engineer in Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, whose investments in cryptocurrencies earned him Rs 30,000 over the last one year, to the unemployed Pankaj Chowdhury, 26, from Howrah, West Bengal, whose mantra is to "invest only as much as you can afford to lose"

In the absence of a regulatory framework or safety net, this interest in cryptocurrencies, mostly among first-time investors with little knowledge of either the products or the risks entailed, has caught the attention of policymakers. The government has decided to bring a Bill in the Winter Session starting Monday to prohibit "all private cryptocurrencies in India" with "certain exceptions"

Currently, while India does not recognise cryptocurrencies as legal tender, there is no ban on trading in cryptocurrencies.

A volatile investment

While there is not much clarity on the composition of The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021, on November 24, the possibility of a ban on certain cryptos led to panic-selling, resulting in a correction of over 20 per cent across

cryptocurrencies listed on Indian exchanges. It's this volatility that marks cryptocurrencies. If stock prices are backed by the earnings and growth of a company, there is no such underlying factor for crypto prices, which are mostly driven by hype and demand.

Recently, investors lost millions of dollars as a new cryptocurrency inspired by Squid Game, the popular Netflix series, went on a roller-coaster ride. Its value plunged to nearly zero but within days, it was trading at \$38 a token on an exchange called Pancakeswap. After a couple of days, the token's value grew from \$628.33 to \$2,856.65, but five minutes later, it nosedived to \$0.0007.

While Bitcoin, the world's first cryptocurrency, was born out of the 2008 financial crisis, in India, it was around 2015-16 that the digital currency started to get noticed. In March 2020, the Supreme Court reversed the RBI's move to cut the money supply to crypto exchanges, resulting in an exponential increase in investment flows into crypto assets.

During the ICCT20 World Cup in October-November, cryptocurrencies virtually flooded drawing rooms.

Ranveer Singh's 'kuch toh badlega' campaign for crypto trading platform CoinSwitch Kuber, aired repeatedly during the World Cup matches, was among those aimed at millennials in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. His hardsell was hinged on the low-entry barrier for those looking to invest in crypto, and the ease of transaction on a platform that now lays claim to being India's largest crypto asset one.

CoinDCX, CoinSwitch Kuber's rival platform, roped in actor Ayushmann Khurrana. Multiple other smaller exchanges also joined the ad pitch. Reports pegged the collective ad spends by crypto players at a cumulative Rs 50 crore during the course of this World Cup.

The buzz had an unintended consequence: a flurry of meetings in policy circles, and regulators stepping in to temper the claims by exchanges.

On November 3, an umbrella grouping of

13 members who are part of the cryptocurrency ecosystem put out an advertisement that said, "Crores of Indians have invested over Rs 600,000 crore in crypto assets." Through the advertisement, the group — including the Internet and Mobile Association of India, Blockchain & Crypto Assets Council (BACC), crypto exchanges and others — said they are committed to complying with the BACC's selfregulatory code of conduct, and to ensuring secure access to crores of investors. This declaration came on the back of alarm

bells being raised at various levels — within the government, regulatory circles and leaders in the investment fraternity. So far, going by the initial reactions, they don't seem to be While the Prime Minister's meeting on

November 13 on the way forward for the sector called for "progressive and forward-looking" steps, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has advised caution. On November 16, speaking at the SBI

Banking Conclave, he said the issue evokes "serious concerns on macro-economic and financial stability" and that he is "vet to see serious, well-informed discussion" on it.

The RBI has in the past indicated that it is "very much in the game", and getting ready to launch its own digital currency.

Capital market regulator SEBI, meanwhile, has reservations on regulating cryptocurrencies as a financial asset, while a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, which met

22:33 **→** 80% 🗷 **BITCOIN** \$1,039,779,694,617 SYMBOL BTC **ETHEREUM** \$492,095,993,207 SYMBOL ETH BINANCE COIN **MARKET CAP** \$100,104,416,551 SYMBOL BNB TETHER \$73,124,620,430 SYMBOL USDT **SOLANA** \$59,831,225,123 SYMBOL SOL **CARDANO** \$52,091,464,315 SYMBOL ADA **XRP** Source: Coinmarketcap.com; Note: Market cap and Prices as of 3pm IST, November 27 \$45,108,844,286 SYMBOL **USD COIN** \$38,033,017,002 SYMBOL USDC **POLKADOT** \$35,056,227,774 SYMBOL DOT **DOGECOIN MARKET CAP** \$27,419,120,042 SYMBOL DOGE 15 million | \$6 billion

GASHU CASH

Estimated outstanding value of

cryptocurrencies across exchanges

Estimated number of active subscribers

 $on\, cryptocurrency\, exchanges\, in\, India$

The government's plan for a Bill to act against private cryptocurrencies has reopened the debate on the fast-moving, highly volatile sector, where policy has so far failed to catch up with technology. The Sunday Express meets a range of stakeholders — from investors to coin exchange players and the government — on what could be the way forward. By GEORGE MATHEW, PRANAV MUKUL, SUNNY VERMA, HAMZA KHAN & SANDEEP SINGH

on November 15, favoured regulating cryptocurrency exchanges.

The way forward

It's this view — that digital currencies be regulated, instead of an outright ban — that is gradually gaining traction.

Speaking to The Indian Express at an Idea Exchange session, Nilesh Shah, MD Kotak Mahindra AMC and a part-time member of the PM's Economic Advisory Council, also favoured this.

"I am not qualified enough to say if crypto is a fraud or not... who knows, it may be the future and we are early entrants. So why not regulate and make people aware that this is high-risk, high-return? So that tomorrow, if

it goes out of hand, it does not jeopardise many investors," he said. Ashish Singhal, founder & CEO of

CoinSwitch Kuber and BACC co-chair, whose Ranveer Singh ads created a stir, says, "I believe that it (the ads) is one of the reasons why this has been taken up on urgency. But the crypto industry was booming even before the ads came out, so there is no point suppressing an industry... We have to come out of the shadows... How do we provide the right education to the user and ensure they understand the risk when they get into it... So definitely, guidelines and self-regulation organisations are needed to lay down what is allowed.'

Avinash Shekhar, co-CEO of cryptocurrency exchange ZebPay agrees. "We are await-

ing further details on the Bill... There have been many positive steps taken by the government to learn and understand crypto and its impact on all stakeholders — investors, exchanges policymakers. So, we are looking forward to a crypto Bill that takes into consideration all the inputs from those discussions," he says.

Aditya Singh, the investor and YouTuber,

isn't perturbed by reports of a ban. "I feel everyone is reading too much into the Bill. The Finance Minister has clearly said that we are not going to ban cryptocurrencies entirely. Crypto has opened so many options and has become even more relevant after Covid, when iobs have been shrinking. For some families yeh crypto bhagwan ka roop bankar aa gaya hai (it's a manifestation of God)," he says.



"I am not qualified enough to say if crypto is a fraud or not... who knows, it may be the future and we are early entrants. So why not regulate and make people aware that it is high-risk, high-return?"

NILESH SHAH,

MD KOTAK MAHINDRA AMC, PART-TIME MEMBER OF THE PM'S ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL



"There is no point suppressing an industry, we have to come out of the shadows...How do we provide the right education to the user and ensure they understand the risk when they get into it." ASHISH SINGHAL,

CO-CHAIR OF BLOCKCHAIN & CRYPTO ASSETS COUNCIL AND FOUNDER & CEO OF



"We're awaiting further details on the Bill... There have been many positive steps taken by the government to understand the impact of crypto on all stakeholders — investors, exchanges, policymakers."

AVINASH SHEKHAR, CO-CEO OF CRYPTOCURRENCY **EXCHANGE ZEBPAY**



"There are serious concerns on macro-economic and financial stability, there are deeper issues... I'm yet to see serious, wellinformed discussion in the public space on these issues."

SHAKTIKANTA DAS, RBI CHIEF, AT SBI BANKING CONCLAVE ON

MEET THE INVESTORS, WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

EXPLAINED

Digital currencies and how they work

PRANAV MUKUL & ANIL SASI

What is a cryptocurrency?

A cryptocurrency is a medium of exchange, such as the rupee or the US dollar, but is digital in format and uses encryption techniques to both control the creation of monetary units and to verify the exchange of money. Bitcoin is considered to be the world's best known cryptocurrency and is the largest in the world according to market capitalisation, followed by Ethereum.

In traditional financial deals, where two parties are using fiat money, a third-party organisation — usually a central bank — assures that the money is genuine and the transaction is recorded. With cryptocurrencies, a chain of private computers — a network — is constantly working towards authenticating the transactions by solving complex cryptographic puzzles. For solving the puzzles, vstems are rewarded wit rencies. This process is called mining.

At the backend of these transactions is a technology called 'blockchain'.

What is blockchain?

Satoshi Nakamoto — the person (or a group of people) who is said to have conceptualised an accounting system in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis - had mooted an idea where the transactions and the value of money would be recorded digitally on a publicly available and open ledger that contains all the transactions ever made, albeit in an anonymous and encrypted form. This ledger is called the blockchain.

Bitcoin and the thousands of cryptocurrencies are essentially codes recorded on a blockchain that gets longer and longer as more people use them.

There have been voices calling for stablecoins as an alternative to volatile cryptocurrencies. What are stablecoins?

Stablecoins are digital currencies that are backed by a fiat currency such as the US dollar, thus giving it an intrinsic value. From an investor point of view, stablecoins become easier to understand considering the underlying reserve asset. There is also a case being

made by sovereign governments for stablecoins such as Tether, USD Coin and Diem (proposed by Facebook's parent company Meta) given that it could increase the reach of their fiat currencies in the digital ecosystem.

How are cryptocurrencies bought? There are two ways. The first is to buy it

from someone and the second is to mine new crypto coins. Buying it from someone usually happens in two ways — an exchangefacilitated transaction or a peer-to-peer transaction. For Indians, the simplest way to invest or trade in cryptocurrencies has been through one of the many exchanges and trading platforms operating in India. These include WazirX. CoinDCX. CoinSwitch Kuber. Zebpay, Bitbns, Giottus, etc.

To be able to trade or invest in cryptocurrencies using INR, users need to register on one of the exchanges by completing a KYC process. Then, a user buying crypto for the first time will need to load INR money in the wallet of their cryptocurrency exchange. The cryptocurrency wallet is identified by a unique address represented by a randomly generated combination of numbers and letters. There are two ways to load money into a cryptocurrency wallet — through net-bank-

ing or through an e-wallet. Here's where the first entry barrier arises.

HOW BLOCKCHAIN WORKS



A transaction request is placed and a virtual 'block' representing that transaction is created



of a particular network, which verify this block for authenticity and uniqueness





Once verified, this block is added to a chain of existing blocks called a blockchain





to the network, marking the transaction complete

Despite the Supreme Court order that quashed the RBI directive prohibiting banks from allowing their systems to be used for virtual currency transactions, several large banks don't offer their financial in-

frastructure for investment or trade in crypto. Among the e-wallets that operate in the country, only MobiKwik is supported on platforms such as WazirX and CoinDCX. Once the transaction is through, the purchased cryptocurrency holding is reflected in the exchange's wallet.

How are they sold for INR?

The Indian exchanges allow sale of cryptocurrencies in exchange for INR as well but given that many of the smaller banks that support the transactions do not have the necessary digital infrastructure to handle the volumes of withdrawal and the volatility experienced by these virtual currencies, disruption in withdrawal services is a common occurrence.

The government plans to bring a Bill to prohibit "all private cryptocurrencies". What are private cryptocurrencies?

While there is no clarity yet on how private cryptocurrencies are defined, indications are that any digital currencies that are not issued by the State will be banned.

THEAISLE



Twitter@Pchidambaram_IN

It is crystal clear that the Modi government fears only one thing — losing an election. Petrol and diesel prices were reduced within hours of the results of the byelections to 30 Assembly seats, where the BJP won just seven. The sudden decision to withdraw the farm laws taken by Mr Modi without Cabinet approval — was a clear indication that he feared massive losses in UP, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa and being blanked out

in Punjab

Big, rich and unaccountable

THE RICH get big and the big get rich. Once they are big and rich, there is the clear and present danger that they will be unaccountable. John Sherman, a United States Senator (the first Antitrust Act, 1890, is commonly referred to as the Sherman Act) said, "If we will not endure a king as a political power, we should not endure a king over the production, transportation, and sale of any of the necessaries of life." Standard Oil and AT & T were broken up in the US. China has cracked down on Alibaba, Tencent and Didi. Microsoft, Google and Facebook face the heat in many countries. Why? Because they have become too big, too rich and unaccountable.

Just as we will not endure a king as ruler, we ought not to endure a ruler who wants to be king. Many countries have term limits on their President or Prime Minister because he/she could acquire absolute power.

DEMOCRATIC & RICH

Mr Vladimir Putin has found a way to remain the real power whether as President or Prime Minister. Mr Xi Jinping has consolidated his power, abolished term limits and is all set to begin his third term next year. By any definition, both countries are not democracies. Nor have they broken into the ranks of the rich countries

The top 10 richest countries of the

world by per capita income are: 1. Luxembourg, 2. Ireland, 3. Switzerland, 4. Norway, 5. United States, 6. Iceland, 7. Denmark, 8. Singapore, 9. Australia and 10. Qatar. Except Qatar, which is a monarchy, and Singapore, which is a qualified democracy, the other eight countries are full-fledged democracies. I cannot name the President or Prime Minister of any of the eight, except of the US and, with some effort, of Australia. The moral is that a country and its people can be rich and democratic, though led by quiet, reserved and faceless leaders. None of these leaders has, to my knowledge, been accused of hubris or arrogance.

SLIDE TO UNACCOUNTABILITY

Democracy ill sits beside absolute power or disdain for Parliament and the media. There is no place for 'I know it all' or 'I am the saviour' rhetoric. These qualities are acquired when a political party becomes too big, too rich and unaccountable. The BIP claims to be the biggest party in the world and we know it is the richest in India. It has 300 seats in the Lok Sabha (out of 543) and 1,435 seats in the State Legislative Assemblies (out of 4,036). It is the ruling party in 17 states (out of 28). That makes it too big. The BJP is also too rich. According to the Association for Democratic Rights, in 2019-20, the BJP collected Rs 2,642 crore (out of Rs 3,377 crore for all parties) from unknown sources, including the infamous electoral bonds. In the last round of state elections in five states, the BIP spent Rs 252 crore; of that Rs 151 crore was spent in West Bengal alone!

In the last seven years, the BJP has become more unaccountable. It shuns debate in Parliament; passes Bills without scrutiny by parliamentary committees and, often, without a debate in the two Houses; the Prime Minister religiously avoids Parliament and the media; and the government has no hesitation in using the CBI, ED, Income Tax, NIA and now the NCB (Narcotics Control Bureau) against political opponents, social activists, journalists and students.

Despite being too big, too rich and unaccountable, the BJP has won a string of elections. Where it lost, it had no compunction in buying legislators and forming the government with the help of obliging governors. They have proudly given a name to the sordid exercise -Operation Lotus!

FEAR ONLY LOSING

The hubris and arrogance were in full display in the passing of the three farm laws and the obstinate defence of the laws. The laws were made through ordinances and converted into legislation without a debate in Parliament. Farmers

protested for 15 months, but the government did not yield. The invitation to farmers for talks was insincere and the talks were political theatre. The abuse and name-calling of the farmers and their supporters ('Khalistanis, anti-national') reached indecent limits. The police crackdown was brutal. The response to the Supreme Court was defiant. Throughout, the government was selfsatisfied and smug — until the intelligence reports and survey results seeped into the high chambers.

It is crystal clear that the Modi government fears only one thing - losing an election. Petrol and diesel prices were reduced within hours of the results of the by-elections to 30 Assembly seats, where the BJP won just seven. The sudden decision to withdraw the farm laws - taken by Mr Modi without Cabinet approval – was a clear indication that he feared massive losses in UP, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa (where his party rules today) and being blanked out in Punjab. The contrived praise for the PM's 'statesmanship' by his ministers only exposed what a crowd of dumb cheerleaders they had become: Mr Modi was a statesman when he passed the law and Mr Modi was a bigger statesman when he repealed the law!

Democracy may yet survive in India as long the BJP fears losing an election. Even better, an actual defeat in February 2022 may prod the BJP to shed some of its hubris and arrogance.

Fifth

We must never forget 26/11

LAST WEEK, in a small sort of way, we commemorated the thirteenth anniversary of 26/11. Why we always have this remembrance only in a small sort of way instead of on the scale that the United States commemorates 9/11 has begun to puzzle me more and more. Let me explain why. After Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014 and went to New York to attend the UN General Assembly's annual meeting, he made it a point to visit the 9/11 memorial. It is a sombre and moving experience, and since I happened to be present, I noticed that Modi looked both sombre and moved. So why in the past seven years that he has been Prime Minister has he not considered building a memorial to those who died in the worst terrorist act committed on Indian soil? This is a Prime Minister who sets great store by memorials, which makes this oversight more puzzling.

It is easy to understand why, when there was a Congress Prime Minister in Delhi, he preferred to forget what happened in the hope that everyone would forget the terrible mistakes made during the attack and after. If the mistakes made during the attack were bad, the mistakes made after it were worse. The attack on Mumbai was an act of war by Pakistan, and the Indian government did no more than whine at public forums that we had provided sufficient proof that those who planned and orchestrated the unspeakable horror we call 26/11 continued to move about freely in Pakistan and continued to remain unpunished.

This itself is proof that the Pakistani State was directly involved. What makes India's weak-kneed response more shameful is that it allowed Pakistan to take charge of the narrative. Pakistanis I met in the wake of 26/11 said they believed that it was Indian intelligence agencies who had planned the whole thing, or they boasted of how "all it took was 10 young Pakistanis to bring India to her knees". The government led by Manmohan Singh, and controlled by Sonia Gandhi, behaved disgracefully and had no reason to attend remembrance ceremonies or build a memorial. It is much harder to understand why Modi has done so little.

After the Pulwama attack, the Indian Air Force conducted a 'surgical strike' on terrorist camps in Pakistan, and many political analysts believe that it was this aggressive retaliation that won Modi a second term. But surely this is not all that the mighty Government of India is capable of? This kind of cowardly, undeclared war, disguised as jihadist terrorism, is likely to be the only kind that Pakistan will fight in its endless quest to weaken India, so should we not have a strategy by now that fights back using the same tactics? Jihadist killers continue to be sent into Kashmir with the help of the Pakistani army, and their numbers are likely to grow now that we have a gang of violent holy warriors ruling Afghanistan. What is India's strategy to stop this from happening? When incidents of jihadist violence decreased after the abrogation of Article 370, there was no shortage of kowtowing ministers who credited Modi with having stopped iihadist terrorism. Now that we are seeing a iihadist attack almost every

other day, who should we blame? As someone who spends many months of the year in Mumbai, it shames me to report that if Pakistan wanted to repeat what happened 13 years ago, it easily could. All that has changed since November 26, 2008, is that armed police commandos and armoured cars can be seen on patrol in those parts of the city where the attacks took place. But, they seem to have more training in protecting VIP politicians than in counter-terrorism. As for ordinary policemen, who are always the first responders in a terrorist attack, they would certainly be as unprepared as they were 13 years ago.

Since Modi became Prime Minister, what has changed is that his spokesmen and supporters have no compunction in using the word Pakistani as a term of abuse. They appear with relentless regularity on primetime TV shows to rant and rave against Pakistanis, Islam, and Muslims in general, but as that old cliché says, they sound exactly like empty vessels making a lot of noise. Instead of helping India's case, they end up wrecking it with their venom and childish hostility.

It is time that the Prime Minister took personal charge of evolving a new strategy to deal with Pakistan's covert, clandestine war with our own covert, clandes-

tine war. If Hafiz Saeed and his gang of

killers cannot be brought to justice in the

courts of Pakistan, then India needs to

show that it has the capability to deal with

them as Israel deals with its enemies.

Meanwhile, at an official level there is no harm in reviving dialogue with Pakistan, and this time making clear that we know what happened on 26/11 and we know what is happening in Kashmir. Instead of the Prime Minister complaining at international forums about terrorism, he needs to show that India can and will deal with those who attack us. Only then will the shame of India having done nothing after the 26/11 attack be erased. A memorial to those who died for

no reason is necessary because it will

serve to remind everyone that India does

not forget or forgive her enemies.

Invisibility of caste in environmental studies



WHEN WE discuss environmental issues in Indian academic spaces, there is reluctance on referencing caste. Environment as a formal subject is taught in most institutions. The field of Environmental Humanities started around 2000 and has been gaining momentum, but in India, it functions with the glaring omission of caste.

We raise two points. First, why is this so in environmental studies in general and Environmental Humanities, in particular. Second, what are the (im)possibilities of anti-caste Environmental Humanities in Indian academia?

Way back in 1997, the late Gail Omvedt had drawn our attention to the question 'Why Dalits dislike environmentalists?'. Preservation of resources, protection of species, setting up of protected areas and campaigns for environment often do not acknowledge the role of as well as impact of these initiatives on the marginalised. mainly Dalits. While there are new studies exploring the issues of caste in the context of the environment, for example Mukul Sharma's Caste and Nature, casterelated discussions are yet to be included in the formal pedagogy.

Why are the issues of Dalits and their relation with land, water and food seldom highlighted in environmental academic discussions? Is it because the dichotomy of mainstream and margin is subverted, where the "margins" are essentially the core component of the environment studies discipline. In the field of environmental humanities, the emphasis is on "interconnectedness", between humans, nonhumans; nature, culture; and people, environment. This appears an antithesis to the Indian social system that is deeply and rigidly hierarchical, with unequal access to

resources, along the gradient of caste. The invisibility of caste in environmental studies is deliberate. In fact, some studies justify the caste system as a sustainable way reflecting "genuine cultural adjustment" to "shared" resources. One particular study by M Gadgil and K C Malhotra, 'Adaptive Significance of India's Caste System: An Ecological Perspective', claims that "resource partitioning" has

helped reduce competition over scarce natural resources, and created the right psychological environment.

Such studies thus legitimise the misappropriate distribution of resources without questioning the inbuilt structural mechanisms holding back Dalits.

Lack of representation of Dalits or tribals in these institutions is also a reason. It is our failure that anti-caste discourse, and literature and culture of the marginalised. are yet to become institutionalised in premier educational institutes. Inclusion of caste in the formal syllabus of environmental studies seems possible only at the individual faculty level. For example, at IIT Gandhinagar, where we are based, it is an important part of a formal course. We invite Dalit poets and researchers to discuss their work on environment with reference to caste, with a mandatory field trip.

One of the field sites is Ahmedabad's largest garbage dumping site at Pirana. Those who inhabit these highly degraded inhumane spaces are invariably Dalits, Muslims and the migrant poor. Caste and its connection to resource distribution is what Joel Lee has appropriately coined 'Environmental Casteism'.

While elite institutes may appear less enthusiastic to including caste, the power of individuals in making caste issues part of the formal environment curricula is possible. We strongly believe that an anticaste approach and perspective from the margins will make this field more inclusive and diverse in terms of adding more critical reflections from a Phule-Ambedkarite point of view.

This will be an attempt to de-casteise and de-Brahmanise along the lines of Braj Ranjan Mani's argument of questioning Brahmanical pedagogy.

Prashant Ingole is a Postdoctoral Fellow and Ambika Aiyadurai an Assistant Professor at IIT Gandhinagar, and the author of Tigers are Our Brothers: Anthropology of Wildlife Conservation in Northeast India

Suraj Yengde, author of Caste Matters, curates the fortnightly 'Dalitality' column



Population slowdown is triumph of India's people

WHEN THE Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the findings of the fifth National Family Health Survey (NFHS), documenting government data on health and family welfare issues, there were a flurry of chest-thumping declarations. Many in the media reported that India's population had "stabilised" and some even claimed that it had begun "declining".

This is not entirely true. According to the findings, India's total fertility rate (TFR) - the average number of children born to a woman in the country over her lifetime has slipped to 2.0. According to the United Nations, if women have on an average 2.1 children each over a sustained period of time, the population neither grows nor declines and thus stabilises. This means that for India's population to stabilise or decline, it would have to maintain a TFR equal to or less than 2.1 for a sustained period of decades.

Regardless, this drop in India's TFR, which stood at almost 6 in the 1950s, to its current levels is a significant feat. The credit for this achievement must go to the people of India, along with successive governments, especially the bureaucracy. This drop is a sign of changing aspirations, especially among women, who are seeing the wisdom of having fewer children.

Started as back as 1951, India's family planning programme is among the world's oldest. The earliest government communication campaigns sought to promote smaller families. But there was little progress as India continued to see rapid population growth.

In 1975, when the Indira Gandhi-led government declared Emergency, the desperation to control the population took a dark turn. A widespread mandatory sterilisation programme saw thousands of vasectomies, many of which were forced. These sterilisations became a major issue in the 1977 general elections, when Indira Gandhi was voted out, and India saw its first non-Congress government at the Centre.

This was the first time we saw strong evidence of a clear popular rejection of a coercive population-control policy.

For several decades after the Emergency, governments stayed away from family planning. In 1994, the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD), convened under the auspices of the United Nations, brought about a landmark shift in the way governments viewed population-related issues. At the ICPD, 179 governments, including



There is no better contraceptive pill than education, According to NFHS data, women who had no schooling had the highest TFR of 3.06. Abhinav Saha

India, recognised and committed to a rights-based approach to family planning, which held that if people's needs for family planning and reproductive healthcare are met, along with other basic health and education needs, then population stabilisation will be achieved naturally, not as a matter of control or coercion.

The ICPD inspired India's 2000 National Population Policy. But implementation only picked pace when the National Rural Health Mission, now part of the larger National Health Mission, was launched in 2005.

The 2000s saw a rekindled interest in population stabilisation, but the burden of family planning stayed with women, with female sterilisation being the most available method. The lack of emphasis on quality of care led to some egregious practices. In 2014, 16 women died in Bilaspur after they were sterilised at a government camp. As a member of a fact-finding team comprising several civil society organisations, led by the Population Foundation of India, I visited the site and conducted several interviews. We found that gross negligence and compromised quality of care had led to these deaths.

Our team's inquiry resulted in a report that became the basis for a landmark judgment by the Supreme Court in 2016 and transformed the way family planning services are provided in India. The order by a two-judge Bench headed by Justice Madan Lokur asked the government to put a stop to sterilisation camps and focus on providing temporary methods of contraception.

Increased reach of the media has changed women's aspirations, and their desire for greater control over their lives. Although NFHS data show that women desire to have less than two children, their inability to access family planning services has resulted in a high unmet need. However, increased focus on providing services in high-fertility districts may have helped improve knowledge and acceptance of family planning.

India's large young population about 30 per cent is aged between 10 and 24 — is gearing for change. The government needs to play a pivotal role and invest in education, health and creating economic opportunities for young people. It needs to understand that there is no better contraceptive pill than education.

Girls' education has a direct co-relation with a decrease in fertility. According to NFHS data, women who had no schooling had the highest TFR of 3.06, as compared to women with 12 or more years of education who had a TFR of 1.71.

The government must provide health and life-skills education at an early age along with ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services. It must absolutely swear off coercive populationcontrol policies for good. The way forward requires less chest-thumping and more collaborative efforts if we are to sustain the trend towards population stabilisation.

> The writer is the Executive Director of Population Foundation of India

STAND-UP comic Vir Das elicited a wholly predictable response to his impassioned lament on the dichotomy of surviving two, contradictory Indias. In the much-applauded monologue held at Washington's prestigious Kennedy Centre, Das highlighted the shocking contrasts we internalise, like how the world's largest population under 30 endures "75-year-old leaders with 150-year-old ideas". Madhya Pradesh's Home Minister declared Das persona non grata in his state while another BIP leader filed a complaint against him for "vilifying" India on foreign soil. Comedy in India has become a dangerous business: in January, comedian Munawar Faruqui was arrested

The power of ridicule

for allegedly passing indecent remarks about Hindu deities. In 2019, comic artist Agrima Joshua received rape threats for a joke on a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji.

It's not difficult to see why touchy politicians feel threatened by comedians. They instinctively understand humour packs in so much more than just frivolous entertainment; it provides clarity on bizarre situations that are otherwise impossible to comprehend. Some years back, a friend's father expired on a cruise liner in the Caribbean. There's nothing funny about this - until you hear that the friends he was travelling with continued with their vacation despite this catastrophe. Undoubtedly, it cast a dampener on everyone's spirits, but logic had reared its sensible head. They had paid a full advance and had flights booked only at the end of the cruise. Meanwhile, my friend doesn't tire of relating this morbid story, how he reached shattered three days later, to a teary mother and his father in a morgue. A way, perhaps, to process the painful realisation: what makes every trauma bearable yet unbearable is that life goes on.

Throughout history, disaster has inspired dark satire. The genre of 'tragicomedy' emerged around the 3rd century BC and gained in popularity as theatre evolved to include nuance. It is thriving in a new millennium because we are all familiar with the dysfunctions of adulthood. Existence isn't purely tragic or comic but a frustrating combination of the two. In fact, if one must find fault with Das's diatribe, it's that it wasn't (bitterly) hilarious enough. The best jesters point out deficiencies in human nature and society by slyly revealing them to be absurd. Basically, turning the grim into grimly amusing. Ridiculousness is implied, never overtly stated. However, when a joke speaks truth to power, it can turn into a lethal tool for disruption. Bill Cosby's life blew up because of one sneer by a comedian: "You rape women, Bill Cosby, so turn the crazy down." Just like that, the floodgates to uncontainable fury burst open.

Indians are not known for their ability to laugh at themselves. In our defence, life here has always been a struggle to keep suffering at bay while building endurance. You need to be able to take basics for granted to engage in light-hearted merriment. But circumstances have us tightly wound up, unable to relax. Alas, even a who-cares attitude is a privilege of richer nations. Our countrymen are religious but not spiritual, which means a lot of mind space is wasted worrying about nonsense, like kids' mar-

riages and relatives' opinions. So, when comedians use our depressing realities as material, not everyone sees that truth is way funnier than fiction. Many people feel genuinely aggrieved that Das was denigrating India abroad, not realising that articulating the unsaid stirs dialogue. It makes room for the perspective that, even with all our differ-

ences, we are essentially the same. To brand comedians as dissenters for critiquing historical wrongs through parody is, ironically, a perfect example of the genre of absurdist comedy — that taps into the paradoxes and irrationalities of the modern world. It takes courage to make peace with our chaotic country and, occasionally, we are entitled to laugh at it. In any case, who are we kidding? The joke's on us.

The writer is director, Hutkay Films

CRUDE WATCH

Brent sees over 8% weekly fall

New York: With the new variant of the coronavirus spooking investors and causing concerns that a supply surplus could swell, Brent crude settled at \$72.72 a barrel, a weekly decline of over 8%, while US WTI crude fell 10.4% for the week to \$68.15 on Friday. **REUTERS**

DIIs ACCUMULATE ₹12,818 CRORE OF STOCKS IN LAST SIX SESSIONS

Domestic institutions bought stocks as FPIs rushed out during market rout

GEORGE MATHEW MUMBAL NOVEMBER 27

DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONAL investors (DIIs) were active buyers last week when stock markets faced a nervous sell-off with foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) dumping stocks across the board

While foreign investors exited from stocks worth Rs 25,000 crore (\$3.34 billion) in the last six sessions, DIIs accumulated stocks worth Rs 12,818 crore during the same period. Domestic institutions have been using every major correction to buy into stocks and reshuffle their portfolios. The benchmark Sensex nosedived 2,901 points, or 4.83 per cent, to 57,107.15 in the last six sessions.

On Friday, when the Sensex fell 1,688 points, FPIs pulled out Rs 5,785 crore from Indian markets

PRANAV MUKUL

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

JUST A day after the Ministry

of Civil Aviation announced

the resumption of interna-

tional scheduled commercial

flights effective December 15,

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on Saturday directed

senior government officials to

"review" plans for easing of in-

EXPLAINED

ternational

Covid-19.

restrictions in light

of the emergence

of new evidence

regarding the

Omicron variant of

Ministry announced?

On Friday, the ministry an-

nounced that international

scheduled commercial flights

will resume from December

According to the ministry the resumption was to happen

in a calibrated manner with a

staggered reopening for coun-

tries considered 'at-risk'. These

include Europe, including the

UK. in addition to South Africa.

Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana,

China, Mauritius, New Zeala-

nd, Zimbabwe, Singapore,

Hong Kong and Israel. Among

these countries, if India has an

air bubble arrangement,

flights will be resumed at a 75

per cent capacity as decided in

bilateral agreements, and for

those without an air bubble, at

50 per cent capacity. For all the

remaining countries that are

not a part of the 'at-risk' cate-

gory, 100 per cent of the flights

were allowed to resume.

Why is the decision being

On Saturday, the Prime

15 after a 21-month ban.

What had the

while DIIs invested Rs 2,294 crore, according to data available from stock exchanges. On November 24, when the Sensex declined by 320 points, FPIs sold Rs 5,122 crore stocks but DIIs were buyers of Rs 3.809 crore worth of stocks. Insurance companies led by LIC and mutual funds are the major players in the market, absorbing the sales triggered by FPIs.

"Domestic institutions follow the policy of 'buy when others sell'. They are long-term players and utilise every opportunity to get stocks cheap," said an analyst.

In November so far, FPIs have taken out Rs 31,124 crore from Indian markets while DIIs invested Rs 20,598 crore. LIC alone usually invests around Rs 50,000 crore in the markets every year.

Analysts are worried about the sell-off continuing in the wake of several uncertainties relating to

Several countries are

restricting travel

from south African

nations, in addition

to curtailing travel

Minister chaired

a two-hour

meeting with

senior govern-

ment officials to

review the public

health prepared-

ness and vacci-

situation for Covid-19, where

he was briefed about the omi-

cron variant. The mutation has

been declared by the World

Health Organization (WHO)

asked officials to review plans

for easing of international

travel restrictions in light of the

Is international travel being

restricted by other nations?

are restricting travel from

south African countries in-

cluding South Africa, Zimbab-

we, Botswana, etc, in addition

to curtailing travel from juris-

dictions where the new vari-

www.indianexpress.com

Full report on

ant has been detected.

Yes, a number of countries

During the meeting, Modi

as a 'variant of concern'.

November 15.

from where the

new variant has

been detected

SECTOR WATCH

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Review of overseas

flights: New Covid

variant key cause of

concern at PM meet

INVESTMENTS BY FPIs However, DIIs which bought Rs **AND DIIs** (in ₹ crore) 55,595 crore worth of stocks made a good profit as markets DATE FPIS DIIS bounced back subsequently. Nov 26 | -5,785 | +2,294

ening of the monetary policy in

world, the market crashed with

Nov 25 -2,300 + 1,367 downward pressure on other world markets, the Dow Jones Nov 24 -5,122 +3,809 Industrial Average in the US on Nov 23 -4,477 +1,412 Friday dropped about 905 points, Nov 22 | -3,438 | +2,051 or 2.5 per cent, for its worst day of the year, while the S&P 500 and Nov 18 | -3,930 | + 1,885 Nasdaq Composite slid 2.3 per Source: BSE data cent and 2.2 per cent, respectively. The Dow was down more than 1,000 points at session lows. the new Covid variant and tight-

'India faces uphill battle to

meet 2030 climate targets'

India must substantially alter its current trajectory if it

targets for 2030, Fitch Solutions said in a note

has to deliver on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's climate

the United States. The sharp corretail investors will follow the exit rection in the market on Friday route taken by FPIs. Retail investors have been pumping money was mainly triggered by concerns arising out of the new strain of the into the stock markets through SIPs of mutual funds in the last 12 In March 2020, when the months. Another possible impact Covid pandemic first hit the of the market rout will be on the

Setting the stage for further

The big question is whether

IPO market which has been wit-

nessing a flurry of activity with the entry of high-profile unicorns.

The FPI sell-off can accelerate if the US tightens monetary policy. "Foreign brokerages had downgraded India early this month on high valuations. India's valuations vis-a-vis emerging market peers also became stretched. The further negative trigger came from the RBI observation that valuations are stretched," said VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

The market action next week will depend on how the new virus strain spreads and its impact on the world. There are concerns over rising inflation in the minutes of the recent US FOMC meeting, signalling higher chances of an aggressive policy tightening. Worries over overvaluation and a possible rate hike have been

First of all, exchanges and haunting foreign investors. crypto companies never expected India to adopt cryptocurrencies as legal tender. India, being a sovereign country, should have capital

Based on current state of play, India will fall far short of its climate objectives, Fitch said

down carbon intensity of its

economy by 45%

By 2030, the shares in primary energy mix will fall, with coal accounting for 45%, oil 33%, and natural gas 8% — with a decline in coal largely offset by a rise in oil and gas

Strongest prospects for displacing fossil fuels are in the power sector, but targets are likely to be missed in absence of a step change in the sector

Emissions reduction benefits will be limited, as long as fossil fuels are the dominant source of power generation

commodity. The trading happens Source: Fitch Solutions/PT because of its use case. What role do crypto exchanges play in the next 5-10 years and

> what problem are you hoping Think of us like the stock exchanges of the world. Amazing companies do IPOs, create value and an NSE or a BSE provides that access to investment for these companies. The use cases of crypto may be smaller, but those use

cases are being solved amazingly.

Credit: Company

INTERVIEW: CO-CHAIR OF BACC & FOUNDER-CEO OF COINSWITCH KUBER

as legal tender... but this tech is

'We never advocated crypto

solving real world problems'

opening the curtains on its Bill to

regulate cryptocurrencies, the

crypto exchange industry hopes

for a balance between protection

of India's financial stability and the

innovation possible from the

blockchain technology. ASHISH

SINGHAL, co-chair of Blockchain

and Crypto Assets Council (BACC)

and Founder & CEO of CoinSwitch

Kuber, told PRANAV MUKUL and

SANDEEP SINGH about the factors

that led to the proliferation of

crypto investments in the coun-

try and the future of crypto ex-

indication of cryptocurrencies

not being recognised as legal

tender, what is the future of

these digital coins as a mere

controls, financial stability. It

makes sense for countries where

there is instability, but for India it

doesn't make sense to give con-

the government and believe that

a CBDC (central bank digital cur-

rency) is the right way to solve the

problem of digitisation. Money is

not digital today and CBDC is the

right way to solve that problem

and we have never advocated for

crypto to be legal tender in India.

 $class. Asset\, class\, is\, the\, biggest\, use$

case for cryptocurrencies. The

next Google, Facebook and Micro-

soft will be built on blockchain

and will hopefully come from

India. So, the scope is much wider.

It is the new internet in the mak-

ing, and is not just about trading a

Second, it is not a mere asset

We, as an industry, stand by

trol to a cryptocurrency.

asset class?

changes. Edited Excerpts:

Now that there's a clear

"Most of our users are very young. It is the Gen Z population, which is very excited about crypto. Average age is about 25-26 years on our platform that is investing in crypto." **ASHISH SINGHAL**

Be it Covid-19 certificates, checks getting issued on Ethereum

blockchain in the US.

There are many real world problems that this technology is solving, and these are the problems that we see many companies from India solving. We will be the custodians for retail users to invest in these companies. Think of us as an exchange equivalent in the world where crypto companies are creating value.

Could you give us a sense of who in India is investing in or is invested in ryptocurrencies?

Today, 45 per cent of our users come from tier-1 cities and 55 per cent come from tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Most of our users are very young. It is the Gen Z population, which is very excited about crypto. Average age is about 25-26 years on our platform that is investing in crypto. People from over 4,000 pin codes have invested in crypto — so it's not that just people from tier-1 cities have invested but the whole of India is investing in cryptos through CoinSwitch Kuber. To give a sense of the kind of money they are putting in - on average, they are putting in about Rs 10,000 every month for investment into crypto and the value decreases when you

go to tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

Goyal to industry: Our effort is to

reduce burdensome compliances

of investors over the last one year explain the shift in the government's stance from a complete ban to a regulation?

Definitely, adoption does help. The government is able to see the use cases beyond currencies.

When you look at crypto just as a currency, there are many issues that lie - terror, money laundering. But our discussions with the government over the last few weeks indicate there is a broader agreement on ensuring that customers are protected, financial stability is reinforced and India is able to take advantage of crypto technology, and build the next generation of companies on blockchain. The developments that are happening outside as well - every now and then, countries adopting crypto. All of that culminated into from the talks of a ban to where we stand today, which is that the government does agree that use case is much bigger and we should have progressive regulations, so we are able to guide everyone in the right direction and don't miss out on innovation.

With regard to the proliferation of cryptocurrencies over the last few years, what explains how

it happened?

I would say there are multiple factors to that and Covid helped, but let me take a step back. Since 2018, crypto was banned in India. The entire revolution of crypto was happening in other countries and the adoption rate was increasing. Crypto is now a household name in the US. Although India wasn't a party to that equation, but in the two-year period after the ban by the RBI, the revolution was happening outside and

Indians were learning. So Indians were not behind in this because of factors like lack of internet penetration. We were almost side by side in figuring out what those developments are and we wanted to be a part of this ecosystem. Once the Supreme Court verdict came in, that gave Indians the opportunity to get into this. In a way, it was the residual demand generated in those two years that has resulted into the

growth in the last 1-1.5 years.

Full interview on www.indianexpress.com

primary energy mix respectively At the COP26, Modi

announced that by 2030, India will increase its non-fossil fuel power generation capacity to

 $500\,GW$, generate 50% of its power from renewable sources, reduce its total carbon emission by 1 billion tonnes and bring

55%, 28% and 7% of the

Analysts forecast nuclear, hydropower and non-hydropower renewables generation capacity to reach 314 GW by 2030, with their share in total generation rising to around 30%

Omicron strain forces WTO to postpone ministerial meet

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

THE WORLD Trade Organization (WTO) has postponed its crucial meet of trade ministers from various countries — scheduled to start from November 30 in Geneva — for a second time, after an outbreak of a new strain of the Covid-19 virus led several governments to impose travel curbs.

emerging new evidence. In addition to the relaxations an-It is the first major trade casunounced Friday, India also alty of the new Covid variant. No date has been set for reconvening eased visa restrictions - havthe 12th ministerial conference, ing resumed granting of widely seen as a test of the WTO's tourist visas for those flying on chartered flights from October relevance amid criticism by key members on the multilateral trad-15 and for other flights from ing system that it represents.

The Geneva meet was to run until December 3 and host talks on a broad range of issues, including the WTO's response to containing Covid-19, curbs on fishery subsidies and a permanent solution to the public procurement programmes for food security.

The B.1.1.529 variant, known as the Omicron variant, detected in South Africa has been classified as a "variant of concern" by the WHO, which says it may spread more quickly than other variants.



WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said many could not have participated due to travel constraints. Reuters file

WTO director-general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said the travel constraints meant that many ministers and senior delegates could not have participated in face-toface negotiations at the ministerial Conference. "This would render participation on an equal basis impossible," she said. The meeting was originally due to take place in June 2020 in Nur-Sultan. Kazakhstan, Although the General Council decided to move the meeting to Geneva, Kazakhstan

keep pushing for vaccine IP, WTO reform

DAVIDLAWDER WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 27

US TRADE Representative Katherine Tai said the United States would continue to push for WTO members to agree on an intellectual property framework for Covid-19 vaccines after a major WTO ministerial meeting set for

next week was postponed Friday. The delay of the in-person meeting in Geneva over travel restrictions and concerns about the spread of the new Omicron Covid-19 variant complicates Tai's plans to push her vision for WTO reform and rekindling the spirit of dynamism and compromise that led to the trade body's creation in 1995. In a pair of tweets, Tai said the postponement "is a reminder that we still have much work to do to end the pandemic." REUTERS



ernment, along with states, is to eliminate burdensome compliances, reduce the need for licensing and rationalise the renewal process with an aim to promoting ease of doing business, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said Saturday.

At the CII National Conference on Ease of Doing Business for Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Goyal suggested that the industry and the government together can engage with the judiciary on issues like fast resolution of commercial disputes and capping adjournments.

"Our effort, along with states, is to eliminate burdensome compliances, or reduce the need for licensing, reduce the regulatory burden, permissions, and ratio-



PIYUSH GOYAL

nalise the renewal process. But it only happens when we work together. Self-regulation and selfcertification should be the way forward," the union minister said.

On fast resolution of commercial disputes, Goyal said the government is working on making mediation the preferred mechanism rather than everybody rush-

Gems, jewellery: Goyal stresses on design, tie-ups

New Delhi: Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday asked the gem and jewellery industry to focus on areas like design, diversification of export product basket and lab grown diamonds.

"Focus on four points... Good design should be patented; include new things such as pearls, platinum and fashion iewellery in the exports basket; increase collaboration with other countries for fusion jewellery; and lab grown diamonds," he said at the inauguration of Gems & Jewellery Manufacturing Association, 2021. PTI

BRIEFLY —

MoSon internet

New Delhi: Democratic countries need to join hands to think about creating safety, trust and accountability on the internet which has no boundaries, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Saturday at the first ever India Internet Governance Forum (IIGF).

MCL solar plant

Sambalpur: Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) will set up a 50-MW solar power plant in Odisha's Sambalpur at a cost of Rs 301.92 crore as part of its goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2024. PTI

'Xiaomi to set up car plant in Beijing'

REUTERS

SHANGHAI, NOVEMBER 27

CHINESE SMARTPHONE giant Xiaomi Corp will build a plant that can produce 300,000 vehicles annually in Beijing for its electric vehicle unit, authorities in the capital said on Saturday.

The plant will be constructed in two phases and Xiaomi will also built its auto unit's headquarters. sales and research offices in the Economic Technological Development Zone, the economic development agency Beijing E-Town said on its official WeChat account.

Black Friday draws US shoppers, but many go online

RICHANAIDU& ARRIANA McLYMORE CHICAGO, NOVEMBER 27

BARGAIN HUNTERS ventured out in chilly weather to buy Christmas gifts on Black Friday only to discover that many US retailers offered smaller price markdowns

this year amid tight supplies. Covid fears and fewer "doorbuster" sales thinned crowds the day after the US Thanksgiving holiday, which kicks off the year-end holiday shopping season.

On the same day, the World Health Organization named the newly identified omicron variant of the coronavirus as a "variant of concern," triggering worldwide alarm and a selloff in the US stock



People line up near a store on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, New York City, on Black Friday. Reuters

Stores on Black Friday had the lowest level of clearance goods for sale in five years or more, Cowen analysts said in a note.

Many shoppers chose to pick up merchandise curbside rather

than venturing inside stores. Black Friday retail sales are up 29.8 per cent versus 2020 through 3 p.m. SpendingPulse.

ET, according to Mastercard Consumers spent \$6.6 billion

cording to Adobe Digital Economy Index, which expected total spending of between \$8.8 billion and \$9.2 billion for the day.

Walmart and Target stood to outperform other retailers in part because of their buy-onlinepick-up-at-store services, Cowen said. Target added more than 18,000 "drive-up" parking spaces, more than doubling spots versus last year.

The company said its most popular Black Friday deals included \$219.99 for a KitchenAid professional stand mixer that regularly sells for \$429.99, and savings of up to \$60 on Apple Watches and AirPods.

Several retailers — including Walmart, Target and Best Buy are expected to post lower fourth-

quarter profit margins because of tight inventory and higher costs for raw materials, freight and labor, "Even though the holiday season should be okay from a sales standpoint – because retailers are discounting less — the margins won't necessarily be higher because of inflation," said Forrester

Research analyst Sucharita Kodali.

US consumers are entering the holiday season flush with cash thanks to a still-hefty pile of savings from multiple rounds of government pandemic relief and double-digit wage increases as businesses compete for workers. Yet retailers had lured shoppers to make holiday purchases as early as September, because the supply chain logiam has prevented them from quickly replenishing yearend merchandise. **REUTERS**

Paytm Q2 loss stretches to ₹473 crore

New Delhi: One 97 Communications, the parent company of fintech major Paytm, on Saturday posted a widening of consolidated loss to about Rs 473 crore during the quarter ended September, mainly on account of increase in payment processing charges.

Paytm had a loss of Rs 436.7 crore in the same quarter a year ago, according to an exchange filing. Its consolidated total income rose 49.6 per cent to Rs 1,086.4 crore during the quarter from Rs 663.9 crore in the corresponding period of FY21. Paytm's expense of payment processing charges rose 36 per cent to Rs 670 crore during the quarter. **ENS, WITHPTI**

MEANWHILE

SPANISH POLICE MARCH IN MADRID

Thousands of Spanish police officers marched through Madrid on Saturday to protest against a proposed reform of a security law which they say will hamper their ability to do their work. They were opposed to proposed changes to the 2015 Citizens Security Law, which critics say violates the right to protest and limits free expression.

WORLD



Burned cars block a road in Petit-Bourg, Guadeloupe. Reuters

FRANCE

Paris says willing to talk autonomy for Guadeloupe

FRANCE IS willing to discuss autonomy for the French Caribbean territory of Guadeloupe if it is in the interests of the people who live there, government minister Sebastien Lecornu said. Guadeloupe and the nearby French island of Martinique have seen several days of protests against Covid-19 measures that have spilled over into violence. Lecornu, the minister for France's overseas territories, said in a YouTube video issued late Friday that certain elected officials in Guadeloupe had raised the question of autonomy, changing its status as an overseas region. "The government is ready to talk about this. There are no bad debates, as long as those debates serve to resolve the real everyday problems of people in Guadeloupe," REUTERS

SOLOMON ISLANDS Police find three bodies after violent protests

SOLOMON ISLANDS police found three bodies in a burned-out building and arrested more than 100 people in this week's violence sparked by concerns about the Pacific nation's increasing links with China. Australian media reported the bodies were recovered late Friday after riots and $protests\, subsided. No\, other$ details were Authorities imposed a curfew in the capital Honiara, after a 36-hour lockdown ordered by the embattled ended Friday. Sogavare blamed outside interference for stirring up the protests calling for his resignation, with a thinly veiled reference to Taiwan and the US.

SOUTH KOREA

Widow of dictator issues apology

THE WIDOW of South Korea's last military dictator issued a brief apology over the "pains and scars' caused by her husband's brutal rule as dozens of relatives and former aides gathered at a Seoul hospital on Saturday to pay their final respects to Chun Doohwan. Chun, who took power in a 1979 coup and violently crushed prodemocracy protests a year later before being jailed for treason in the 1990s, died at his Seoul home Tuesday. AP

OMICRON VARIANT: MORE COUNTRIES IMPOSE TRAVEL CURBS ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

UK reports cases of new variant, world on alert

Probable case of omicron in Germany

AP&REUTERS LONDON, NOVEMBER 27

BRITAIN BECAME the latest country Saturday to report cases of the new potentially more contagious omicron variant of the coronavirus as governments around the world sought to shore up their defences by slapping restrictions on travel from nations in southern Africa.

Amid fears that the recently identified new variant - named omicron by the WHO – has the potential to be more resistant to the protection offered by vaccines, there are growing concerns that the pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions will persist for far longer than hoped.

UK Health Secretary Sajid Javid confirmed that two people have tested positive with the omicron variant and that the cases are linked and related to travel from southern Africa

Britain added four more countries — Angola, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia onto the country's travel red list from Sunday. Six others -Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe – were added Friday.

A host of countries, including the Pakistan, US, Australia, Brazil, Canada Iran, Japan and Thailand, joined others, including the European Union and the UK in imposing restrictions on southern African countries.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson tightened up rules Saturday, saying anyone arriving in England will be asked to take a a mandatory PCR test for Covid-19 on the second day and must self isolate until they provide a

Cash-strapped

Pak to get \$3 bn

from Saudi; to

in central bank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, NOVEMBER 27

CASH-STRAPPED PAKISTAN will

soon get \$3 billion as loan from

Saudi Arabia as the Cabinet led

by Prime Minister Imran Khan

keep the amount in the country's central bank, media reports

The Saudi government had

According to the agreement,

'The SBP has finalised all

promised to maintain a reserve

of \$3 billion at the State Bank of

the aid will remain in the SBP's

arrangements and now every-

thing is in place and the

amount of the agreed deposit

will be received within the next

couple of days," official sources

the agreement to keep the \$3 bil-

lion aid from Saudi Arabia in the

SBP, the reports quoted an offi-

State Bank's retention of \$3 bil-

from the

The Cabinet approved the

Pakistan's entire liquid for-

eign reserves, according to the

central bank, stood at \$22,773

billion as of November 19, ac-

Saudi

cial document as saying.

Development Fund.

cording to Geo News

The federal Cabinet approved

told The News.

Pakistan, Geo News reported.

deposit account for a year.

said on Saturday.

park money

Doubts over travel curbs

EVEN AS countries rush to impose travel bans on South Africa and its neighbours, the WHO has warned against tak ing such steps before there is more information about the new variant. Some experts have said that it is likely that the variant is already spreading in other parts of the world, and that travel bans at this stage would already be too late. There are also suggestions that omicron was detected in South Africa because of the advances made by the country in genome sequencing and identifying new variants, and not necessarily because the variant originated there.

negative test. He also said maskwearing in shops and on public transport will be required and that vaccination will be accelerated.

In addition to the UK, cases have been reported in travellers in Belgium, Israel and Hong Kong. Germany also said it suspected a positive case and Dutch authorities were testing if 61 people who arrived on flights from South Africa with Covid-19 have the variant.

US President Joe Biden on Friday reiterated his call for nations to agree to waive intellectual property protections for Covid vaccines in the wake of the new variant. "The news about this new variant should make clearer than ever why this pandemic will not end until we have global vaccinations,"



GERMAN AIR FORCE PLANES TRANSFER COVID PATIENTS: A Covid-19 patient is taken into an air force aircraft in Memmingen, Germany. Hospitals in southern and eastern regions of Germany have warned they are running out of ICU beds because of the large numbers of Covid-19 patients, prompting the country to organise large-scale transfers of patients to other regions. Germany's health minister said he hopes the sight of air force planes transferring patients across the country will act as a "wake-up call" to those who still haven't got vaccinated. AP

S Africa feels 'punished' by travel bans after detecting new variant

LYNSEY CHUTEL JOHANNESBURG, NOV 27

AS THE US and European countries close their borders over fears over the recently detected coronavirus variant, many South Africans say they feel as if they are being "punished" for alerting global health authorities.

Hours after South African scientists announced the existence of a new variant that they said displayed "a big jump in evolution," Britain banned travellers from southern Africa. Other European nations and the US followed suit.

"I do apologise that people



A lab at the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine in Durban

took a very radical decision," said Tulio de Oliveira, director of the KwaZulu-Natal Research and Innovation Sequencing Platform and the scientist who announced the new variant on Thursday.

international solidarity would be in favour of South Africa's decision to publicise its findings.

The variant, named Omicron by the WHO, was first detected in South Africa and in neighbouring The economies of South

Africa and Botswana are reliant on tourists. South Africa's tourism minister, Lindiwe Sisulu, described the temporary travel bans as "devastating".

"Perhaps our scientists' ability to trace some of these variants has been our biggest weakness," Sisulu said. "We're finding ourselves pun-

Top UK scientist says Omicron 'not a disaster', vaccination likely to protect

ADITI KHANNA LONDON, NOVEMBER 27

THE NEW potentially highlytransmissible variant of Covid-19, named Omicron by the WHO, is not a disaster as vaccines are still likely to protect against the serious disease from it, a UK scientist, who advises the government, said on Saturday.

> Professor Calum Semple, a microbiologist from the UK government's

Professor Calum Semple

Scientific Advisory Group for **Emergencies** (SAGE),

struck a note of caution on the worldwide headlines around the new B.1.1.529 variant detected in South Africa.

"This is not a disaster, and the headlines from some of my colleagues saying 'this is horrendous' I think are hugely overstating the situation," Semple told the BBC.

"Immunity from vaccination is still likely to protect you from severe disease. You might get a snuffle or a headache or a filthy cold but your chance of coming into hospital, or intensive care or sadly dying are greatly diminished by

Russia spy chief says Ukraine invasion plan 'malicious' US propaganda

REUTERS

MOSCOW, NOVEMBER 27

RUSSIA HAS no plans to invade Ukraine and suggestions to the contrary are malicious US propaganda, Moscow's foreign intelligence chief said on Saturday.

US, NATO and Ukrainian officials have raised the alarm in recent weeks over what they say are unusual Russian troop movements near the border with Ukraine, suggesting that Moscow may be poised to launch an attack.

Russia has repeatedly said it is free to move its troops on its own territory and that such movements should not be a cause for concern.

"I need to reassure everyone. Nothing like this is going to happen," Sergei Naryshkin, head of Russia's foreign intelligence agency, said in an interview broadcast on state television, referring to comments on Russia's alleged invasion plans.

"Everything that is happening around this topic right now is of course malicious propaganda by the US State Department."

Naryshkin spoke a day after he State Department's top US diplomat for European affairs said all options were on the table in how to respond to Russia's troop buildup near Ukraine's border and that NATO would decide on the next move after consultations next week

While US officials have voiced concerns about a possible Russian attack on Ukraine, Moscow has accused Washington, Kyiv and NATO of provocative and irresponsible behaviour near its borders.

Stephen Sondheim

American

MARK KENNEDY

musical theatre

master Stephen

Sondheim dies

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 27

STEPHEN SONDHEIM, the song-



UK: Storm Arwen Leaves 2 Dead

Waves crash against the pier wall at Seaham Lighthouse during Storm Arwen, in Seaham, Britain, on Saturday. At least two people died and tens of thousands were left without power as Storm Arwen brought strong winds across many parts of the UK, with gusts of up to 160 kph. Reuters

US city panel clears bid to demolish Wright Brothers' first bicycle shop

ASSOCIATED PRESS DAYTON NOVEMBER 27

THE DAYTON Board of Zoning Appeals has approved the city's request to demolish a 129-yearold historic building that once was the site of the Wright brothers' first bike shop. The city wants to tear down

the site because the building has deteriorated to a point where it can no longer be maintained, the Dayton Daily News reported. The Dayton Landmarks



At the site of the shop in Dayton, Ohio. AP

Commission had rejected the city's demolition request in

Preservation groups had also opposed the city's plan. They argued for keeping the building's facade and incorporating it into a redevelopment project.

The city appealed the landmarks commission's decision to the zoning appeals board, which has now given the city permission to raze the property.

The shop was first built in 1892 to serve as the Wright brothers' first bike shop. The brothers are credited with inventing and flying the world's first successful motoroperated airplane.

A cure for Type 1 diabetes? For one man, it seems to have worked

GINA KOLATA

RRIAN SHFITON'S life was ruled by Type 1 diabetes.

When his blood sugar plummeted, he would lose consciousness without warning. He crashed his motorcycle into a wall. He passed out in a customer's yard while delivering mail. Following that episode, his supervisor told him to retire, af-

Service. He was 57. His ex-wife, Cindy Shelton, took him into her home in Elyria, Ohio. "I was afraid to leave him alone all day," she said.

ter a quarter century in the Postal

Early this year, she spotted a call for people with Type 1 diabetes to participate in a clinical trial by Vertex Pharmaceuticals. The company was testing a treatment developed over decades by a scientist who vowed to find a cure after his baby son and then his teenage daughter got the devastating disease.

Shelton was the first patient. On June 29, he got an infusion of cells, grown from stem cells but iust like the insulin-producing pancreas cells his body lacked. Now his body automatically

ros for each infringement.



Brian Shelton may be the first person cured of Type 1 diabetes. NYT

controls its insulin and blood

sugar levels. Shelton, now 64, may be the first person cured of the disease with a new treatment that has experts daring to hope that help may be coming for many of the 1.5 million Americans suffering from Type 1 diabetes.

"It's a whole new life," Shelton said. "It's like a miracle." Diabetes experts were astonished but urged caution. The study is continuing and will take five years, involving 17 people with severe cases of Type 1 diabetes. It is

not intended as a treatment for the more common Type 2 diabetes. "We've been looking for something like this to happen literally for decades," said Dr Irl Hirsch, a diabetes expert at the University of Washington. **NYT**

writer who reshaped the American musical theatre in the second half of the 20th century with his intelligent, intricately rhymed lyrics, his use of evocative melodies and his willingness to tackle unusual subjects, has

died. He was 91.

Sondheim's death was announced by Rick Miramontez, president of DKC/O&M. Sondheim's Texas-based attorney, Rick Pappas, told The New York Times the composer died Friday at his home in Roxbury, Connecticut.

Sondheim influenced several generations of theatre songwriters, particularly with such landmark musicals as Company, Follies and Sweeney Todd, which are considered among his best work. His most famous ballad, Send in the Clowns, has been recorded hundreds of times, including by Frank Sinatra and Judy Collins.

The artist refused to repeat himself, finding inspiration for his shows in such diverse subjects as an Ingmar Bergman movie (A Little Night Music), the opening of Japan to the West (Pacific Overtures), French painter Georges Seurat (Sunday in the Park With George), Grimm's fairy tales (Into the Woods) and even the killers of American presidents (Assassins), among others.

Tributes quickly flooded social media as performers and writers alike saluted a giant of the theater. "We shall be singing your songs forever," wrote Lea Salonga. Aaron Tveit wrote: "We are so lucky to have what you've given the world.'

The theatre has lost one of its greatest geniuses and the world has lost one of its greatest and most original writers. Sadly, there is now a giant in the sky.' nroducer Cameron Mackintosh wrote in tribute.

CRITICS SAY THE NEW RULES ARE HALF-BAKED, SHORT ON DETAIL AND UNFEASIBLE

Workers' paradise? Portugal's new teleworking law takes flak

BARRY HATTON LISBON, NOVEMBER 27

PORTUGAL'S NEW law on working from home makes the European Union country sound like a workers' paradise

Companies can't attempt to contact their staff outside working hours. They must help staff pay for their home gas, electric and internet bills. Bosses are forbidden from using digital software to track what their teleworkers are doing.

There's just one problem: the law might not work. Critics say the new rules are half-baked. short on detail and unfeasible. And they may even backfire by making companies reluctant to allow working from home at all.

The law is badly written and doesn't meet anybody's needs," savs José Pedro Anacoreta, an employment attorney at PLMJ, one of Portugal's main law firms. "It's no good for anyone. ... It doesn't make any sense."

In many places around the world, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated a prior trend toward the digitalisation of work and more flexible work arrangements. Amid such a sudden and massive shift in the employment landscape, governments are scrambling to accommodate working from home in their em-



ployment laws. Those efforts are

largely still in their infancy.

attention around the world. AP

proaches, and others are consid-

ering it through amendments,

During the pandemic some extensions or conventions. countries have recommended As home working grew in reteleworking. Others - like cent years, workers' "right to dis-Portugal – have demanded it. connect" - allowing staff to ig-Most EU countries have specific nore work matters outside legislation on teleworking, formal working hours — was though with different apadopted before the pandemic in

Portugal's France, Italy, Spain and Belgium. new law on It is now becoming the standard. But Portugal is taking that working from home has grabbed

concept a step further, by flipping the onus onto companies. The employer has a duty to refrain from contacting the employee outside working hours, except in situations of force majeure," meaning an unanticipated or uncontrollable event. states the new law.

countries such as Germany,

Also, parents or caregivers with children up to eight years old have the right to work from home if they choose, as long as the type of work they do is compatible with teleworking.

and will be "very hard" to enforce. Prompted by the pandemic Fines for companies breaking but designed to apply in the fu-

the law go up to almost 10,000 euture irrespective of Covid-related measures, the law could come The Portuguese rules are into force as soon as December 1. meant to address the downside of Nevertheless, practical ques-

what has become known as WFH. tions abound: must staff be taken The technology that enables off company email lists when working from home has also their shift finishes and then put opened the door to abuses, such back on when they start work as drawn-out workdays as staff reagain? What about Europeans main reachable outside their norwho work in financial markets mal eight-hour shift. But the new and need to know what's going law has met with scepticism from on in, say, Hong Kong, and have those it is intended to protect. colleagues working in different

Andreia Sampaio, 37, who time zones? works in communications in "The devil is always in the details ... but also in the implemen-Lisbon, agrees with the law's purpose but thinks it is too general

tation," says Jon Messenger, a specialist on working conditions at the International **Organization**

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS MAGAZINE



POINT OF VIEW With a Dot and a Dash

How the use of the telegram was of strategic interest for different power structures in

Eenam-Pechi in Your Backyard

An animated short film presents a slice-of-life glimpse into characters who populate the afterlife in Malayalam folklore



Benita Fernando with Ankita Dwivedi Johri

STAND-UP comedian Munawar Faruqui's post on social media from the last fortnight goes something like this:

I come from Two Indias 2014 #FreedomOfSpeech

Faruqui's joke, while alluding to the controversial statements made by actor Kangana Ranaut (who claimed that India actually got its freedom in 2014 when the Narendra Modiled government came to power, and not in 1947), is modelled along the lines of yet another controversy - stand-up comedian Vir Das' Emmy-nominated monologue, I Come from Two Indias.

On November 15, Das, 42, posted a YouTube video that presented observations on India, some intended to expose the nation's hypocrisies and ironies, at a sold-out show at the Kennedy Centre, Washington, US. "I come from an India where we take pride in being vegetarians and yet run over the farmers who grow our vegetables" was part of this piece as were remarks on Bollywood, cricket, and the PMCares fund.

The viral clip from the show lasted all of six minutes. As of this week, at least two persons associated with the BJP in Mumbai and Delhi have lodged police complaints against Das; the Madhya Pradesh home minister Narottam Mishra, also from the BJP, has disallowed Das' future performances in the state; and INC spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi tweeted that Das had generalised "the evils of a few individuals and vilified the nation as a

Comedians now have staggering reach and the potential for impact and that's making everyone nervous

> Ravina Rawal editor, DeadAnt Co



whole in front of the world".

Das is the latest in a long line of stand-up comedians and satirists who have been intimated or arrested in recent years for hurtin religious or national sentiments. In January this year, Faruqui, 28, was arrested at a venue in Indore even before he could perform his set, Dongri to Nowhere. The arrest came after a complaint from the son of a BJPMLA, who accused Faruqui of making jokes on Hindu deities and home minister Amit Shah. The alleged jokes, however, were not made at the venue, as per eyewitness accounts reported in news and research website Article 14. Faruqui spent over a month in jail.

'Someone or the other is targeted everyday on the internet now," says Faruqui, who started off with open mics in 2018 and has risen to nearly 1.5 million subscribers on YouTube recently. Earlier this month, organisers cancelled his events in Mumbai and Goa following threats of physical, emotional and financial harm. Faruqui says, "You say what you think is right and what you stand by. There are lots of people who follow you on public platforms. You have to take the responsibility that comes along with it."

Other comics have also faced backlash on grounds of "hurting" sentiments, religious or otherwise. By now, it's clear that political humorists come from two Indias - one, where you are thrown in jail for a joke and another, where you joke about your time in jail. In a country where biker groups and physiotherapists are offended by jokes, nationalists can't be far behind. Comedians prepare for a whole lot of things - awkward silences or an audience that is not in on the joke — but is an FIR also among them?

There have been several warnings in recent years about the shrinking space for freedom of expression in India, such as a steadily falling rank in the World Press Freedom Index. Speaking on this subject also has become a challenge, with observers often labelled as dissenters. Several well-known comedians chose not to comment for this story or retracted their

comments, citing various reasons. "We have artists like Kunal Kamra and Varun Grover, who have developed a strong voice in the space... But they know that it still comes with potential legal complications, threats of violence, people showing up at venues to shut down shows or vandalise the place. and even getting tossed in jail, as we saw earlier this year. Younger comedians are extra cautious. Few are willing to open themselves up to the increasing risks involved," says Ravina Rawal, editor, *DeadAnt Co*, an online publication that tracks India's comedy culture.

Stand-up comedy in India is currently a well-defined genre, distinct from film comedy and YouTubers, but just over a decade old. From around 2017 onwards, Rawal recounts, a lot of comedians were venturing into the space of political satire, and it looked like it could evolve into a solid sub-genre with many exciting voices. Aisi Taisi Democracy (ATD), Das's News on the Loose, AIB's On-Air With AIB, were among them. Audiences also got used to laughing at things they haven't had the nerve to say out loud themselves. "But things started getting messy quickly. I think it comes from the realisation that comedians now have

making everyone nervous," she says. When Mumbai-based comic Azeem Banatwalla, 32, calls himself a "traditional Muslim man", the audience scoffs, knowing well that the comedian is by no means one. In

July 2020, Banatwalla suspended his Twitter

staggering reach and the potential for impact

on young voters, for instance — and that's

account and later issued an apology for tweets from many years ago. He stated that he was subjected to the "vilest of Islamophobic abuse". Over email, Banatwalla tells us that he has spent most of his career making jokes about the culture he was born and brought up in. There are jokes about the stereotype of Muslims being terrorists, but that seems forgotten because the focus is always on perceived slights against "Hindu culture". People with political agendas attack smaller comics and venues — soft targets, essentially — to showcase themselves to their political peers, he adds. Banatwalla says that it is easy for a lot of comics, especially the newer ones, to joke about the right wing. "It's an easy laugh because, let's face it, nobody in the government exactly covers themselves in glory," he says.

Banatwalla's apology was one of the many posted online around the same time in 2020. Rohan Joshi, Sahil Shah and Sapan Verma (also members of East India Company), and Aadar Malik were among them. The spate of apologies rose in the aftermath of a joke on misinformation surrounding a proposed Shivaji statue in the Arabian Sea, Agrima Joshua, the stand-up comedian who had made the joke, was threatened by a Hindu activist with legal action if found guilty of insulting a state and national icon; she was viciously trolled online and subjected to rape threats.

Practising for the last five years, Joshua, 31. has often made digs on Indian politics, but doesn't identify herself as a political humorist. In her first and only video, "UP is the Texas of India", Joshua jokes about life in Uttar Pradesh, as both a citizen and a Christian. She unlisted the video that also mentions the Shivaji statue after threats to her life. "If you profile these men attacking comedians, women and

artistes, you'll learn they are the same people who made an issue out of (Pakistani actor) Fawad Khan performing in India. There's a lot to unpack here — fragile masculinity and the need to protect women or our culture, along with the panic over interfaith and inter-caste relationships," she says.

Stand-up comedian Shyam Rangeela, 26, says that sometimes his family asks him to 'go easy" on his content. Earlier this year, when Rangeela was visiting his village in Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan, he got into a discussion with his friends regarding the petrol price crossing the Rs 100 mark. "As I expressed my concern, most of them said Modiji har kaam soch samajh kar kartein hain sions). The hike in fuel prices must be to deal with the pandemic-induced slump in the economy," recalls Rangeela, who rose to fame mimicking the Prime Minister. It gave him an idea for a new act. He immediately searched for the nearest petrol pump and got verbal permission from the owner and agreed to share the video with him, he says. The next day, however, moments after he had uploaded the two-minute parody video in the Prime Minister's voice on his YouTube channel, he got a call from the owner, informing

him that he was filing an FIR against him. Rangeela uploaded another video, 'Petrolwala crime', explaining why he decided to not take down the February 16 act. It has got close to 30 lakh views. "If I had taken down the video, then it would have been better to just give up doing comedy. Even I support PM Modi, but that does not mean that I cannot disagree with him," says Rangeela, but admits that decisions such as these have come at a cost. In 2017, the comedian was allegedly told on a reality TV show, on which he was a contestant, to not mimic either Modi or Rahul Gandhi. He was eventually eliminated from it.

Political satirist and member of ATD, Sanjay Rajoura, 49, says his scripts are tailored for his audiences and he relies mostly on everyday observations for inspiration. "Today there is an audience for stand-up comedy even in small towns, where people respond to jokes on issues related to daily life. In urban centres, people are largely ignorant," he smiles, adding, "But jokes on government's criticism work in all centres. Everyone relates to it."

Rajoura and ATD had an FIR registered against them following a show in Shillong in 2019 titled Science ki honour killing, but, over the years, he says, only "those who identify



Venues are brick-and-mortar spaces. When a comic is hard to find, the venue is an easier target

Balraj Singh Ghai owner, The Habitat, Mumbai



with our content come to our shows" and so the backlash has reduced. "Say if there are 2.000 people in the audience, then only 4-5 eonle will disagree with us We upload most of our shows, only small clips,'

Many believe that political humorists are inherently anti-establishment. Karthik Kumar, who runs Evam Standup Tamasha in Chennai, says that comedy takes pot-shots at the establishment, that they wouldn't take labels like right-wing or left. "We really don't care who's in power. We are the ones who call the emperor naked and if we are not allowed to do that, there is a great loss..." There are comedians whose material aren't anti-establishment, as much as just pointing out little absurdities in political leadership or the social fabric. It may be a small part of a larger narrative on, say relationships and sex, but attacks against

them are focused on that stray line or two. In 2017, 34-year-old comedian Sourav Ghosh's joke on how airports in Mumbai were named after Shivaji became the basis for an attack from Maharashtra Navnirman Sena's (MNS) supporters. When Ghosh responded to comments on his video, MNS supporters grew more enraged and Ghosh was forced to issue a statement. The incident came in the way of getting shows in the city, too. "I was never the kind of comedian who had sold-out shows. But even the controversy did not help me sell tickets," he says with a laugh. Last year, Ghosh left Mumbai for good due to pandemicrelated reasons. He opened his own comedy venue, Topcat Retired Comedy Club in Kolkata, with the intention of building the scene in his city. "Comedians have to find a way that works for them because attackers will always find a way. Currently, the whole comedy scene in India is a tad bit defensive," he says.

In Mumbai, The Habitat, currently the most popular venue for comedy events, is no stranger to controversies. Joshua's attackers had vandalised the venue when she had performed her piece; a mob had gathered outside the venue in retaliation to Ghosh's show, and Balrai Singh Ghai, its owner, was asked by the police to shut the venue for a week. Ghai says, "Venues are brick-and-mortar spaces. When a comic is hard to find, the venue is an easier target." As of this year, Ghai has started a light screening of scripts being performed at the venue and is more vigilant about what parts of the show make it to digital platforms.

In one of Faruqui's videos. Ghost Story. The Habitat's logo gleams, dented in a corner from the time the attackers came to the venue in July 2020. "I think we are going to let that be there. It's like Leopold Cafe has its bullet marks [from the 26/11 terror attacks]. Let people know what we are dealing with," says Ghai.



ILLUSTRATION: SUVAJIT DEY

Stand-up comedians in India prepare for a lot of things — awkward silences or an audience that is not in on the joke. But, over the last decade, amid increasing instances of fragile egos and easily-hurt sentiments, is an FIR also among them?

(The PM gives a lot of thought to all his deci-



DOWN IN JUNGLELAND



Ranjit Lal Ranjit Lal is an author,

Don't Throw a Hissy Fit

Being fussy about food can be tricky but it has led to the evolution of an admirable biodiversity

OME ANIMALS and even plants are real primadonnas when it comes to what they eat and where they live and what the climate should be like if they are to survive. At the other extreme are those which don't really give a damn: they'd try anything, adapt to any environment and tolerate hideous living conditions. Scientists have divided them into "specialists" and "generalists". Of course, there are many middle-of-the-roaders that slot between these two extremes, but let's meet a few of the real fusspots and few of who are willing to put just about anything into their mouths and doss down anywhere.

Anyone who has ever tried to rear caterpillars in the hope of them eventually turning into chrysalises and then butterflies will know that the caterpillars will binge like gluttons, but only on their particular brand of food. Offer them something else and they will rather starve to death than take a nibble. There are many other such fusspots in nature – by and large, herbivores tend to be specialists though there are many who break convention.

Among the fussiest is the giant panda — who wants bamboo for breakfast, lunch and dinner and any snacks in between, and who gets 95 per cent of its intake from bamboo. Another famous example is Australia's koala, which has a thing for eucalyptus leaves and nothing else. Eucalyptus leaves are poisonous and shunned by all other herbivores except the koala, whose tummy does not get upset by them, and so it has the whole eucalyptus buffet all to itself, carving an ecological niche for itself.

Now eucalyptus leaves would probably not appreciate being eaten — even if it were by a cuddly animal and, so, would be working towards strengthening its poisons, just as the koala would be working at negating even this, thus setting off a kind of arms race between the two. This, in fact, is how new species evolve — as they get more and more specialised in order to survive. While carnivores generally tend to help themselves to any kind of meat (including rotting), the fastidious Canadian lynx will only want snowshoe hares to be served at its table.



EAT LIKE A BIRD

For eclectic eaters like gulls, anything from fish to namkeen goes

Of course, there is a dangerous downside to this: Take away the bamboo and where would that leave the giant panda? Well on the road to extinction. If eucalyptus were to suddenly die out, so would the koala. They simply would not have enough time to adjust to another diet. That's why many zoos have hell of a problem feeding stubborn exotic creatures who demand designer food and nothing else. Fussy eaters will need larger territories than non-fussy eaters, because only so much of their favorite food can grow in a particular patch. But it's a frightening dependency and is not confined only to

Many species of plants depend on particular species of insects to pollinate them. The grand banyan tree — a keystone species in the tropical forest — has its own species of wasp, less than one millimetre long, which does this job. If this wasp were to go extinct (say by reckless use of pesticides), the grand banyan would fall and in doing so, eventually bring the entire forest down with it.

Being fussy can be dangerous but it has led to the evolution of our bewildering and astonishing biodiversity, with enough space for all.

At the other end of the spectrum are the "generalists". These would include such lovelies as cockroaches, rats, goats, horseshoe crabs and, of course, ourselves, Our kind can eat anything, live anywhere in any kind of climate we "adjust". Horseshoe crabs, which evolved some 360 million years ago, have an extensive variety in their diet and can tolerate a wide range of water temperature, not to mention low oxygen levels, too. Some specialists also seem to be changing their colour: gulls were supposed to be sea-going fish-eaters but now throng garbage dumps and fight over offerings of namkeen. Bears in Alaska, traditionally living off salmon, berries, roots and honey have now discovered the joys of fast food in suburban garbage bins especially since their wild territories are increasingly encroached upon. And some "generalists" like ourselves have specialised too! The Inuit can live virtually only on meat, fish and blubber with a little seaweed and berries on the side.

Thanks to their eclectic nature, generalists tend to have larger populations than specialists and are less in danger of going extinct. Overpopulation is more their problem. I guess the best compromise — and means of survival — would be not to throw a hissy fit if your favourite dish were not available — but accept what is with good grace.

History in Dots and Dashes

In its time, the telegram was a remarkable feat of communication that met more than just routine needs

Jagannath Srinivasan

HE GRANDEUR of the Rashtrapati Bhavan makes it easy to overlook the fact that it is an office too, and quite a busy one at that. Its records, reaching back to colonial times, afford a glimpse into the evolution of the government in India. And occasionally, the telegram peeks out from notes and letters, bearing testimony to its once pivotal role in moving the wheels of the government.

Governments are command and control structures and colonial governments, more so. The advent of the electric telegraph allowed its nerve centre, the governor general, to overcome the limitations imposed by physical modes of communication, cutting down to hours what took days to communi $cate. William\,O'S haughnessy, who joined\,the$ East India Company (EIC) army as a surgeon in 1833, had experimented with the telegraph in Bengal but it needed Lord Dalhousie to make the parsimonious Court of Directors of the East India Company — reluctant imperialists but active colonialists who were always averse to incurring any expenditure in the usual course — to approve the introduction of the electric telegraph in India. Dalhousie understood the criticality of communications for the empire he was extending and commissioned O'Shaughnessy to work on

From its beginning in Diamond Harbour in 1851, the telegraph grew like a chain, sync-

ing with the military needs of the empire. It moved from Calcutta to Lucknow to Attock, connecting the newly acquired territories. Agra was linked to Bombay and from there to Madras. The transformation of the communication system was electrifying. For instance, a request for troops for the Crimean War (1853-56), which was received in Bombay by ship, was transmitted to Calcutta in six hours. It would have taken at least a week but for

the telegraph. The EIC was to better appreciate the significance of the telegraph during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, when an official noted that "Under providence, the electric telegraph saved us". Freedom fighters, on the other hand, felt they were "strangled by that

damned wire". Telegraphic information, however, didn't always give a complete picture. "All well in Oude," one of the first messages received by eral in 1856, optimistically missed the powder keg of 1857 lurking around the corner to quote the sender General Outram somewhat out of context.

After the Uprising, connectivity between India and England was established, initially by overland telegraph across the Ottoman Empire and Europe and, later, by the undersea cable to the Suez. This telegraphic connection shifted the nerve centre of the empire to England. Students of history would recall that, before the Battle of Plassey, Robert

Clive had been ordered to return to Madras. His reply refusing to do so took a month to reach England, by which time he had put the Company on the path to empire building. The telegraph in Clive's time would definitely have proved providential for India!

Telegrams soon became an integral part of government communications. They would cover the routine and the strategic from the appointment of Major Strachey as the

comptroller of the Viceroys Household in 1903 to the secretary of state for India's queries on the impact of the Rowlatt Act, 1919, and questions on whether the Andaman and Nicobar islands should remain with free India. Lord Dufferin in 1887 had got approval for the creation of the Intelligence Bureau through a telegram from the secretary of state for India. Churchill's infamously peevish remarks during Mahatma Gandhi's fast in 1943, asking the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to confirm if Gandhi



Former President Rajendra Prasad during the Telegraph Centenary in 1953

Linlithgow calling Gandhi the "world's most successful humbug" were conveyed through telegraphic dots and dashes.

Unlike letters, telegrams needed to be transcribed and transmitted by signallers, who had to perforce read the message. To ensure secrecy, the use of the cypher was common, which in the early days of the telegraph was a source of complaints, as the coded messages weren't comprehensible to the signallers. For a colonial government, dealing with a growing nationalist movement (whose leaders were, ironically, major users of the public telegraph), coding was sacrosanct, with the Cypher Rules being strictly followed. A note from 1928 underlines how serious the secrecy of communications was considered. HG Haig, secretary to the Home Department, remarked on a reply from George Cunningham, private secretary to the viceroy (PSV), Lord Irwin, "PSV should not have replied en clair to a telegraph sent to him in cypher."

This sin aside, the PSV's office was quite efficient in getting the draft telegrams received from various departments every day approved by the viceroy, encoding and despatching them. Cunningham, however, records the difficulties faced while the viceroy was in Shimla or on tour with his "cypher clerks being always busy". The viceroy being the fulcrum of government and telegrams having become the main mode of communicating the urgent business of governance, Cunningham initiated the Home Department to issue an order in 1930, detailing a procedure to reduce the burden on the PSV's office while on tour or in Shimla.

The flow of information was also aided by news agencies. In the 1860s, Reuters had opened offices in Bombay and Calcutta, and regularly supplied news to the India Office in London. It was a Reuters cable, received at 10am on December 23, 1912, which informed the India Office of the attack on Lord Hardinge. The official telegram reporting the occurrence in detail, with a medical report on the viceroy's condition, reached the India Office only at 3.30pm. As is required with all government communications, the competent authority (in this case the Viceroy's Council) had to approve the draft of the telegram. Since the Delhi Durbar had continued in spite of the attack,

this approval got delayed. Telegrams received in the same office after Independence would have caused an imperialist like Dalhousie to wince - especially when Hungarian Prime Minister István Dobi's telegram to India's first President, Rajendra Prasad, on December 22, 1961, said that the liberation of Goa gave encouragement to people still languishing under colonial slavery elsewhere, or when Nigerian Prime Minister Abubakar Balewa's telegram to former president S Radhakrishnan lamented Jawaharlal Nehru's demise and noted how his wise counsel would be missed in international affairs, or the time Chairman Mao, who founded Communist China, congratulated India on becoming a republic.

After playing a prominent role in weaving Indian history for over a century, the telegraph was superseded by other modes of communication. The Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum symbolically preserves its legacy in a facsimile copy of the telegram from US President Harry S Truman to Rajendra Prasad on January 26, 1950, greeting him on India becoming a republic - an ode to a technological marvel of a bygone era.

Jagannath Srinivasan is Officer on Special Duty with the President's Secretariat



Living History

An Indian Express

COLLABORATION WITH THE

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

When we are mindful and content, we feel at home wherever we are

Finding Home in Us

SLICE OF LIFE



Suvir Saran is a chef, author, educator and world traveller

HOLIDAYS LIKE Diwali, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Passover and Eid teach us about our place in this world. They also educate us about the importance of being at home in our inner sanctum. But are we paying attention to the cues they offer? Do we care? Too many of us live aimlessly, going from one festival to another, from one social high to another, until we crash and are in deep despair.

One can happily be alone and not be lonely. Being alone is a physical state we choose. We decide to remove ourselves from $the \, other \, to \, do \, something \, that \'s \, important \, to \,$ us. It is right for us, meaningful to us. But being lonely is an emotional state in which we

are disconnected or removed from others. We feel empty, afraid and broken.

When we are alone, we can reflect, rest. travel, create, contemplate. We are choosing a freedom that allows us to be apart from others and not feel lonely. We haven't been forced into being disconnected to people we might choose to be with. We have separated ourselves by our own volition. But when we are lonely, we feel unloved, abandoned and desolate. We feel scared, left out, and forgotten.

When we experience loneliness, we actually have a negative sense of self. But when we choose to be alone, we often take that time of isolation to grow, to go back into ourselves. Then, when we are with others, we are better versions of ourselves.

We can live, love, work and discover, all while being alone and totally at peace with ourselves and the world. But when we are lonely, we feel removed from those we respect and love, even if we are in the same room, and it causes us to languish in a state

of despair and desolation. A busy life doesn't always mean a life that is comfortable with itself or at peace with the world, Name, fame and success get us notoriety, access and material comforts. But a life well lived is a life lived with peace of mind, without self-doubt, and in harmony with one's inner self. It is a long road getting to our inner sanctum where we are never lonely. It is in this home of our soul that we find the equipoise that doesn't require external validation or connection and that is happily lost in acquainting itself to its own self. It is in this sanctum sanctorum of consciousness that we find freedom from those hankerings and distractions that can make us broken when all seems perfectly functional in our lives on the surface.

Who wants to think of one's conscience



Home is deep inside us, not grounded in geography; rather, it is a connection between mind and soul. If we have that connection working, and are feeding our soul with the nourishment of mindfulness, then we are at home and at peace with self

> and soul-health when the going is good? No one! Troglodytic life and living is nothing like what we see depicted as desirous or sexy on social media or the idiot box. Movies and books that truly help the self never make it to bestseller lists and hardly get oxygen on the stage of hugely celebrated mindless living and ruthless capitalist profiteering. The high one gets when chasing lucrative success is unmatched and puts all other comforts in its shadow where mindfulness is eaten away by

> After we have experienced all the riches and material discoveries of the world, after travels across the planet to beaches, valleys, mountains and plains, after retreats or in the hustle and bustle of human madness, we have to retire to our inner sanctum alone and feel in love with the self and loved back by

the sparkle and shimmer that is souless in-

dulgence and popularity.

the self. Without this self-love and self-appreciation, we are truly alone even when

I learnt the difference between lonely and alone after I started travelling across the US for book tours and cooking demos, for lectures and classes, for appearances and interviews. I was forever on stage. I was seeing the world and the world was seeing me. I was

never alone; I was endlessly lonely. Then one day, my body's total collapse took me to living in India. Living mindfully. I learned to be alone, find value in who I was, appreciate my body's cues, understand my mind's comfort, feed my soul's fulfillment. More importantly, I realised that I'm just as happy being alone as in the company of

I found myself more of myself, reflective, smiling with no one around me at all, singing to myself, writing to free my mind, dancing all alone. I realised I had come home to myself, to my inner sanctum. I had made peace with my body, within my spiritual home, my inner sanctum.

Home is deep inside us, not grounded in geography. Rather, it is a connection between the mind and the soul. If we have that connection working and are feeding our soul with the nourishment of mindfulness, then we are at home and at peace with self, and at peace wherever we are.

So many of us are so lost in the material that we are unaware of the needs of our own mind and soul. We are so lost in the bodily and physical, that we could be living lavishly, eating opulently, travelling like kings and dressing like fashionistas and yet have vacant, homeless eyes and broken hearts and restless minds. It doesn't have to

be this way. When the circuitry between our brain and our soul works, it is then that we live with a social-emotional connect that is at once purposeful and fulfilling. When mindfully happy and satisfied, we feel at home wherever we are, and even when all alone.

We come into this world alone, and it is alone that we leave it. The sooner we appreciate this fact, the sooner we can start making a more meaningful contribution to the world, and also be in harmony with self.

Solidarity in a Polarised World

How we can create spaces for discussing transgressions, weave in accountability and work towards a collective transformation



For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: How do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?

bell hooks, Black feminist writer



BY SHELJA SEN

O LADKI izzat layak hoti he, hum uski izzat karte hein. Jo izzat layak na ho, uski hum izzat nahi karte," (We respect a girl who deserves it and not the ones who don't). I turned around and saw a schoolboy, possibly 15 years of age, shouting out these words to a young girl running by in shorts and a T-shirt. The girl immediately slowed down and started walking self-consciously, head bent down, and the boy surrounded by his friends began laughing, back-slapping with "Bilkul bilkul!"

Fast forward to another time in the same park, where I see two young women, full of glee and laughter, playing badminton in hijabs. Suddenly, a crowd of boys, possibly 13 to 15 years of age, jostle their way through as they return home from evening school. They come close to the girls, snigger and point fingers at them. The girls immediately wrap up their play and scuttle away, leaving the boys to do a victory dance - thumping their chests, stamping on the ground, arms stretched out with loud chortling. What struck me as ironic is that they were wearing school uniforms - whitecollared shirts, ties, trousers — and making fun of young women playing badminton in hijabs, a garment that is very much part of our country's history and cultural traditions. They were also oblivious to the colonial references of their own attire.

These incidents of intersectional transgressions have made me question: What are the different scenarios that could have played out?

I could have dismissed these antics as "boys will be boys," the misogyny or Islamophobia might have become invisible and the injustice of it completely obscured. I could have taken to shouting and shaming the boys or even lectured the girls on feminism and how we have to stand our ground, shoving the responsibility of resistance on to them. I could have walked to the neighbourhood school, reported to the authorities, where the boys would have been duly punished, starting another cycle of oppression. Would any of these have helped at all? Not really, as they might have got chastised, but in many ways, I might have worsened the situation for the girls, when the jeers and abuses would be even louder and more vengeful the next time. The only person who might have ended up feeling good about it is me as I would march home after taking a moral grandstand.

Talking about metaphors, this daily play of power in the park is a reflection of what is happening on social media. At every hint of a transgression, there is a knee-jerk outrage, and the wrongdoers are drummed out for public humiliation. Lines are drawn in the sand, sides taken and pushed to polarised positions. Issues that are so nuanced and complex are presented in binaries of black and white. We locate the problem in individuals rather than see it as a reflection of a society that is steeped in gender inequality, casteism, Islamophobia and violence. Shaming might make us feel good about ourselves, but what does it do to dismantle generations of oppression?

FEMINIST ETHICS IS A PRIVILEGE AND NOT A **BADGE OF HONOUR**

The schoolboys I ran into at the park have grown up in a society where a girl's worth and layakness is measured in terms of culturally sanctioned, stringent ideas of clothing, body language, or religion, where every girl is sorted into good/bad, layak/na-layak boxes, and the boys stuck in a maze of cultural clichés of narrow masculinity. If you take that lens, then their actions in the park make perfect sense. Rather than judging them, it becomes my responsibility not to shame them but to ask myself, what am I doing to perpetuate this injustice? If I am committed to feminist ethics and social justice, does it give me the right to automatically rubbish people who might not have had that privilege? How can I meet them in a way that does not lead to polarisation and further entrenchment?

Danger of virtue SIGNALLING

So what am I saying here? Sab chalta hai? Not at all. This is not about obscuring issues of social justice but about reflecting on how the typical virtue signalling in social media – "I am right and you are wrong," is very much like the victory dance of the schoolboys in the park. It ends up othering the problem as if it is out there and we do not have anything to do with it. There is no "us" and "them" here. We all carry scarred memories of the boys' similar metaphorical chest-thumping on Instagram in May 2020 (the Bois Locker Room controversy), which led to such a massive public outrage and, ultimately, tragedy.

Who did this social media lynching really help? Did it enable in restoring justice or just sow seeds of intense shame with virtue signalling in the guise of social justice — instant high, minimal healing, maximum damage.

GENDER POLITICS AND **ACTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY**

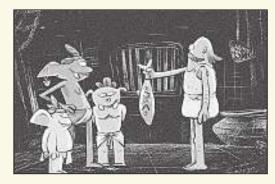
The social justice movement can move forward when we instate gender and active accountability at the core of school and college curriculum. There was an incident in a school when some Class IX girls took a stand on how the boys in the class commented on their bodies. The wise teacher decided to bring the conversation to the class circle time and built a safe space for girls to talk openly about the humiliation they had to face every day. The teacher later shared with me that what was remarkable was that despite the intensity and pain, there was no blame, and the boys apologised. Together, they started talking about what they could do to make the class a safer and more respectful space for the girls and what steps could be taken if $there \,was\,a\,transgression.\,This\,conversation$ created ripples of resistance as the girls were called to speak in the school assembly, and other classes started having conversations on gender politics and diversity, too.

What if this could happen throughout their school life rather than just a one-off class – where issues of gender, sexuality, consent, disability, body types, caste, religion could be discussed in safe spaces without judgement or shaming? How will it be to inform our young people to question power and patriarchy? How would it make this world a safer place for all? How would it enable us to make spaces for discussing wrongdoings, weave in active accountability and solidarity?

I resonate deeply with these words by bell hooks, the Black feminist writer, "For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: how do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?"

Shelja Sen is a narrative therapist, writer, co-founder, Children First. In this column, she curates the know-how of the children and the vouth she works with. She can be reached at shelja.sen@childrenfirstindia.com

Eenam-pechi in your Backyard



TALL TALES

A still from the animation Kandittund!

A Malayalam animation film presents a glimpse into characters who populate the afterlife

Shiny Varghese

FYOU haven't seen it, do. Kandittund! (Seen It!) by Mumbai-based Studio Eeksaurus is a Malayalam short film that has leaped over fences that caged animation in India, given us a personality-driven script that allows our imagination to climb outside the box and bursts the myth that without distribution channels, animation cannot be successful.

Kandittund! is inspired by the stories of 89-year-old PNK Panicker, who is sure that ghosts and ghouls surround us and claims to have seen them. He is introduced in the animation by his son, Suresh Eriyat, also the creative director of Studio Eeksaurus, as a "jolly, good fellow" who enjoys watching films and conjuring stories from what he sees on screen and retains from folklore.

We meet characters from the afterworld popular in the Kerala landscape — Eenam-pechi (a pangolin), who traps pregnant women; Aana Marutha, who wears iron chains as anklets and is a pretty harmless one-and-a-halffoot elephant creature; Arukola floats like a faceless shadow, while the six-foot tall Thendan is a deity, whom Panicker has only met once. There's the all-too-familiar Kuttichaathan, too, whom you can call upon to nip your enemies' happiness in the bud.

"I did the video recording on my phone camera four years ago, and wanted to turn it into a film, with real footage of my father and animation in the narration of the ghosts. But it didn't shape up. Adithi joined us two years ago. When she made my father's sketches, it was spoton," says Eriyat, "The film loosely follows a documentary style. Many of these characters are known entities but here they have been reimagined visually.

The film by Adithi Krishnadas is the 24-year-old's ambition of bringing together her childhood love for cartoons and the craziness of Malayalam films. "For me, everything about Kandittund! was challenging, but that's what made it fun! For instance, for some of the scenes, I had to enact the actions before a mirror to see how the body moved and then put it back into animation," says Krishnadas, about the film that took nearly 18 months to complete.

While its black-and-white format was a radical decision, Krishnadas has done a fine job of balancing dialogues with 2D animation, says Eriyat. The film is an ode to his father, which comes with an endearing quality of story telling and a peculiar piquant humour. Krishnadas says, "When Panicker talks about the monsters, it's as if they are actually there. You see him surreptitiously watching the ghost behind a bush, for instance.'

What also draws the viewer in is the music. With award-winning sound designer-editor Resul Pookutty and Vijayakumar on board, Eriyat and the team got live chenda melam (drum beat) recordings done in Thrippinithura (Kochi). They found Nandhu Kartha, who gave the film its original background score.

For more than two decades, Eriyat's studio has been winning awards for its ad films and animation, centered on local stories with a universal appeal. *Kandittund!* has already won over six international awards, including Japan's Satoshi Kon Award for excellence in animation.

A River Runs Through It

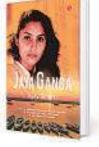
Paris-based Indian writer-filmmaker Vijay Singh on his three-decade-old first novel's recently released Hindi translation

Tanushree Ghosh

THIS NUMBER Does Not Exist, yeh number maujood nahin hai. The lines between Mangalesh Dabral's verse and reality blurred for Paris-based Indian writer-filmmaker Vijay Singh last year, around this time, when the Hindi poet was claimed by COVID-19. Having never met the poettranslator - who had translated poets/writers such as Pablo Neruda, Zbigniew Herbert, Bertolt Brecht and Arundhati Roy (The Ministry of Utmost Happiness/Apaar Khushi ka Gharana) - for Singh, 69, Dabral will remain only a telephone voice. One with whom he had deliberated on love, life,

death, poetry, music, rivers, mountains. Thirty-six years since Singh's debut French novel Jaya Ganga: le Gange et son Double (1985), reprints/translations (Jaya Ganga: In Search of the River Goddess, 1989), and a Hindi film (Smriti Mishra-starrer Jaya Ganga, 1996; available on Cinemasofindia.com), comes its first Hindi edition (by Rajkamal Prakashan) and an English reprint (Rupa Publications), released recently.

In the early 1980s, Singh, a PhD student at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, wrote a fact-cum-fiction article on the caste-class intersectionality of modern Indian society and polity, which was published in the French daily *Le Monde*. That landed him a book deal with Editions





With Ganga as a narrative thread and metaphor, Vijay Singh marries spirituality with surrealism

Ramsay publishers, to sketch a portrait of India, to be released at the 1985 Festival of India, an event that showcase the country's rich and diverse culture. An inexplicable fascination for the writings of the surrealism master André Breton (especially Nadja, 1928), and his exposition of "sensuality... love, chance encounters", had taken the Jawaharlal Nehru University history student

to Paris, where, he met Breton's artistwriter wife Elisa, and, through her, the intellectual crème de la crème.

The book commission prompted Singh to embark on a Ganga yatra, from Gomukh (Uttarakhand) to Gangasagar (Bay of Bengal), a pilgrimage-cum-romanticodyssey, albeit without forethought. "Till today, there's no proper navigation till Allahabad (Prayagraj)," says Singh, who'd changed 200 boats, and travelled by Jeep, over six months.

There was no directional help at hand. "No sadhu, no guru I met had done this journey," he says, "The book kind of ends in Benares; my journey from there on was less difficult. Ganga has been very kind

The journey "showed (him) the Hindu underbelly the Western rationalist had consigned to the dustbin of history".

Among other things, he met people who couldn't pay Rs 150 to cremate the dead, so they tied it to a stone, and when the river receded, the bodies surfaced, and the dogs attacked – it isn't just a post-COVID reality.

With Ganga as a narrative thread and metaphor, Singh marries spirituality with surrealism. Fiction and poetry meets memory, travelogue, reportage, letter, history. Jaya Ganga, an instance of automatic writing, is an "empirically, realistically verifiable fictional search," he says.

The story follows the semi-autobio-



SOUL SEARCH Vijay Singh; his book covers

graphical young Paris-based writer Nishant who, haunted by Jaya's memory (part-real, part-fantasy), undertakes a journey along the Ganga, and plans to write a book on it. On the river banks, he meets Zehra, a poetess/nautch girl, falls in love, rescues her from the brothel, instils hope of a better future

together. Nishant is a soul in limbo, torn between the past and the present, ephemerality and physicality. The elusive Jaya is the Bretonian "convulsive beauty" (like Nadja), in whose quest lies the author's search for self-identity.

Jaya Ganga, the book, carries backstories, intertextuality, and inadvertent humour, like a tea-shop conversation, where people authoritatively declare an atom bomb has killed thousands in Bhopal, a reference to the 1984 gas tragedy.

Dabral, a man of simple words, was alienated by some of the "baroque-like", "flowery prose" in Jaya Ganga. "Double adjectives", which work in English, "become a catastrophe in Hindi and French," says Singh, whose preference for reported speech met Dabral's emphasis on the dialogue format.

 $Dabral\,also\,steered\,away\,from\,using\,Urdu$ words (rihaish/residency, shaista/civilised), which were used in the film. "He bequeathed the language back to the actors of history, whom I had distorted by writing in English and French," says Singh.

Dabral, whose poetry includes untranslatable English words, was not a linguistic puritan. In Jaya Ganga, the untranslatable lines were either deleted or, the pathniye (readable) ones, reimagined. For instance, in Nishant's letter, Dabral turned "You are the miracle by which leaves change colours/The magic by which Ganga wears her sparrow-veil" into "Pattiyon ke rang badalta chamatkar ho tum/Aik sammohan apsara ka devavtar ho tum".

After Dabral's immaculate rendering, Singh wants to get his Whirlpool of Shadows 1992) translated into Hindi. "Among all my books, this (Jaya Ganga's Hindi edition) is the first one which is the closest to the French edition.'

SPORTLINE

Hors de combat

Issues of inclusivity, cruelty to animals may soon result in riding being left out of Modern Pentathlon

SHIVANI NAIK NOVEMBER 27

THE VERY premise of horses in a warzone -an ode to which was the modern pentathlon combining show-jumping with swimming, fencing, shooting and running -- has been archaic. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who patched together this bespoke Olympic sport, was himself giving in to romantic martial nostalgia of knights fleeing enemies. What started as a throwback in the first place is fast fading in sepia too.

The disbanding of ancient cavalries led to military dressage and show-jumping finding their way into international sport, on neatly raked sand. Even that was 109 years ago, when the Swedes at the Stockholm Games aggravated the Baron's annoyance by asking everyone to 'bring your own horse' (BYOH). But the horse question has been ticklish for a few decades now in its century-old history, with the sport's governing body, the International Modern Pentathlon Union (UIPM), having set up an Innovation Commission around the Rio Games to contemplate what could be done about the horses.

While the Innovation Commission was innovating, a German coach struck a glum horse, who felt more neigh than aye and refused to jump for his rider at the Tokyo Games. The short clip of the cruel hit on Saint Boy, seen by the greater world, precipitated an internal decision in UIPM to drop riding from the sport. If the buzz inside UIPM is to be believed, the decision had been inevitable. with the only question remaining on which sport would replace riding.

Forty-six top names in pentathlon have since written to IOC to keep the horses in the sport, alleging that removing one of the five disciplines cannot be bulldozed by merely amending the "competition rules" of October 31, but will require deliberations on the 100+ year-old statutes.

They also pleaded to IOC's sense of tradition and history in preserving the fundamentals of the founder's sport. The IOC, meanwhile, has embarked on its path to engage with the youth, and include accessible sports that can hook an evolving trendy demographic.

Even the current set of pentathletes believe that animal welfare needs to be at the core of any reform - forcing a reluctant horse to jump, merely for sport and competition, is too brutish for anyone riding in 2021.

"As the past two decades have proven, we are all ready to adopt changes in the competition rules in order to modernise our sport and make it more possible and accessible," the letter written by the 46, read. "Nevertheless, we are deeply convinced that leaving out rid-



Annika Schleu of Germany broke down at Tokyo Games after she couldn't control her horse to compete in the equestrian portion. Reuters

I'm angry, disappointed and disagree with the idea. They didn't

speak to anyone from the athletes' federation.We knew and agreed that there were problems after Tokyo with the ride, and were ready to propose new ideas to improve the sport."

JOE CHOONG

REIGNING OLYMPIC CHAMPION

ing will not solve any of the common reservations about modern pentathlon. Instead, it will create additional challenges and ruin years of hard work for hundreds of athletes. Our equestrian discipline is a fundamental foundation of our sport - to be the ideal athlete - is to be preserved."

Pentathlon isn't shy to change. A few Olympic cycles ago, it welcomed laser-runs, replacing air-pistol target shooting with 20 hits

or 3-minute-40-second laser load and shoot and 800mx4 cross-country. As such, what used to be a 5-day event, in which fencing went on for 14 hours, became a single-day competition in 1996 and will be crunched into 90 minutes at Paris.

While Olympic hosts themselves had parried away Coubertin's efforts to lug in rowing into the modern pentathlon programme at the outset, an entire team event was packed off, to finally make way for a women's competition.

There had been reports after the Executive Board voted out riding that cycling would be included instead, but the UIPM according to a November 5 report in CNN said that wasn't the case. The newly-introduced sport-climbing was an option, again with an eye on the yuppie demographic that has seen more paintball than cavalries blitzing in.

Joe Choong, the reigning Olympic champion in men's modern pentathlon, started out as a national-level swimmer in Britain, and dabbled in rugby and cross-country for fitness. Riding was the last of the five he learnt, and even suffered a fall when a moody horse threw him off in his first competition. "Riding, I found the hardest to pick. It took some time to realise that you can't be thinking about yourself, but must think of the animal. The reward was in striking that balance with someone else, and it gave me another sense of achievement," Choong tells The Sunday Express.

Talent scouts came calling for pentathlon, since it's rare to find athletes who swim and run, he says. Usually, swimming sets the tone - and fencing and shooting are added, at youth levels. He is miffed with UIPM for unilaterally dropping a fifth of history, while blindsiding those at the centre of the sport athletes. "I'm angry, disappointed and disagree with the idea. They didn't speak to anyone from the athletes' federation. We knew and agreed that there were problems after Tokyo with the ride, and were ready to propose new ideas to improve the sport.'

The Olympic gold medallist from Bromley watched most of the women's event and was heartbroken to watch it unfold, also with rising anxiety at what this implied.

"It was not nice to watch, very difficult for both the horse and the athlete," he recalls, adding the height of jumping fences has been a persistent problem, with Tokyo only erupting after years of neglect from the federation.

"It's been happening for more than 10 years or more. In fact, if you speak to athletes even from Sydney and Athens (Olympics), they'll tell you the same issues persist with the ride," Choong says. The nuance - though a big blight it casts - is in the height of the jumps, a newly-acquainted horse is expected to jump with an unfamiliar rider, after just 20 minutes

"Even at the Pan Am Games, horses used

to jumping 90 cm or unschooled in showjumping are asked to go over 120. That's always a disaster. Twenty-minute preps and then a 120 cm jump is not at all easy. Changing the height to 1 metre might be the simple solution," he says.

Choong, however, doesn't think bringing one's own horse is the solution. "No, history says that you have to establish a bond with an unknown animal. I see the ability to form a bond with an animal as technical. Horses bring diversity to our sport and link up the tale of the cavalryman. At the heart of Coubertin's thinking was history - find the first horse you can stolen from the enemy, not your horse. You meet them just minutes before, strike the bond and live the image of the cavalry soldier. Also, if you ask everyone to bring their own horse, that'll make it elitist and limit accessibility to newer countries," he stresses.

Costly affair

Thirty-six riders share 18 horses at the Olympics. Pentathlon can get expensive. And for two medals, the investment, which can run up to 1.5 crore INR a year in training, is wildly exorbitant. To master the 12 hurdles can cost one 25 lakh INR at a riding school in Egypt.

Other issues with governance in the sport include smaller tournaments, which make do with a tetrathlon, omitting riding up to the semifinals. "Then you hope you get a really good horse. But that sends the wrong message out that you are only concerned about four participants," he says. It effectively deprives the rest of the field of what can go awfully wrong at the Olympics: a sullen equine, refusing to jump.

It is expected that beyond the dozen nations, the European traditional powerhouses and Australia, others will vote out riding, hoping to make the sport as compact and relevant as possible. Minus the ride, newer nations might well benefit, while medal gluttons US and China tend to accept rules and get on with sharpening those skills. Pentathletes worry that the sword hangs over fencing next.

Choong's younger brother Henry, 15, is entering the sport under this cloud of uncertainty, and while he himself straddled both the pellets (2-3 years) and laser years - finding laser easier because of the smaller recoil - he says animal welfare needed to be at the heart of riding.

"There are many small things. Tokyo temperatures were 35 degrees, you need to feed water to them because they got thirsty. Don't force them to jump if they refuse and are under stress. Make them as comfortable as possible, use as little as possible of whips, spins. It's not just 'get on the horse and finish round'. Not patting it, forgetting to congratulate it is not okay. It needs the well done and the pat," he says.

Chess Worlds: Carlsen blunders as Game 2 ends in a draw

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NOVEMBER 27

MAGNUS CARLSEN and the challenger Ian Nepomniachtchi sat across the board and dissected some of their moves at the end of Game 2 of the World Chess Championship. which finished in a draw after 58 moves. When the microphone was turned up on the official feed, the current two best players in the world were heard asking questions to each other. They were like two toppers who had given in their paper but were far from satisfied with their answers.

Carlsen, in his post-game comments, used the word 'blunder'. Playing with white pieces Carlsen was expected to give the unconventional Nepomniachtchi a hard time but the Russian was up to the task.

'It was tough. I blundered when I allowed knight c5. I think a lot of things could have been done differently. After that I was trying to hang in there not to lose. The position was very interesting and it was going my way for a bit, but I could not really find a plan. He certainly had chances as well," Carlsen said.

The players will now go into the third consecutive day before they have a rest day. The toll the two draws have taken on them could be vital on Sunday. The game on Saturday was not linear and both players had a chance to wrest the initiative. Carlsen admitted as much that knight c5 'completely escaped his attention'. Nepomniachtchi said despite Carlsen 'missing knight c5' he played interesting lines. "It was a puzzling but interesting game," Nepomniachthci said.

The Russian at times played very quickly. Once he made a move, often he quickly got up and left, leaving Magnis alone for long periods. At times, when he made a quick move, Nepomniachtchi stared at the world champion before sipping from his cup.

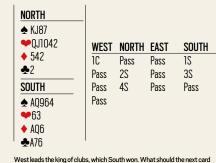
Carlsen, however, said he was unaffected by what Nepomniachtchi did.

"I just reckoned he was thinking in the restroom. So yeah it was obviously unusual but I don't think (it affected me)," Carlsen said in the post game media interaction.

What is clear in the early stages of the competition is that Carlsen is yet to find a way to really rattle Nepomniachtchi. The Russian said he didn't feel any nerves after making the first move in Game 1 on Friday.

Carlsen felt if it was a must-win game he could have played differently but he didn't find a clear window of opportunity in Game 2. "I didn't feel I had any great chances per say. I didn't feel that my position was improving quite a bit. I couldn't really see a way to comfortably improve my position and that is why I decided to basically force a draw here," Carlsen said.

BRIDGE



The West Hand: S-52H-K5D-KJ107C-KQJ104 South should lead a heart. Start setting up heart tricks. It would be horribl

wrong for South to do what many players would do, which is ruff clubs in dummy. South has more to worry about than his club losers. He has to worry about his diamond losers too. West is very likely to have the king of diamonds and if so, South has two potential diamond losers to go with the two heart When South leads his heart West hops up with the king and leads the gueer

ace. So East, who could not respond to 1C, has the ace of hearts. He won't have much more. East's next play is the nine of diamonds. Should South fi-No. South is not interested in finessing. He takes the ace and draws two rounds of trump, which brings in all the missing spades. South now has

of clubs. South ruffs this one and leads the gueen of hearts, taken by East's

eleven tricks and can claim the rest. What happens if South tries to ruff a cub at trick two? If South had furfied a club and come back to his hand to ruff another club it would have cost him his contract. He could no longer set up and use the heart suit (the defenders would remove dummy's last spade entry) and the failing diamond finesse would be fatal.

Dealer: South Vulnerable: North/South

HTIINZ

30

5C

Pass

	NONTH	000111		
	♠ A1074	★ K2		
	∽ AKQ5	→ 764 ◆ KJ ♣ QJ9874		
	♦ 83			
	♣ AK10			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
IILUI		LAUI	00011	
	Dana			

West leads the jack of hearts, won by the ace in dummy. South saw that he had eleven top tricks and wished that he had gotten a diamond lead, which would have spared him having to guess the diamonds. How do you think South should play the diamonds? Should he lead to the king or the jack?

Pass

Pass

Pass

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2349

QUICK CLUES

- Ancient city of the oracle (6)
- Undecided (2,3,3) 10. Singe (4) 11. Wanton or lewd (10)
- 12. Opposite of low (4) Swiss peak (10)
- 17. Sports channel (4) 18. Stock ploy(5) 19. Defeat (4)
- 21. Dedicate formally to divine or holy purposes (10) 23. Is in debt (4)
- 24. Robbing or stealing from? (7,3)
- 28. Extras at cricket (4) 29. Unique(8)
- 30. A group of nine "End Ena" anagram?(6) DOWN
- The science of heredity (8)
- Seizes or arrests (10) Inoffensive (10)
- "Zn" chemically speaking? (4) Render senseless or incapable of
- Of local origin locally (4)
- Liquid substance; alcoholic drink
- 14. Head ornament (5) 15. 132 inches? (6,4)
- 16. Associating on very friendly terms
- 20. Bony (8) 22. Genesis or lineage (6)
- 25. Young attendant (4) 26. ____ and void ? (4) 27. Hideous giant (4)

CRYPTIC CLUES

- ACROSS
 8. Shale I find for my girlfriend (6) 9. I'm taking two articles to a first rate
- copier(8) 10. Cylindrical body has a resting place outside(4)
- 11. Baseball player foolishly fueled riot 12. Said differently when belonging to
- the girl ? (4)

 13. Sadly, no US beer at this southern England resort (10)
- 17. Deal arranged by a Spartan queen
- 18. Tree from New Zealand and New
- Guinea is good for nothing! (5) 19. Nothing in a dry boat (4)

SUDOKU

- 21. It takes the father and mother of a
- mind to produce it!(5-5) 23. Skinny object cut short (4)

- 28. Letters demanding an answer? (4) 29. Town you hear in Bega rim
- roughly! (8)
 30. Extremely clever somewhat in part

expire(8)

- **DOWN**

1. Smart fellow who makes battle-axe

- Indian thus translates into his own language (10)
- 3. I fatten a Pole on ice cream endlessly, the manner being
- worthy of the Corsican (10) Scandal - there hasn't been a clean
- up!(4) Producing a fellow if I get a girl(4)Profitable lack of information in the
- $old \, country (4)$ 7. It's on the fire, even if it's still out of
- 14. Police beat up sadist and throw away key (5)
- Would you get it by tapping a rich vein? (5-5)

 $talk\, of\, cheque\, (8)$

 $16. \ \ Render\,duct\,badly\,when\,not$ dissuaded (10) 20. Put money back in waistcoat after

6

- 24. Money you don't get for nothing? 26. King's rival nearly became Avenger
 - 27. There'll be questions asked if this

22. Ill used or provoked (6)

programme is broadcast

Solutions to 2348 OUICK CLUES Across: 8 Amre, 9

Handicap, 14 Gentry, 16 Lied, 17 Mouse, 18 Begs, 19 Sermon, 21 Business, 23 Tractors, 26 Yorker, 27 Decoration, 28 Prey. Down: 1 Imperative, 2 Rewarded, 3 Critic, 4 YMCA, 5 The hague, 6 Screen, 7 Alti, 13 Plumb, 15 Registered, 17 Manmohan, 18 Bankrupt, 20 Micron, 22 Shying, 24 Reel, 25 Swim.
CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 8 Non-U, 9 Ungrateful, 10 Pliers, 11 Suppress, 12 Polish up, 14 Tawdry, 16 Otis, 17 Flush, 18 Seam, 19 Grocer, 21 Baby boom, 23 Scuttles, 26 Onrush, 27 Brain-child, 28 Ecus. Down: 1 Coal-porter, 2 Sureties, 3 Putsch, 4 Ages, 5 Bad patch, 6 Hebrew, 7 Bugs, 13 Plumb, 15 Reasons out, 17 Forelock, 18

Suborned, 20 Catnip, 22 Blonde, 24 Carp, 25 Slim.

8 5

If it's your Birthday

Sunday November 28

It is time for serious contemplation. You have will work best if you understand the broader pattern. Listen closely to a family member who has some surprising advice.

Monday November 29 There's intensity in the air. Feelings will

well up from the deep, stirring emotions which you had forgotten. A financial choice could trigger a long-term shift in your life.

Tuesday November 30 A shift in solar patterns brings fresh

possibilities and new people. Open your heart to the world, but after you have faced the truth. You may agree with someone who has been standing in your way.

Wednesday December 1

You seem to be able to go almost anywhere you want and do what you wish. The coming year is a time to think about what you might do, not about what you ought to be doing. The sky is the limit.

Thursday December 2 You're almost ready to take a leap into the

future. You are about to reach a point of no return professionally. It all now depends on what you know.

Friday December 3 Be businesslike. Make practical choices.

Fun is based on planning and there'll be time for frivolity, as you have laid the groundwork. Don't worry if a partner is impatient.

Saturday December 4

Venus is forming a relationship with your chart. Expect happy news over the coming month. Those of you entering a new romance will hear declarations of love.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) Your most decisive planets strike at the very summit of your solar chart, challenging you to achieve

your ambitions, using not one something like a hundred and ten percent. If you experience a setback, it's a message to change your direction.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21) You have probably been through enough, but there

are still some choices to be made and decisions to be taken. Your best teacher is the law: that doesn't just mean that you must be guided by what is permissible, but what is morally just and right, especially for partners.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) Underlying certain

superficial concerns like money and joint psychological issues, such as how you cope with an emotional loss and the way you handle separation from

those you love. It's time to

focus on your spiritual self. CANCER (June 22 - July 23) Be prepared for



or even a shock, though by no means an unpleasant one. If you have any say in the matter, arrange to mix with people who are original, lively and interesting. An unusual friend will transform your life over the

next six months. LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)



your passions can run out of control. VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23) There are creative

always remember how easily

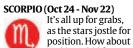
schemes on the go, and if you are sensible you will

divert more energy to exciting new projects, especially personal ones, and less to which you've now outgrown. Romantic matters are ready to

LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

Where there's a will there's a way would seem to be a suitable saying for the moment. Professional affairs are to be afflicted by underlying reason may not be clear. In this, as in romantic

matters, you must wait two weeks for a mystery to



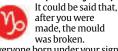
making a bid for increased recognition of your talents? This may mean showing off just a little, and as long as you're not arrogant, other people should respond favourably.

$SAGITTARIUS (Nov\,23-Dec\,22)$



to heart other people's low estimate of your abilities. Please realise that you have fallen into a trap from which you can now

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)



Everyone born under your sign now has the right to be considered a genuine one-off, completely unique. If there's anything to learn at the moment, it's that you have your own destiny to fulfil.

Family members

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

don't always behave as you would like. Partners are challenging you to explain yourself, yet now may not yet be the right time to come out with hidden truths. There still seems to be a chance that the truth, if it

emerges, will be



practical arrangements are required, especially if you want to put your dreams into practice. There is little room for sentiment, and no space at all

JUMBLED WORDS

2NT

4S

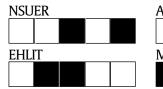
60

Pass

Pass

Pass

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get



Half the ___ is often a great __ - Benjamin Franklin (5,.,3)

AOUWLT **MMSUHU**

Answer: Half the truth is often a great lie - Benjamin Franklin SOLUTION: NURSE, LITHE, OUTLAW, HUMMUS

Difficulty Level 3s To solve a Sudoku puzzle every digit from 1 to 9

must appear in each of the nine vertical columns. in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the

Difficulty Level 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium: 4s = Hard: 5s = Very Hard; 6s =

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

7 2

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4667

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

Michael Vaughan has apologised "for the hurt" that whistleblower Azeem Rafiq experienced but again denied making racist comments while at Yorkshire. In a BBC interview shown Saturday, Vaughan was asked if he ever made any racist comments during his time at Yorkshire. He replied:

BRIEFLY

Sindhu, Satwik-Chirag lose in Indonesia Open semis

Bali: Ace Indian shuttler P V Sindhu's impressive campaign at the Indonesia Open came to an end after she lost her hard-fought semifinal to former world champion Ratchanok Intanon, here on Saturday. Third seed Sindhu, a twotime Olympic medallist, lost 21-15 9-21 14-21 to world number eight and second seeded Ratchanok in 54 minutes for her third semifinal finish on the trot. The 26-year-old Sindhu had made it to the last four in Indonesia Masters last week and also at the French Open in October. World number 11 men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, seeded sixth, lost exited the Super 1000 tournament after a 16-21 18-21 defeat to top seeded Indonesian combination of Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo in the semifinals. It was 10th straight defeat for the Indian pair against the world number one pair, a two-time former All England Open champions and reigning Asian Games gold medallist.

ICC calls off Women's World Cup Qualifier

 ${\it Dubai:} The \, ICC \, on \, Saturday \, called \, off \, an \,$ ongoing qualifier for next year's Women's ODI World Cup in Harare following the emergence of a new COVID-19 variant in the African region, paving the way for Pakistan, West Indies and Bangladesh to make the cut on the basis of rankings. Travel restrictions have been introduced from a number of African countries after detection of the new variant in South Africa stoked fears around the world. The ICC said the decision to stop the event was based on its concerns about how the participating teams would head back in the wake of Omicron variant's rise. The decision was taken during the preliminary league phase of the nine-team tournament, that was to decide the final three qualifiers for the World Cup 2022, to be played in New Zealand, as well as two additional teams for the next cycle of the ICC Women's Championship. "The qualifiers will now be decided according to the team rankings as detailed in the tournament playing conditions. Therefore, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the West Indies will now progress to the event in New Zealand," said the ICC. PTI

Gone in 11 minutes: ATK Mohun Bagan crush SC East Bengal

Fatorda: ATK Mohun Bagan crushed arch-rivals SC East Bengal 3-0 in the of the Indian Super League at Tilak Maidan here on Saturday. In a scintillating display, ATK Mohun Bagan scored through Roy Krishna (12th minute), Manvir Singh (14th) and Liston Colaco (23rd) as they did not allow SCEB the breathing space to make it three out of three in their ISL exchanges. After a quiet start, Fijian star marksman Krishna connected a perfect cross from Pritam Kotal to net the derby's opening goal. Singh was quick to double the strike with a thunderbolt strike within two minutes. Colaco capitalised on a goalkeeping bloomer from Bhattacharja to make it 3-0. PTI

India find Axar-factor

Left-arm spinner's 5 for 62 on Day 3 proves vital in India taking a 49-run first innings lead

SANDIPG

KANPUR, NOVEMBER 27

THERE ARE days where it pays to hold the line, not panic and just wait. If Îndia were fretful on the second day, they poured in an incredible amount of attrition and patience to reclaim the advantage on the third day, bowling out New Zealand for 296, when they looked destined to erase India's first-innings total of 345.

For 66.1 overs and five hours, as New Zealand's openers, Will Young and Tom Latham welded discipline to technique and temperament, thwarting India at every turn, nothing seemed to work or happen.

The strip was tormentingly sluggish, so much so some of the close-in fielders were kneeling and not crouching, edges agonisingly evading the fielders, and reviews were being misjudged. India could have easily wilted, but they laboured on, masking their frustrations, sustaining their energy and sound levels, blocking runs tigerishly, probing tight lines and lengths, barely gifting freebies and shuffling their strategies.

Perhaps, a comeback fashioned in the mould of their new coach Rahul Dravid's ideals. One built on sweat and blood.

Then late in the first session, patience brought its dividends, as Ravi Ashwin terminated Will Young and Umesh Yadav took out Kane Williamson. Then in the second, they bolted the stable door, dislodged the obdurate Tom Latham and skinned through the middle order. At the end of an engrossing, if old-fashioned, day of cricket in the subcontinent, New Zealand, who had begun their innings so promisingly, walked off gloomily, shrugging their heads and pondering how they squandered the advantage, even as India left the field on a pleased note, glowing in the sweat of their toil.

The Test is still on a knife-edge, India's overall lead of 63, is not yet a match-winning proposition. At the heart of India's comeback narrative was Axar Patel, perceivably the most understated of their three-man spin firm. In spite of his mind-spinning entry into Test cricket, he's judged condescendingly, often stereotyped as a conditions-reliant bowler. All of his 27 wickets might have been wrought in extremely beneficial conditions in Chennai and Ahmedabad, against a group of English batsmen allergic to spin as ghosts are to a cross. But here, his five wickets were heckled from a largely unresponsive wicket, where his most decorated partners, Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, laboured 74 overs for three wickets, showing that he could bring a third dimension to India's spin attack.

He is not a Jadeja clone, or an inferior version of him. Rather, he is a different bowler, operating with a different bandwidth of skills, with a different perspective, and someone who is utmost comfortable in his skin. With his height, he wooed more bounce from the wicket, and on a surface with variable bounce, this attribute of him stood out. Though he has a slightly round-arm, he still generates ample bounce. Resultantly, New Zealand batsmen, who were comfortably playing Ashwin and Jadeja on their front foot, were more tentative against him, forcing them to play him a lot on their back-foot and coming out of their comfort zone.

Latham's dismissal was a classic example. He was resolute against most spinners, but the variation of bounce was playing at the back of his mind. So to unsettle him and force him to bowl shorter or fuller—Axar was mostly hitting the spinner's good-length—he stepped out. But the ball sped quicker after pitching, turned in a shade, and took his inside edge to be stumped. Among the three, he turned the ball the least, but he discovered more spite from the wicket than the rest. The lighthouse was brought down, New Zealand lost their di-

rection, even though they did fight till the end. In that sense, he is more early-year Anil Kumble like in his methods, relying on bounce, discipline, over-spin, change of angles and

pace. He might not possess too many eye-popping variations—he skids the ball in, makes it turn away a shade, bowls the hard-spun straighter one-but he knows how to maximise his gifts. There are more subtleties to his game too. He occasionally uses the scrambled seam to check if he gets more bite. He then presses the middle finger harder on the ball at release to get it to go straighter. A few deliveries were under-cut so that the ball skidded on.

Slowing the pace

Some of the other dismissals are equally illustrative of his craft. He slowed up his pace against Ross Taylor, encouraged him to the front-foot and after he conceded a false sense of security, he slipped one faster into him with a bit of inward turn. Taylor played inside the line and edged behind. Had he been on the back-foot, he could have wristed it through the leg-side. Rather than bamboozling batsmen, he dulls them into making mistakes. Taylor's exit put India further on the front-foot.

Henry Nicholls was given a quick working over. A few balls on length stayed low, and Nicholls brought out his sweep, so that he would push the length back. Axar smartly second-guessed the intention, flung one fuller and faster, which Nicholls completely missed and was trapped in front. By this time, he had grown so much on Kiwi batsmen that doubts began to creep up, and they were increasingly and dangerously content at playing him on the back-foot.

With other bowlers, they could trust the bounce, and the turn, as it was slow. But with Axar, they were unsure of how much he would bounce and how much he would not. Tom Blundell realised the folly when he hung back to defend a good-length ball, only to see his stumps splayed by a crawler. He then fooled Tim Southee with his angle from wide of the crease to wrap up his fifth five-for in seven innings, an incredible feat irrespective of conditions. His accomplices, Ashwin and Jadeja did their part too-Ashwin in continuously chatting with him and encouraging him, putting behind his own lack of fortune. Jadeja, though not at his deceptive best, kept his end quiet. Their chemistry was such that irrespective of the nature of the pitch, India could field three in typical subcontinental pitches in the future.

In many ways, Axar was the perfect poster boy of India's third-day resurgence, because he held the line, did not panic and just waited. He out-willed New Zealand's will. He might not turn the ball by much, but could surely turn the destiny of a match.

SCOREBOARD: India 1st Innings: 345 New Zealand 1st Innings: (Overnight 129/0)

Tom Latham st sub (KS Bharat) b Patel 95, Will Young c sub (KS Bharat) b Ashwin 89, Kane Williamson Ibw b Yadav 18, Ross Taylor c sub (KS Bharat) b Patel 11, Henry Nicholls lbw b Patel 2, Tom Blundell b Patel 13, Rachin Ravindra b Jadeja 13, Kyle Jamieson c Patel b Ashwin 23, Tim Southee b Patel 5, William Somerville b Ashwin 6, Ajaz Patel not out 5 Extras: (B-6, LB-4, NB-5, W-1) 16

Total: (all out in 142.3 overs) 296 FoW: 1-151, 2-197, 3-214, 4-218, 5-227, 6-241,

7-258, 8-270, 9-284. Bowling: Ishant Sharma 15-5-35-0, Umesh

Yadav 18-3-50-1, Ravichandran Ashwin 42.3-10-82-3, Ravindra Jadeja 33-10-57-1, Axar Patel 34-6-62-5

India 2nd Innings: 14-1 Mayank Agarwal not out 4, Shubman Gill

b Jamieson 1, Cheteshwar Pujara not out 9 Extras: 0 Total: (1 wkts, 5 Overs)14

FoW: 2-1

Bowling: Tim Southee 2-1-2-0, Kyle Jamieson



Six-hitting Dhoni fan KS Bharat shows his prowess behind stumps

SANDIPG

KANPUR, NOVEMBER 27

AFTER THE first day's play, Srikar Bharat was stretching in the corner of the ground, when a few teenage boys spotted him. "Woh RCB wala hai na? Six maarke match jeeta tha!" (He is the RCB player right? He hit a six and won a game). Bharat's last-ball six against Delhi Capitals a couple of months ago is his instant connect with the fans. They fumbled for his name, before they gave up, though they squealed for a selfie, which a coyly smiling Bharat obliged. They yelled out a parting wish too, "Six maarke match jitwao!" (Hit a six and win the game).

Bharat responded with an all-knowing smile. He wouldn't hit a six in the match; for he was not even in the eleven. He was, yet again, fated to be a nearly man. If Rishabh Pant was not fit for the England series, he would have made his Test debut; if Wriddhman Saha was not fit for this series, or if he had hurt his neck a day before, he would have been play-

But fate, in a twisted way, was kinder to him, as Saha sustained a stiff neck on Friday, giving Bharat his first outing in a Test match, but one that would not statistically count as he played as a substitute keeper. He ended and began the day as it is, someone waiting for his first Test appearance.

But between the end and start of the day, he demonstrated that he has the requisite standard to stake a larger claim in the playing eleven. It was a tough examination on an upand-down wicket, an ordeal for keepers, which he passed with flying colours.

The stumping of New Zealand opener Tom Latham might be his most spectacular moment of the match, wherein his agility of mind and body stood out, but there were several other instances too. The moment Latham jumped down the track, he made that sideward shuffle, his hands following his feet in a



KS Bharat appeals against New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson. AP

harmony of muscles, in anticipation of a stumping. But what happened next was the stuff of nightmares, Latham bottom-edged it, and rather than collecting the ball from leftside, he had to gather from his right in less than a split second. What's worse, the ball dropped on to the ground in an instant. Now he had to realign his eyes from the left down to the ground

But Bharat had the flexibility of mind and speed of reflexes to make complex moments look natural. A lot of keepers would have groped at it, but he didn't. The hands, like a good keeper's, descended with the ball, the upper-body arched just enough, the knees flexed just enough to maintain the balance, as he gathered the ball and whipped the bails off in the blink of an eye.

From where he was standing, it must have emerged into view at the very last second, but he pushed his hands through, moving forward and stumped him with time to spare. There is a bit of MS Dhoni too — his favourite cricketer and whose maiden ODI century he watched as a ball boy on the ground — in his stumping, in the absence of follow-through. Bharat's flourish is not as minimalistic as Dhoni's, but it's relatively less than Saha. Even when picking on the off-side, he doesn't lift his right-leg as pronouncedly as say Nayan Mongia, that keeper-artist.

The impeccable balance when gathering stood out, most gloriously when he pocketed the catch of Will Young, a faint outside edge off a ball that kept low. He doesn't lose his shape and even when the ball seems to have misbehaved, he is there to pick it, like a strict hostel warden with a never-flinching gaze on his in-

A few times, the ball did beat him, espe-

cially on the leg-side, but there is only so much he could have done on this deck, Relatively easier was the Ross Taylor one, or rather he made it look easy. It's what he always does—makes it look ridiculously simple. He often makes the magnificent look mundane, in a positive sense. When lesser-gifted keepers lunge, he just needs to stretch his arms, because he is already in a better position. His stability begins with his stance – he has

his head on the sixth stump to get the proper any further, batsmen would block the sight of the ball, and as good keepers are Bharat's eyes are always fixed on the ball and not the bats-

But for all the verve he displayed in this match, he could end up as a perennial fringe keeper; deputy to Saha as well as Rishabh Pant. Therein is his fix - he is a better keeper than Pant, but not a better batsman (supposedly); he is a better batsman than Saha, but not a better keeper than him. It could turn out to be the story of his career too. Nonetheless, if he could pile on performances like in the chance breaks he gets he could put pressure on both Saha, now 37, and Pant, still unpredictable. He might not win every game with a six, but he can win games with his glove-work. As was evident on

India seniors taking notes and guiding the U-2ls at Jr Hockey Worlds

MIHIR VASAVDA

BHUBANESWAR, NOVEMBER 27

HOURS AFTER their shocking loss to France, some of India's junior players received a link for an e-meeting. Their host was the Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Harmanpreet Singh. Having watched from the stands the team concede five goals against an unheralded opponent, the defender-cum-drag-flicker had prepared a dossier of sorts.

Next door, India captain Manpreet Singh was having a conversation on leadership and tactics with the junior team skipper Vivek These weren't crisis talks. Rather, just a ca-

sual exchange of ideas between veterans who have been there, done that and rookies for whom this is an initiation to international hockey, except Prasad who was in Tokyo as

The relationship between India's senior and junior teams has evolved over the months; from being 'respectful' of the 'seniors', they now idolise the bronze medalists.

Prasad is in awe of the way Manpreet carries the team together. Drag-flicker Sanjay Kumar, who has netted a couple of hat-tricks already, has modelled himself on Harmanpreet. Goalkeepers Pawan and



India started strong and lead by two goals within 10 minutes.

Prashant Chauhan look up to PR Sreejesh and forward Araijeet Singh Hundal is in awe of Akashdeep Singh, who wasn't in Tokyo but remains an integral part of the team.

Now, in Bhubaneswar, the U-21 players' heroes have turned into their analysts and mentors. During every match India's colts have played in this World Cup, the senior team members have sat in the stand behind the goal and dutifully made notes. "It's a learning experience for us too," says

India beat Poland, to face Belgium in QFs

New Delhi: Once they went up by two goals inside 10 minutes, India practically stopped playing. Keeping themselves fresh for the quarterfinals but more importantly, aware that their lasteight opponents were watching from the stands, keeping a close on every move they were making. Yet, India eased past Poland 8-2 to end their group stage commitments, finishing second behind France to whom they lost in the opening match. That defeat means while France will face a relatively-easier opponent, Malaysia, in the quarterfinals, defending champions India will square up against Belgium, whose senior side is currently the best in the world. It'll be an even contest -- a repeat of the 2016 Junior World Cup final -- given that both teams have had wobbles in the group stage.

Manpreet. "We are analysing the games from the stands and after it's over, we are giving the players our feedback."

Returning favour

In a way, it's returning a favour as well. Both, senior and junior, teams had a farfrom-desirable build-up to their respective marquee events of the year. For a major part of the last two years, they were locked inside Sports Authority of India's Southern Centre in Bangalore, staying and training together.

As the Olympics got closer and with the national team barely getting any match practice due to the pandemic-forced travel restrictions, the junior team turned into a simulation machine of sorts for them. During training, the coaches would make the under-21 side line up and play like India's opponents at the Tokyo Games. They even played six matches against each other, and the colts eked out a win in one.

The mentoring process began with that. "Whenever we used to spot something, we spoke to them. If they had any problem, they reached out to us," Harmanpreet says. "They just needed some fine-tuning, not a lot of

After India returned from Tokyo with the bronze, the senior team resources were shifted to the junior side. Chief coach Graham Reid was asked to take over the side and the players started to individually guide their juniors.

Even though both teams are in Bhubaneswar – the senior side preparing for next month's Asian Champions Trophy – they are staying in separate bio-bubbles, which means physical interactions aren't possible. "So, we have been in touch through online meetings," Harmanpreet says

Exchanging ideas

The senior team vice-captain, who was a member of the 2016 Junior World Cup-winning side, has been guiding the defenders and drag-flickers. He spoke to the two freemen the player who floats between his team's defence and midfield – in particular, Sanjay and Yashdeep Siwach.

"Even I play as a freeman so from whatever I observed watching from the stands, I told them. I spoke to them in detail about how they need to stay within the danger lines, aligning with the goalposts, so that they can intercept dangerous balls," Harmanpreet says.

For the senior players, analysing the junior sides from the stands has helped them improve knowledge about their opponents, given that the styles and patterns used by most teams in the World Cup have been very similar to their senior sides. "So, while watching them, we also understand the areas where we can improve," Manpreet, who captained India in the 2013 Junior World Cup, says.

After the team lost to France, the biggest upset of the Junior World Cup so far, Manpreet had an immediate talk with Prasad.

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"That wasn't a time to blame anyone or finger-point. He had to lead the team on the field, make sure the players communicated with each other and showed unity," Manpreet says. They need to believe in themselves.

Manpreet knows. Belief carried the team onto the podium in Tokyo.

And as the colts prepare for the biggest test of their nascent careers, facing Belgium in Wednesday's quarterfinals, they'll know the seniors have their backs.