

DEBATE RAGES

RAHUL REMARK  
CAUSES SPLIT

Some Congress leaders say religion talk is not needed, others feel it's necessary

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# The MORNING STANDARD

A CAPITAL VIEW OF NEWS • NEW DELHI • ₹8.00 • PAGES 12

'US COULD RUN OUT OF CASH BY DEC 15 IF DEBT CAP NOT RAISED'

YELLEN URGES CONGRESS TO ACT FAST

In October, the Congress had passed a \$480 billion increase in the debt limit as a stop-gap measure to avoid a potential default on October 18. Following this, Yellen set December 3 as the next date for a likely default. That date has now been extended to December 15.



Yellen, however, urged Congress to suspend or raise the debt limit further to avoid a default

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Tuesday the federal government could default on its debt on December 15, 2021



DEFAULT WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC

The US has never defaulted on its debt & could derail global economy if it misses a payment. Many foreign governments, financial institutions & investors hold trillions of dollars in US debt issued through Treasury bonds. These could become irredeemable



SC MAKES HARD-HITTING OBSERVATIONS ON POLLUTION

- People sitting in five star and seven (star) facilities in Delhi keep on accusing the farmers... Have you seen their earnings?
- We know it all: gas guzzlers, tractors, hi-fi cars are plying in Delhi on every route. You're saying you'll encourage people to stop it. How will you?... And who will accept?
- Debates on TV are creating more pollution... They don't understand what is happening
- It is apathy and just apathy... The bureaucracy has developed some sort of inertia... How to stop a car, seize a vehicle, how to stop a fire has to be done by this court

## Justice Jain to oversee revamped SIT probe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday appointed former Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Rakesh Kumar Jain to monitor the investigation into the October 3 Lakhimpur Kheri violence in Uttar Pradesh that left eight persons dead, including four farmers and a local journalist.

hail from other states though they are part of the UP cadre, so as to make the investigation impartial.

Shiradkar will head the SIT. He is ADG Intelligence HQ in UP and hails from Nandimur Kheri violence in Uttar Pradesh. The SIT will report to Justice Jain.

Since the earlier SIT predominantly comprised middle/subordinate level police officers posted in Lakhimpur Kheri district, there were concerns about the fairness and independence of its investigation, which was

why it was reconstituted.

The court said its intervention was aimed at guaranteeing an impartial, fair, just and thorough investigation, adding justice must not only be done, but also be seen and perceived to be done. It will hear the case next after a chargesheet is filed.

The decision to appoint Justice Jain to head the judicial commission comes after it had objected to the UP government naming Justice Pradeep Kumar Srivastava, retired Allahabad High Court judge, to

enquire into the violence.

Four farmers were mowed down by an SUV in Lakhimpur Kheri district when a group of farmers agitating against the Centre's three farm sector reform laws was holding a demonstration against the visit of Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya.

Two BJP workers and the SUV's driver were then beaten to death allegedly by the angry protesters. The police have so far arrested 13 accused, including Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra, in connection with the case.

## SC asks Centre & Delhi to not lower pollution guard

Bureaucratic inertia, media speculation come under court criticism

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday refrained from passing any harsh directives on the worsening air pollution in Delhi-NCR for now after the Centre, listing a slew of measures taken to address the issue, assured that the condition would improve after Sunday.

The court, however, made scathing observations against governments, bureaucracy, media and people in general, even as it asked authorities not to lower the guard and slated the next hearing for November 24.

The executive in the country was suffering from a policy paralysis and the court had to step in for bringing down the rising levels of air pollution in Delhi-NCR, a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana observed, as it pulled up the bureaucracy for

dithering over the steps to take to deal with any situation.

"They do not want to take any decision. They want courts to pass orders and they are happy to implement it," the bench said. "It is unfortunate that bureaucracy has come to this pass... The bureaucracy has gone into inertia and they don't want to do anything, like using sprinklers or water buckets... we have to say," the CJI said. "It is apathy and just apathy," added Justice D Y Chandrachud.

"There has to be some responsibility. Not everything can be done through judicial order," the bench noted. It asked the Centre and states to implement in letter and spirit the decisions taken at the emergency meeting held by the Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas.

The Commission had on Tuesday directed closing down of educational institutes and stopping construction activities, among other measures.

The bench also came down heavily on "people sitting in Delhi in five, seven-stars" for criticising farmers for contributing to pollution through stubble burning.

"Have you seen their earning per landholding? How will they afford these machines (for crop residue disposal)?" it asked, while pointing out that the contribution of transportation as a pollution source or firecrackers is ignored.

The bench said that debates on TV channels were creating more pollution. "They don't understand the issue and they say anything they like... They have their own agenda. We are here for a specific purpose. We want to bring down pollution."

## '80% EXHAUST SALARY BEFORE MONTH ENDS'

SAMIKSHA GOEL @ New Delhi

HIGHLIGHTING a financial situation many of us can easily relate to, a recent EY-Refyne survey found that 80% of employees exhaust their salary before the month ends, while 34% run out of money by the middle of the month. And, only 13% are able to save a decent amount from their pay cheques.

"The ever-increasing cost of living, fear of missing out lifestyle spending, poor financial planning and vicious debt cycles are increasingly making it difficult for employees to sustain cash flow during the month with their salaries," said the report titled *Earned Wage Access in India: The final frontier of employee wellbeing*, released on Wednesday.

The survey was based on responses from 3,010 salaried Indians.

The study says only 38% feel in control of their financial wellbeing. Interestingly, financial stress is not restricted to the low-income groups. Around 60% of the respondents earning more than ₹1 lakh a month reported that their monthly pay cheques are inadequate to cover all their expenses.

The report also noted that employees earning less than ₹15,000 per month are six times more likely to fall into the debt-trap than the high-income group employees.

75% say salary not enough

Nearly 75% said they are unable to meet all their expenses with their salary, forcing many of them to look at alternative finance options during emergencies and to cover unplanned expenses

INSIDE ► TRUCKS SANS ESSENTIALS BANNED TILL NOV 21 | SCHOOLS, COLLEGES TO REMAIN SHUT TILL FURTHER ORDERS P4

CM'S ANNOUNCEMENT

## Punjab set to withdraw cases against farmers, increase compensation

HARPREET BAIJWA @ Chandigarh

THE Punjab government has decided to withdraw cases registered against farmers in the farmer stir and upped the compensation for damage to cotton crop to ₹17,000 per acre from ₹12,000. However, the government is silent on the contentious issue of farm loans worth ₹1.25 lakh crore. Nor has it decided the pension amount for old farmers.

Cotton growers are the main recipients of relief declared by Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi. They suffered huge losses due to a pest attack on crops. Farm labourers, too, have benefited from the government largesse. Channi on Wednesday chaired a meeting of representatives of 32 farm unions represented by the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha and led by Punjab BKU (Rajewal Group) chief Balbir Singh Rajewal. Channi said the enhanced compensation would involve nearly ₹200 crore in addition to the already approved ₹416.18 crore. Channi also announced cancellation of all cases registered by the state police against farmers who protested against the Central farm laws within the state. The CM assured SKM representatives he would take up the matter with the Governor, who is also the administrator of Chandigarh, to withdraw cases against those who participated in a protest march towards Raj Bhawan.

"We reminded the CM that his party is yet to honour its promise to waive farm loans amounting to ₹90,000 lakh crore due to arhtiyas, cooperative banks, and commercial banks. The CM has assured us he would call a separate meeting within a week," Rajewal said.

Channi referred to the demand for a loan waiver for small, marginal and landless farmers, saying he would meet their representatives after a detailed briefing by the finance department. He said 5.63 lakh farmers have benefited from the earlier loan waiver amounting to ₹4,610.84 crore. Besides, ₹520 crore have gone to landless farmers and farm workers.



MEETING ON RATES

On compensation to farmers for land acquired for the Delhi-Katra-Amritsar expressway, Channi said he will meet divisional & deputy commissioners to rationalise rates



## PILGRIMAGE BEGINS

Sikh pilgrims take the Kartarpur corridor to visit Darbar Sahib Gurdawara in Pakistan's Narowal, on Wednesday | P11

As the corridor opened after a year and a half, 29 devotees visited Darbar Sahib Gurdwara in Narowal district of Pakistan, paid their obeisance and came back

Punjab Chief Minister Channi will pay obeisance at the Gurdwara on Thursday, while state Congress president Sidhu will also be visiting the shrine later

Some of those who wanted to visit the Gurdwara on Wednesday were stopped at the border for not carrying negative RT-PCR reports

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS BY SEX & GRADE

Std	2018		2020		2021	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Std I-II	57.9	65.1	61.1	66.7	72.0	74.1
Std III-V	62.7	71.2	65.6	73.3	70.9	77.1
Std VI-VIII	65.8	73.3	68.3	77.0	73.4	79.2
Std IX & above	64.6	68.9	69.7	72.7	71.2	74.3
All	62.8	70.0	66.4	73.0	71.9	76.5

## Rural India records high enrolment in govt schools during Covid

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

WHILE more students got enrolled in government schools between 2018 and 2021, there also was a big jump in children taking private tuition, the latest Annual Status of Education Report revealed.

The ASER is a citizen-led household survey by NGO Pratham that provides nationally representative estimates of children's schooling status and their foundational reading and arithmetic skills. Findings from its latest edition throw crucial insights on the Covid pandemic's impact on education.

The survey was conducted in 25 states and three UTs covering 75,234 children in the 5-16 year age group.

In rural India, the proportion of students in government schools went up from 64.3% in 2018 to 70.3% in 2021 (see table). The rise was across all grades.

"Incidence of private schooling in India has been rising... from 2006 to 2014... After plateauing around 30% for a few years, there has been a significant decline in the pandemic years," it noted.

Besides, close to 40% are now dependent on private tuitions as against to about 30% in 2018.

Significantly, the largest section of children taking tuition is from the most disadvantaged households.

"Taking parental education as a proxy for economic status, between 2018 and 2021, the proportion of children with parents in the 'low' education category who are taking tuition increased by 12.6 percentage points, as opposed to a 7.2 percentage point increase among children with parents in the 'high' education category," the report said. The highest number of kids taking private tuitions are in Bengal — 76.5% — followed by Bihar at 73.5%.

NATIONWIDE	NOV 16	NOV 17
	Fresh cases	8,865
Recoveries	11,971	12,134
Deaths	197	301



JAB-O-METER TAKE YOUR SHOT

November 16  
61,21,626 doses  
November 17  
65,73,687 doses  
TOTAL DOSES  
114,37,61,698

WORSHIP WORTHY

## Muslim farmer donates land for Kali temple in Bengal

PRANAB MONDAL @ Kolkata

SIX months after West Bengal witnessed high-octane Assembly polls highlighted by a communal divide, a poor Muslim farmer has donated a portion of his land to construct a Kali temple in Nadia district.

The village of Bhimpur has 450-odd families, of which 150 are Muslims. The village is located next to a fencing of the Indo-Bangla border. Hindu villagers use a vacant plot beside the border road for Kali Puja, but they need to seek permission from BSP every year.

This year, BSP was not initially ready to give permission which touched Hannan Mondal

and he decided to solve the issue permanently. The small farmer donated a portion of his land to villagers to construct a permanent Kali temple.

Ahead of the Assembly polls, the district was in the list of BJP's bigwigs, as it is dominated by Matuas, a Hindu religious sect that migrated from Bangladesh. During the poll campaign, BJP leaders tried to woo the Hindu refugee electorate by talking about alleged atrocities by Muslims in Bangladesh while explaining why Matuas had to migrate from the country during Partition.

"This is the real colour of India. Bengal has always been famous for its communal harmo-



Fitting reply to polarisation attempts, say villagers

Earlier this year before Assembly elections in West Bengal, there were attempts to divide voters along religious lines. Villagers of Bhimpur where the Muslim farmer has donated land for the Kali temple, say that this incident shows such tactics will not work in the state.

ny and communal discord has no place here. We all are grateful to Hannan for setting up an example of brotherhood," said Bimal Sarkar, president of the Kali Puja committee.

Hanna donated a piece of land measuring up to around 460 square feet to the committee. "Every year, villagers used to be concerned about BSP's green signal to organise the Puja. I never thought that the Puja would not be held because

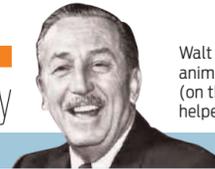
of this land problem. I decided to donate the plot so that a permanent temple can be constructed there, where Kali Puja will be organised every year," said Hannan.

Welcoming Hannan's decision, Hindu villagers of Bhimpur said that the political parties, who are trying to play the religious card to bag votes earlier this year, should take a lesson from this gesture of a poor man. "We witnessed a never-seen-before attempt to polarise the voters on the line of religion ahead of the Assembly polls. Butr Hannan's sacrifice makes it clear that such line of politics will not work in Bengal," said a villager.

## LAW IN PAK FOR JADHAV TO FILE REVIEW

Parliament follows International Court of Justice directive. Retired Navy officer sentenced to death can challenge conviction in a higher court | P7





Walt Disney released *Steamboat Willie*, the first animated film with sound to feature Mickey Mouse (on this day in 1928). The huge success of the cartoon helped make Mickey an iconic character.



# FLUTTER FILES

According to a recent study, 71 new butterfly species have now taken refuge in the city

DYUTI ROY

**I**n a concrete jungle such as Delhi, biodiversity parks—an amalgamation of different ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, and grasslands—are constructed to aid in conserving the fauna in urban spaces. The Capital is teeming with diverse species of birds and insects that need to be documented in order to conserve them. Keeping this in mind, the Biodiversity Parks Programme (BPP) of Delhi Development Authority (DDA) often conducts studies so as to document the insect faunas, especially the butterflies, in the city. Prominent members of the insect diversity—it makes up more than 50 per cent of the global biodiversity—butterflies provide major service to the ecosystem by being primary pollinators to plants.

## A STUDY TO CONSERVE WINGED WONDERS

A recent field study—it was conducted by the DDA Biodiversity Parks of Delhi—to assess the butterfly biodiversity in the city, identified 71 species of butterflies. This week-long exercise was conducted in the seven Biodiversity Parks of the city—Yamuna, Aravalli, Tilpath Valley, Northern Ridge (Kamla Nehru Ridge), Neela Hauz, Tughlaqabad, and Kalindi. Led by the scientists of the DDA Biodiversity Parks, a number of volunteers joined to observe these butterflies between October 25 and 30. In groups of two to five, they conducted 15 nature trails, varying from 500m to 2km, every day from 10am to noon. A similar study will be conducted in around March next year to study the butterfly species migrating to the Capital during spring.

## CHRONICLING THESE COLOURFUL INSECTS

Of the 71 species, the most distinguished species include:

- Parnara spp or the Parnara Swift
- Borbo bevani or the Bevan's Swift
- Hypolimnas bolina or the Great Egfly
- Appias albina or the Common Albatross
- Leptosia nina or the Psyche

The study showed that the Psyche, a shy white butterfly, which is usually difficult to spot, has a strikingly high population at Northern Ridge Biodiversity Park. Moreover, the Bevan's Swift, which was recorded for the first time in the Capital, is found in both the Yamuna Biodiversity Park (YBP) as well as in Aravalli Biodiversity Park.

## A HAPPY REVELATION FOR NATURE LOVERS

Mohammad Faisal, an entomologist at YBP, says, "When we first started working in YBP in 2002, there were only three butterfly species in the city. Now, in just six days [during the study] we recorded around 65 species [in YBP]." This study thus comes as a happy revelation of the steady increase in the number and density of butterflies in Delhi. Aisha Sultana, a wildlife ecologist who is part of the BPP, mentions that this is just the beginning of the conservation of the insect fauna. Along with biodiversity parks, she insists that citizens should also be equal facilitators in the process. "The host plants for butterflies are usually native and local plants; these are mostly considered as weeds and are often uprooted from gardens," she says. Reducing the use of pesticides and not grooming green spaces is very important. "Collect native plants and let them grow wild. That is the best way to create an insect habitat," she concludes.



(1) *Catopsilia pomona* or the Common Emigrant; (2) *Danaus genutia* or the Striped Tiger; (3) Mud puddling of Butterflies; (4) *Eurema hecabe* or the Common Grass Yellow; (5) *Argynnis hyperbius* or the Indian Fritillary; (6) *Leptosia nina* or the Psyche

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AISHA SULTANA, wildlife ecologist, BPP

When we first started working in YBP in 2002, there were only three butterfly species in the city. Now, in only six days [during the study] we recorded around 65 species [in YBP].

MOHAMMAD FAISAL, entomologist, YBP



I try, as far as possible, to use words that are appropriate to convey the idea that I wish to convey and, at the same time, are understood by a majority of readers.

SHASHI THAROOR

Shashi Tharoor and David Davidar (right)

## 'You cannot reach people effectively if you are not understood'

ANJANI CHADHA

WITH a career sprawling over four decades, Indian politician and writer Shashi Tharoor has penned a number of books on diverse themes. Promising yet another page-turner, Tharoor released *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry* on Wednesday. The book launch, organised by Prabha Khaitan Foundation, took place at ITC Maurya, New Delhi, wherein Tharoor was in conversation with Indian novelist and publisher David Davidar. The launch took place as a part of the foundation's initiative 'Kitaab' that seeks to celebrate the birth of a book. The initiative attempts to organise book launches in order to provide a stage to writers that can help them showcase

their works of literature before a discerning audience. Published by Aleph Book Company, this book is considered to be Tharoor's magnum opus—a comprehensive compilation of his literary work, including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry pieces as well as a few of his unpublished writings—thereby giving readers an insight into his life and intellect. The hour-long conversation touched upon an array of events from his life along with his writing process. It was followed by questions posed by the audience. "This book includes a tasting of my different kinds of writing. By reading this book from cover to cover, one can decide which ones you want to read properly," said

Tharoor when asked about the favourite book he has written till date. Talking about his views on writing, Tharoor said, "You really need to be able to reach people, and you cannot reach people effectively if you are not understood. So I try, as far as possible, to use words that are appropriate to convey the idea that I wish to convey and, at the same time, are understood by a majority of readers." *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry* also contains a few poems that Tharoor has penned in the memory of his late wife Sunanda Pushkar. Though melancholic, the mellifluous style in which Tharoor delivered the poetry resonated thoroughly with the audience.

FARAH KHATOON

WHEN IT COMES to taking care of her lustrous mane, 'Param Sundari' Bollywood actor Kriti Sanon is very particular. The *Hum Do Humare Do* actor swears by natural products and is obsessed with avocados at the moment. She believes in maintaining a healthy lifestyle for her overall well-being and loves experimenting with her hairstyles. We find out more about her hair-care regimen as she becomes the brand ambassador of Naturali, a personal care brand. Excerpts:

Since your hair undergoes a lot of chemicals and treatments, what is your hair-care regimen like?

I like to keep things simple and use a shampoo and a conditioner that's free from harmful chemicals. Sulphates and parabens can make your hair dry and dull so it is important to pick a shampoo-conditioner that has natural ingredients in it. Moringa oil and avocado not only reverse damage caused

## MANE MATTERS

Actor Kriti Sanon decodes her hair care secrets that include experimenting with colour and home remedies



Kriti Sanon

by constant styling but also help moisturise the scalp and restore shine. I also indulge in regular deep conditioning at home and hair spa treatments.

Are there any homemade remedies that you swear by?

I enjoy DIYs but I won't lie that it gets quite messy and is also time-consuming. Instead, I am always on the lookout for products that are infused with natural ingredients such as avocado, red onion, green tea etc. I am currently obsessing over avocado, it is a superfood that does wonders, not just for hair but also the skin!

For the film *Mimi*, you gained weight and then got back into shape. This sudden weight loss and gain also causes stress on the hair.

How do you deal with it? Fortunately, I did not see any direct impact on my hair. I ensured I was maintaining a healthy lifestyle even through the weight-gain process and used the right products that are good for my hair and deliver quick results.

Is there any diet that you specifically follow for healthy hair?

Eat protein-rich food, add greens to your diet, don't skip your daily dose of vitamins and most importantly, maintain a balanced lifestyle. Avocado is something that I have integrated into my life quite religiously—it not only moisturises the hair but also repairs and strengthens your tresses. You'll see the difference almost immediately.

Do you like experimenting with your hair or like to keep it natural?

I love to wear my hair naturally on the go. I do experiment with my colour and opt for hair accessories to jazz up a look. I always keep cloth headbands handy.

Beauty essentials in your bag? Concealer, lip tint, and a peachy nude simple lipstick.

Which Bollywood or Hollywood star's hairstyle do you like?

I love JLo's sense of style and the way she keeps experimenting. I love Dakota Johnson and Blake Lively's casual hairstyles as well as Zendaya's hair game!

## Aiming for a toxic-free future

ANJANI CHADHA

DELHI'S air quality continues to deteriorate with every passing day. Though a long-standing issue in the Capital, it is dismal to see that most contentions about air pollution take place by putting the privileged sections at the forefront. Even though it has been widely confirmed that air pollution affects certain groups more severely than others, we rarely see a discourse surrounding the same. "When we talk about air pollution, we talk little about its exposure to the poor. The impact of pollution is much higher especially on poor women and poor children, because of higher exposures and lesser capacity to deal with the exposure," explains Ravi Agarwal, founder and director of Toxics Link, an environmental NGO in Jangpura. Working since 1997—the organisation was registered in 1998—Toxics Link seeks to address issues pertaining to waste management and chemical use. They focus on toxicity, an omnipresent concern, and its underlying nuances.

## Bringing key issues to light

Toxics Link has been one of the first organisations to draw attention to issues surrounding waste—biomedical, plastic, hazardous, electronic—among others. Research conducted by them has also been taken up by the government for policy making. The

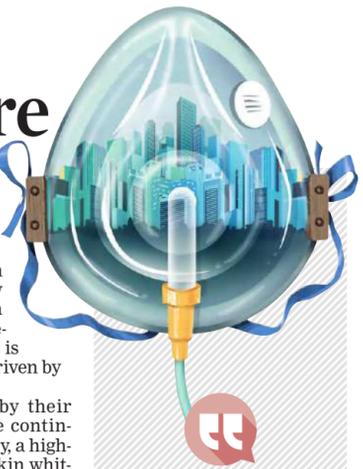
organisation works with state and central governments across domains such as utilising community outreach and education, policy analysis, research and programme development. The idea is to create solutions driven by people's needs.

A recent report by their team confirmed the continued usage of mercury, a highly toxic element in skin whitening creams, thereby revealing the monitoring gaps existing at varied levels.

## A never-ending fight

Among the many campaigns they are spearheading, a considerable amount of their work focuses on 'Persistent Organic Pollutants', which are "chemicals that are extremely hazardous, and are required to be eliminated by all countries," explains Satish Sinha, associate director, Toxics Link. "We recently did a survey in Ganga and tested its water at three places—Varanasi, Haridwar, and Kanpur. The report revealed that plastic pollution level in the river was high," he adds.

They also conduct an annual film festival in order to strengthen public discourse. This event brings forward a series of hand-picked films that deal with critical environmental issues and have a scope to educate their audience with its visual appeal.



When we talk about air pollution, we talk little about its major impact on poor women and poor children because of higher exposures and lesser capacity to deal with the exposure.

RAVI AGARWAL, founder, Toxics Link



We recently did a survey in Ganga and tested its water at three places—Varanasi, Haridwar, and Kanpur. The report revealed that the plastic pollution level in the river was extremely high.

SATISH SINHA, associate director, Toxics Link



An image from the inauguration of the annual film festival by Toxics Link

## B'TOWN NEWS

### ABHAY DEOL'S 'VELLE' TO RELEASE ON DECEMBER 10

The upcoming crime-comedy *Velle*, starring Abhay Deol and his nephew Karan Deol, will release in theatres on December 10. The makers shared the film's first-look poster on Wednesday. A directorial debut by Deven Munjal and presented by Ajay Devgn FFilms, *Velle's* trailer will release today. An adaptation of Telugu comedy *Brochevarevarura* (2019)—a film that revolves around three college students who keep flunking every year whose luck turns when they fake a kidnapping with a new classmate—*Velle* will also feature Anya Singh, Savant Singh Premi and Vishesh Tiwari in supporting roles. Mouni Roy will be seen in a special appearance too. Actor Karan Deol, who is the son of actor-director Sunny Deol, made his acting debut in *Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas* (2019).



# Slight let-up in AQI as farm fires remain low

Mercury drops trapping more pollutants, say experts; improvement in air quality likely after Nov 20 with change in wind direction

**KEY DECISIONS TAKEN TO COMBAT POLLUTION**

- 1 All construction and demolition activities are banned till Nov 21
- 2 All schools, colleges and educational institutions closed till further orders
- 3 1,000 private CNG buses will be hired to strengthen the public transport system
- 4 All industries using unapproved fuels to be closed with immediate effect
- 5 Only 5 of 11 thermal power plants within 300 km of Delhi will remain operational till Nov 30
- 6 Work from home for 50 per cent of govt employees in offices in NCR till Sunday
- 7 Trucks carrying non-essential items banned from entering Delhi till Sunday
- 8 Machines of the fire brigade will sprinkle water at 13 pollution hotspots
- 9 Diesel and petrol vehicles older than 10 years and 15 years, will be stopped from plying roads

VATSALA SHRANGI @ New Delhi

AIR quality in the national capital improved slightly to settle into the 'very poor' zone from 'severe' the previous day. Even though the pollutant cover settled about 1 km from the earth's surface, resulting in poor ventilation, external emissions such as smoke from farm fires remained low that helped improve the air quality in the city, said weather experts.

Also, Delhi saw its coldest morning of the season on Wednesday with the minimum temperature dropping to 9.6 degrees Celsius.

As per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi's overall air quality index (AQI) was 375 in the 'very poor' zone, as against 403 in the severe zone, the previous day. As per the Union ministry's System for Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), air quality is likely to remain the same over the next two days. "While transport level winds are coming from the east direction preventing intrusion of pollutants from the upwind region, local surface winds are low and mixing layer height is about 1 km resulting in poor ventilation of near surface pollutants," it said.

As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), with a dip in mercury combined with low surface winds and a transition likely to take place in the wind direction on Thursday, which always slows down winds, any significant improvement in air quality was not likely at least till November 20. A senior IMD scientist said, "The wind direction is likely to change to southeasterly from northwesterly at present. Whenever there is a transition in wind direction, winds become calm, which is not favourable for dispersion. Besides the drop in temperature only makes the air heavier, which further traps pollutants."

Mahesh Palawat, VC of Skymet, a private weather forecaster, also said that while northwesterly winds are cold and dry, southeasterly winds are warmer and humid. "The southeasterly winds are likely to begin blowing over Delhi from November 18 and stay till November 20. Since these winds are variable, the speed is not much and remains less than 10 kmph unless there is some strong weather system forming. On November 20, there will be cloud cover as well, which combined with these winds will allow the night temperature to rise up to 12 degrees C. There might be some dispersion around this time. The northwesterly winds are likely to return to Delhi from November 21-22, with which the mercury will again see a gradual drop and the night temperature may fall to 8 degree C," said Palawat.



CURRENT AQI LEVELS IN DELHI-NCR REGION



## UP gets its first pollution control tower in Noida

NEW DELHI: Uttar Pradesh's first air pollution control tower opened in Noida on Wednesday, officials said. Located in the posh Sector 16A, the 20-metre-high tower with a diameter of nine metres can filter air in an area of one square kilometre around it, they said. The tower has come up with joint efforts of the BHEL and the Noida Authority, the officials added. It was inaugurated by Union Heavy Industries Minister Mahendra Nath Pandey in the presence of minister Krishna Pal, Gautam Buddha Nagar MP Mahesh Sharma, Noida MLA Pankaj Singh and Noida Authority CEO Ritu Maheshwari.

# Delhi, neighbouring states list steps taken

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

EXPLAINING the steps taken by state in curbing pollution in the capital, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the Delhi government said hearings on this should happen every year in October instead of firefighting at the last moment.

Singhvi also sought to highlight that the court must also address the issue of stubble burning which is the chief contributor of rising levels of pollution in the months of October and November.

Singhvi also said that 90 per cent of the measures, mandated by the commission on Tuesday, have already been in place in the national capital.

At this point, the bench emphasised on the need to have adequate number of mechanised machines for road cleaning in the city to tackle the dust

which is a major source of pollution.

Singhvi said that the Delhi government has spoken to the municipal corporations about their requirements and the government shall provide complete financial assistance for whatever number of machines are required.

The court suggested that the Delhi government should augment its fleet of CNG buses and should encourage its employees to use public transport.

About removing old vehicles from the road, the bench said that the exercise of identifying old vehicles will take long and that the city government should instead take some urgent measures to bring down the number of vehicles plying in the city.

Singhvi maintained that such an exercise can be successful only if vehicles are stopped in the entire NCR.

Haryana's additional advo-

cate general Anil Grover was also asked by the court about curtailing the number of vehicles on roads, suggesting that some inspection and enforcement measures must be taken to bring down unnecessary and casual traffic in Delhi's adjoining districts of Gurugram, Faridabad and Jhajjar.

"We want you to take steps within a day or two. Why don't you stop unnecessary travel?" the bench told Grover, who further informed the bench that work-from-home orders have also been issued for the areas falling in the NCR, and the schools are shut.

While the counsel for UP said that they are complying with the directions issued by the commission, Punjab government's counsel pointed out that the state does not have any district in the NCR and that its submissions confined to the issue of stubble burning.

# Pending salary, no revised DA; NDMC doctors protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

DOCTORS working in hospitals under the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) have once again raised the issue of delay in salary payment; this time by two months.

Municipal Corporation Doctor's Association in a letter written to the Commissioner of the North civic body pending salary as well as failure to revise DA (daily allowance) as per government notification and also non payment of long-pending arrears.

"It is deeply regrettable that senior service doctors of the corporation have to repeatedly protest for payment of their salaries, which has not been paid to them for the past two months. Though DA has been enhanced twice in 2021 by GOI and revised in SDMC and EDMC but the same has not been revised by the corporation in our pay till date," read the letter.

The association noted that if the corporation does not respond back within a week about salary, DA and arrears then the doctors will once again call for a total strike.

The senior doctors association also wrote that despite

working sincerely through tough pandemic times and many a time without salaries, they were deprived from celebrating Diwali due to no salary payments.

"Questionably, even our hard-earned savings in the form of General Provident Fund (GPF) are not available to us for withdrawal even during such adverse times of financial crisis, suggesting unauthorised diversion of our GPF savings for other purposes even though such diversion is not permissible under law. It appears

that neither we have any right to live a dignified life nor have any right to die in a dignified manner because of the strange attitude of North Delhi corporation," the letter stated.

The association also raised question on the Central government's response to the Supreme Court last year that it will issue guidelines to make it mandatory for states to pay salaries to healthcare workers, and non-compliance of the directive will be an offence under the Disaster Management Act and the Indian Penal Code and said such orders were merely a paperwork as no such action has been taken by any authority so far.

EXPRESS READ

## Two held for trying to enter Rashtrapati Bhawan

NEW DELHI: Two people were arrested for allegedly trying to enter the Rashtrapati Bhawan. They were identified as Shivam Sharma and Kusum Rajput, and work at a salon. They were in an inebriated state when they tried to force their way in a car into the President's Estate. An FIR has been registered under sections of trespass, the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act and the Motor Vehicles Act.

# East MCD deploys drone to combat dengue threat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

IN a first-of-its-kind initiative, a drone was used by a vector-control team of the East Delhi Municipal Corporation to spray larvicide to check the spread of dengue in the city on Wednesday, cases of which have seen a record spike.

East Delhi Mayor Shyam Sunder Aggarwal claimed that the EDMC was the "first civic body" in the national capital to deploy a drone for control of vector-borne disease.

Larvicide was sprayed on the banks of river Yamuna using a drone, which can carry a container with a capacity of 10-12 litre, he said.

"We have hired an agency for it as a pilot project, and if the response is good, we will deploy more drones for vector-

control. One drone can cover 3 km range," the mayor said.

The aim is to supplement the efforts of the municipal team, especially to reach areas where staffers or volunteers cannot go to conduct the spraying, officials said.

Dengue cases in Delhi have seen a massive surge in November, triggering a blame game between the ruling BJP in civic bodies and the AAP, which leads the Delhi government in the city.

The number of dengue cases in Delhi this season has crossed 5,270, the highest in the national capital in a year since 2015, according to a civic report released on Monday. Nearly 2,570 fresh cases of the vector-borne disease were logged in the city in the last one week. However, no fresh fatality was reported.

# Govt school students invent alarm to prevent gas leak

GAYATHRI MANI @ New Delhi

NINE students of Government Boys Senior Secondary School, No. 3, Sector 5, Ambedkar Nagar, has invented a low-cost alarm system which will prevent gas leakages and ensuing blasts. The alarm has been developed with seed funding from the state's Business Blasters Programme (BBP)

After the Business Blasters Programme (BBP) was implemented on a pilot basis, the Delhi government launched the programme in all government schools in September for Classes 11 and 12, and increased the seed allocation from ₹1,000 to ₹2,000 to encourage students about starting their own businesses.

The alarm, which comes with the motto 'Safe Kitchens Catch no Flame', will be launched commercially, and the students already sold a few as part of the project. Each piece costs ₹700; ₹450 being production costs. Ac-



The team of students who created the alarm (inset), which comes with the motto 'Safe Kitchens Catch no Flame'. It costs ₹700 per piece

ording to mentor teacher Chandan Jha, "There are many great start-up ideas proposed by students that are currently being worked upon. The idea of an 'alarm' was found to be unique because these alarms can be a cheaper alternative in preventing major untoward incidents

that could prove fatal. Currently, such products costs between ₹5,000 and ₹1,800. In contrast, our students sell their products in the ₹650-700 range, which is more affordable."

The nine students who are working to make the alarm more advanced are Om, Aman,

Nishant, Karan, Yash, Tushar, Dushar, Laxman and Rohit. On the application of the alarm, Om said, "We created the alarm with assistance from our teachers, using an Integrated Circuit (IC), sensor, buzzer and bell, and other vital items to make this alarm. One has to just plug the alarm set in an adaptor a few meters away from the gas cylinder and if there is gas leakage, the alarm will start buzzing and indicate to the members there is a leakage in their kitchen."

The alarm has been designed to go off within 20 seconds of a gas leakage. The students are developing an advanced version that will link the device to smart phones. They are also working to reduce the timing from 20 to 5-10 seconds. "Currently, students are working on pricing and packaging and are also in talks with investors to take the project to a bigger level. Interestingly, students are already getting orders for the product," said the mentor-teacher.

**K N INFRACON PRIVATE LIMITED**  
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 CIN: U4540RD2007PTC162008

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Director of Town & Country Planning, Haryana has granted in principal approval for Change of Developer and Transfer of Licence over an area measuring 0.94 acres from KN Infracon Private Limited to MRG Castle Realty LLP w.r.t. License No. 102 of 2010 dated 02-12-2010 for developing Group Housing Colony over an area measuring 1.7935 acres in the revenue estate of Village Babupur, Sector 106, Gurugram, DTCP has very kindly accorded in Principle Approval for Change of Developer vide memo no. LC-1514/JE (DS)/2021/28720 dated 15.11.2021 and Transfer of License vide memo no. LC-1514/JE (DS)/2021/28723 dated 15.11.2021 in favour of M/s MRG Castle Realty LLP as per Rule 17 of the Haryana Development and Regulations of Urban Area Rules 1976. And as per pre condition mentioned in the aforesaid in Principle Approval's, we hereby invite objections from the general public in view of this proposed Change in Developer and Transfer of Licence limited to adverse effect on their rights, if any. Copy of the in Principle Approval is available for perusal at our Registered Office and posted on our website www.kninfracon.in

The objections if any to the proposed Change of Developer and Transfer of Licence may please be filed with o/o STP Gurugram, within 30 days from the publication of this notice failing which it shall be assumed that there are no objections to the proposed Change of Developer and Transfer of Licence Land.

Authorized Signatory  
 M/s K N Infracon Private Limited  
 New Delhi

**INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK** Manesar Branch  
 F 8, F 9-1st Floor Raheja Square IMT Manesar

**POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) [(Rule 8(1))]**

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Indian Overseas Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and 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 a demand notice calling upon the borrowers /mortgagors /guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice with further interest at contractual rates and rests, charges etc till date of realization within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower /mortgager/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on this 16th day of November of the year 2021.

The borrowers /mortgager/guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be Subject to the charge of Indian Overseas Bank for amount mentioned below with interest thereon at contractual rates & rests as agreed, charges etc., from the aforesaid date mentioned in the demand notice till date of payment less repayments, if any, made after issuance of Demand notice

Note: The dues payable as on the date of taking possession mention below + Interest payable with further interest at contractual rates & rests, charges etc., till date of payment.

The borrower /mortgager/guarantor attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section(8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of Borrower/Guarantor	Description of the Immovable Property	Outstanding Amount	Date of Demand Notice
Mr. Praveen Yadav, HNo: 101 Ground Floor, Sector: 51 Gurgaon Haryana 122001 (hereinafter referred as "borrower")	All that part and parcel of the property bearing Property No WZ 266 Khasra No 709, situated within the Old Lal Dora, Village: Madipur, New Delhi 110063 Bounded On the North by: Road 20 Ft Wide, On the South by: Personal Gali, On the East by: Property of Dharam Singh, On the West by: Road 20 Ft Wide	Rs 18,73,208.02/- as on 01.07.2021 with further interest at contractual rates and rests, charges etc.	01.07.2021
Mr. Praveen Yadav, HNo: 101 Ground Floor, Sector: 51 Gurgaon Haryana 122001 (hereinafter referred as "borrower")	All that part and parcel of the property bearing Property No WZ 266 Khasra No 709, situated within the Old Lal Dora, Village: Madipur, New Delhi 110063, Bounded On the North by: Road 20 Ft Wide, On the South by: Personal Gali, On the East by: Property of Dharam Singh, On the West by: Road 20 Ft Wide	Rs 43,75,560.13/- as on 01.07.2021 with further interest at contractual rates and rests, charges etc.	01.07.2021
M/s JMK International (Prop: Mr. Praveen Yadav) HNo: 101 Ground Floor, Sector: 51 Gurgaon Haryana 122001 (hereinafter referred as "borrower")	All that part and parcel of the property bearing Property No WZ 266 Khasra No 709, situated within the Old Lal Dora, Village: Madipur, New Delhi 110063, Bounded On the North by: Road 20 Ft Wide, On the South by: Personal Gali, On the East by: Property of Dharam Singh, On the West by: Road 20 Ft Wide	Rs 1,17,33,676.73/- as on 01.07.2021 with further interest at contractual rates and rests, charges etc.	01.07.2021
M/s Idhyah Trading Solutions (Partners: Mr. Kunal Yadav & Mrs. Shelly Yadav) H No: 101 Ground Floor, Sector: 51 Gurgaon Haryana 122001	All that part and parcel of the property bearing Property No WZ 266 Khasra No 709, situated within the Old Lal Dora, Village: Madipur, New Delhi 110063, Bounded On the North by: Road 20 Ft Wide, On the South by: Personal Gali, On the East by: Property of Dharam Singh, On the West by: Road 20 Ft Wide	Rs 50,53,095.59/- as on 01.07.2021 with further interest at contractual rates and rests, charges etc.	01.07.2021

Date: 16.11.2021, Place: Manesar Authorized Officer

**OPERATION AGAINST STREET CRIME**  
 Delhi Police took preventive action against 1.48 lakh people in North district this year during anti-street crime operations. On Sunday, combing operation was conducted in three police stations of the district

North district police carried out **51 combing exercises** Delhi by from January to October 24

**39** areas had been identified to carry the exercises

Police took preventive action against **1,48,924** people under Section 65 of the Delhi Police (DP) Act (persons bound to comply with the reasonable directions of a police officer)

**POLICE TOOK CHARGE OF 20,881** unclaimed properties under Section 66 of the DP Act (duty of every police officer to take temporary charge of all unclaimed property)

**REGISTERED 740 CASES** under 40A of the Excise Act and relevant CrPC sections

**LENS ON VEHICLES**  
**SUBZI MANDI POLICE STATION** examined a total of **25 suspicious vehicles**, seized three under Section 66 and detained 33 people under Section 65 of the DP Act.

**CIVIL LINES POLICE STATION** checked **45 vehicles**, deposited **2 vehicles** and took action taken against **14 people** under Section 65 of the DP Act. Also, 3 suspected drug peddlers were examined and a case was registered.

**WAZIRABAD POLICE STATION** checked **109 vehicles** and deposited **1 vehicle** under Section 66 of the DP Act. Action was taken against 40 people under Section 65 of the DP Act, 5 cases were registered under Section 188 (disobedience to order)



# Cheers muted on first day of new liquor policy

With many customers returning empty-handed, liquor vend owners say normalcy will return after initial hiccups

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

AS the new excise regime came into effect on Wednesday, preparations were still going on in most of the retail liquor vends, which are yet to operate on full scale. Many customers had to return empty-handed and liquor vend owners said these are initial hiccups.

Under the new policy, 850 retail vends will come up across the city. But only about 350 have been issued provisional licenses to procure stock and start business. With the new policy in place, the Delhi government, which used to run at least 60% of retail liquor stores in the city, has quit the business. Liquor business in the capital will now be run completely by private players. This is good news for liquor retailers as well as restaurants, bars and hotels, who can fix the price instead of having to sell it on MRP mandated by the government.

"We are yet to be issued our license id, only after which we will be able to place an order for the stock to wholesalers. We have to wait for stock, as the shelves are empty," said a store manager in Greater Kailash. A number of vends were still to get stock. Many were closed.

Himanshu Khanna, 28, said



BJP workers shout slogans against the new liquor policy at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Wednesday | SHEKHAR YADAV

the shop he went to in Saket did not have the brand he wanted. "I checked out more vends, but no body seemed to have supply. I picked up something off the shelf," he said. According to excise officials, this policy is a huge transition from the old one and things will take at least a month to settle down. "Many ap-

lications are pending. Only after licenses are issued, the owners can place their orders to wholesalers," said an official. Tushar Kasana, who visited many shops in Govindpuri to buy liquor said that the vends are either under maintenance or do not have the stock. "The government should have made

adequate arrangements before overhauling the entire system." Another buyer said, "Today, it feels like a dry day. Most of the shops are under maintenance." According to government officials, provisional licences have been given to around 350 shops and registration of over 200 brands have been done with 10 wholesale licensees. Wholesale licensees have procured nine lakh litres of liquor of various brands, they said. The new ex-

cise policy allows the opening of five super-premium retail vends having an area of 2,500 square feet. Liquor tasting facility will also be developed at these super-premium retail vends. Officials also said wholesale prices of all types of alcohol were likely to increase by 8%-9%. As per a government order last month, the impact on wholesale prices is due to factors like Central sales tax at two per cent.

## Congress protests outside liquor stores

NEW DELHI: The Delhi BJP and Congress on Wednesday protested against the newly opened liquor shops and accused the AAP-government of pushing the youth towards alcoholism and turning the capital into "Nashe ki Rajdhani". The Delhi BJP, led by its state president Adesh Gupta, held its protest at Jantar Mantar, while the Delhi Congress staged it outside the new liquor shops at Sita Ram Bazar in old Delhi. The new excise policy, which hit the city markets on Wednesday, marks the end of nearly 600 government-run liquor shops operating across the national capital. Liquor shops in the city will solely be run by private players now. PTI



AAP's Uttarakhand chief ministerial candidate Col (ret) Ajay Kothiyal

# AAP U'khand CM candidate to contest from Gangotri seat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Dehradun

AAP Chief Minister candidate Col (Retd) Ajay Kothiyal would contest state assembly elections due next year from Gangotri state assembly constituency, announced Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday.

Sisodia, who was on a two-day visit in Uttarakhand, said: "It is such an auspicious moment that I announce this. In the past 20 years, the people of Uttarakhand have been cheated by two parties — the Indian National Congress and the BJP. We promise that people will never have to regret. The people of Delhi are the live example of what good work we have done."

The party, which has decided to contest on all 70 state assembly constituencies, has already released a list of 10 candidates earlier this month.

Sisodia met the people from business community in Dehradun on Tuesday following his visit to Uttarkashi district, home of Gangotri shrine on Wednesday.

Sisodia promised all round development of Uttarakhand if AAP is voted to power.

"The people in Uttarakhand hills have been suffering 20 years of corruption and misrule by the BJP and the Congress. Youth has no job, pregnant women have no medical facilities and people are deprived of their rights. We promise to change this with support of the peo-

## Will form corporation for taxi, auto operators



PANAJI: Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said when his party is voted to power in Goa, it will

form a corporation to address the needs of taxi and autorickshaw operators in the state. While interacting with the taxi unions at Vasco on the second day of his visit to the coastal state, Kejriwal said the AAP would take care of the taxi and auto rickshaw operators. Taxis and auto rickshaws are important components of the tourism industry, he said. PTI

ple of Uttarakhand," added Sisodia. Interestingly, trends reveal that the party whose candidate has won the Gangotri seat has been able to form the government in the hill state. However, the state has been under de facto two-party system with the Congress and the BJP coming to power alternately. None of the two parties have been able to form consecutive governments following the assembly elections.

A political analyst said: "Ganga is not a river but a focal point of faith of entire Indo-Gangetic plains and Uttarakhand hills as well. Gangotri is the origin of the river Ganga. To field Col Kothiyal from that constituency is a strategically well thought decision to counter the BJP.

## COURT BULLETIN

# Notice on teacher's plea on not to get vaccinated

ANKITA UPADHYAY @ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday issued notices to the Department of Education and the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on a government school teacher's petition that challenged the decision of making Covid-19 vaccination mandatory for all to teach in schools.

The single bench of Justice Rekha Palli, however, did not grant immediate relief to the petitioner. The court clubbed the matter with another petition filed by a teacher working in a private aided school.

The petitioner, a History teacher in a Delhi government school, was asked to go on leave for refusing to take the Covid-19 vaccine. She stated that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's guidelines said the vaccine was voluntary. 'Authoritative public health sources' have also said that vaccination

may not prevent transmission. Yet, the school was forcing her to get vaccinated against her wish.

The petitioner claimed her natural immunity, developed while doing door-to-door surveys as a frontline worker, had helped her counter the virus. She is unwilling to get vaccinated as she fear it may have unforeseen effects on her body. "She had already been teaching her students for two months when it was disrupted by the impugned orders. She is teaching senior classes whose exams are starting in December," said the petitioner's counsel. The government counsel said the petitioner could not be allowed to put the lives of students at risk. The court posted the matter for further hearing on February 3, 2022. Earlier, a plea was filed in the high court in October wherein the petitioner challenged the Delhi government's decision

# Complaint against comedian's remark

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

DELHI BJP vice-president and spokesperson on Wednesday filed a complaint against actor-comedian Vir Das at Tilak Marg police station alleging that he used 'derogatory' statements against the country at an international platform maligning the image of woman and India.

BJP leader Aditya Jha in his complaint said that Das had used derogatory statements and tried to malign the country's name by saying "Women in India are worshipped in the day and raped at night" in a show organized at the John F Kennedy Centre in Washington DC.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) New Delhi Deepak Yadav said: "Yes, we have received a complaint against actor-comedian Vir Das. We've not registered any FIR yet. The matter is currently being probed."

As soon as the actor-comedian uploaded a six-minute clip of the video from his monologue called, 'I come from two Indias,' on YouTube, the video went viral sparking a controversy across the social media platforms like twitter and facebook.

As the video went viral with sparking controversy, many criticized and trolled the actor, while several popular personali-



'VIR TRIED TO DEPICT INDIA AS THREAT'

Advocate Ashutosh Dubey filed a complaint against Vir Das in Mumbai. Dubey alleged that Das' statement attempted to project India as the biggest threat to democracy. Dubey sought an FIR and felt "it is necessary to issue notice to the intermediaries."

ties, celebrities and senior political leaders like former Education Minister Kapil Sibal and Shashi Tharoor supported Das. Some Twitter users specifically posted the clip from his show in which he says, "I come from an India where we worship women during the day and gang-rape them during the night."

"Vir Das. None can doubt that there are two india's. Just that

we don't want an Indian to tell the world about it. We are intolerant and hypocritical," tweeted Sibal.

Meanwhile, Tharoor in a tweet said, "A stand-up comedian who knows the real meaning of the term 'stand up' is not physical moral but -@thevirdas spoke for millions in the six minute take on the two India's he hails from and stands up for," he said, adding, "This is a joke but it's just not funny." Brilliant.

However, the actor-comedian issued a statement on twitter stating that his intention was to remind every citizen to remember that India, despite its flaws, is "great".

"The video is a satire about the duality of two very separate India's that do different things. Like any nation has light and dark, good and evil within it. None of this is a secret. The video appeals to us to never forget that we are great. To never stop focusing on what makes us great," read the statement.

He further said, "It ends in a gigantic patriotic round of applause for a country we all love, believe in, and are proud of. That there is more to our country than the headlines, a deep beauty. That's the point of the video and the reason for the applause," his statement read.

## BIZ UNDER SCANNER

### ED raid on Supertech group premises in Delhi-NCR

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted raids at multiple premises of real estate group Supertech in connection with a money laundering investigation, officials said. They said at least nine premises of the builder group and its promoters were being searched by the agency in the National Capital Region. The Supreme Court had on August 31 ordered the demolition of the Noida located twin towers of the Supertech Group, which had come up in violation of building bylaws. It had set a three-month timeline for the demolition, which ends on November 30. The case pertains to the realty firm constructing two 40-storey towers illegally in its Emerald Court housing project premises.

### SC clarification sought on interrogation of Chandra brothers

NEW DELHI: Thirteen farmers, who had waved black flags and tried to stop the convoy of the Haryana CM on Tuesday, were booked on charges including attempt to murder, rioting, obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions, criminal intimidation among others. Police claimed some farmers had tried to charge towards the convoy and blocked its movement for some time. Black flags and tried to stop the convoy of the Haryana CM on Tuesday, were booked on charges including attempt to murder, rioting, obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions, criminal intimidation among others. Police claimed some farmers had tried to charge towards the convoy and blocked its movement.

## MONUMENT REVIVED

# Subz Burj and its Timurid art conserved for posterity

PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

CONSERVATION of one of the unique domed architectural gems in the national capital — Subz Burj located on a traffic island close to Nizamuddin Police Station — has been completed after three years of concentrated efforts carried out by Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC).

Sandstone lattice screens (Jaalis) have been restored at arched doorways, where unsightly iron frames were installed. Rare gold and lapis lazuli paintings and incised plaster patterns on the



Lying in oblivion for years, Subz Burj is back in its original glory | EXPRESS

ceiling have also been exposed after a careful cleaning process done under watchful supervision of the experts.

Intricate artwork on the ceiling is now visible almost after 100 years, which was buried under layers of chemicals used

during its restoration in the 1920s. The dome and elongated neck of the structure, which was originally a tomb, is adorned once again with green, yellow and blue glazed quartz tiles.

In 1986, ordinary terracotta tiles were placed with cement mortar by the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) during restoration undertaken causally, which had led to water seepage. The leakage, in turn, started damaging the ceiling paintings.

According to Ratish Nanda, chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, no information about its date of construction and the

person who was laid to rest here is available.

"Its architecture features such as incredible artwork, tiles, and jaalis, especially the painting on its ceiling makes it rare. The opulent gold artwork and proximity to the shrine of the 13th century Sufi-Saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya suggests that the sepulcher must have been of a powerful and close noble of the ruler. Another fascinating feature is the irregular pattern of façade of this octagonal building, which is not common on Islamic monuments," said Nanda.

Kerala State Film Development Corporation Ltd. RE-E-TENDER NOTICE. E-tenders are invited for the SITC of Dolby ATMOS Sound System at Kairali/ Nila/Sree theatre complex at Thiruvananthapuram in connection with modernization. Last date of submission of e-tenders will be 24.11.2021 at 3.00 pm. For more details visit website: www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

Tender Notice Selection of System Integrator for the supply, implementation and maintenance of AADHAAR Vault for the Government of Kerala. Kerala State IT Mission (KSITM) invites tender for the selection of 'System Integrator for the supply, implementation and maintenance of AADHAAR Vault for the Government of Kerala'. Bids shall only be accepted online through etenders.kerala.gov.in up to 16.00 hours on 07.12.2021, and no manual submission of the same will be entertained. Detailed Notification and bid Documents may be downloaded from https://etender.kerala.gov.in/

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— Rammath Goenka

## AMARAVATI RULING WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS FOR AP

AMARAVATI, the supposed capital of Andhra Pradesh, is back in the headlines with a Division Bench of the High Court commencing daily hearing on petitions challenging the Jagan government's legislations that seek to create three capitals—legislative in Amaravati, executive in Visakhapatnam and judicial in Kurnool. The hearing began on a controversial note with the government seeking recusal of two of the judges on the three-member Bench as they own plots in Amaravati. The court, though, deemed it fit to reject the request, notwithstanding the Code of Ethics adopted by the apex court and numerous precedents.

Without casting aspersions on the court, we would like to point out that this has the potential to cast a shadow of doubt on the final verdict. However, irrespective of which way the ruling goes, the case has larger implications. It has been 84 years since the Sri Bagh Agreement was sealed between coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema leaders. Amid this Amaravati row, everyone seems to have forgotten about it. It was a pact made to bring onboard Rayalaseema to form a separate Andhra province, which finally came into existence in 1953. The essence of the agreement was that the capital would be in Rayalaseema and the High Court in coastal Andhra. Accordingly, in 1953, Kurnool was made the capital. With the merger of Telangana, subsequently, the capital and the court too moved to Hyderabad. The separation of Telangana in 2014 brought Andhra back to square one. Unfortunately, the then CM N Chandrababu Naidu bulldozed Amaravati down the throat of the state and equally regrettably, the then opposition leader and present CM Jagan agreed to it, albeit with a few caveats.

The three-capital formula does honour the Sri Bagh pact in part, if it were to be upheld. But then, Amaravati farmers will have to be compensated for the lands they surrendered. On the other hand, pumping thousands of crores into Amaravati while giving peanuts to Rayalaseema will only stoke resentment in the backward region. Naidu harps on having brought Kia Motors to Rayalaseema. One swallow doesn't make a summer. The region needs to have a sense of participation and empowerment. There is no easy way out of the right royal mess politicians have landed Andhra in.

## TOWARDS A BOOSTER DOSE POLICY

AS the Union government is engaged with formulating a policy on booster doses for the Covid-19 vaccine, various issues stand out. About 40 countries have already begun administering booster doses, while in India, just 38% of its eligible population is fully vaccinated. This has led to several healthcare workers in the nation taking self-prescribed boosters, fearing a breakout. This is despite co-chair of the 28-lab Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) Dr N K Arora appealing to people not to opt for booster doses at present as it would not be considered for certification. At the other end of the spectrum, there are people who have taken only their first dose but have refrained from taking the second to complete their vaccination, let alone considering a booster dose. Moreover, with a total of 113 crore doses administered in India, there are many who have not yet taken their first dose.

If and when a booster dose policy does see the light of day, the Centre and state governments will be faced with challenges on two fronts: one, to ensure that a maximum number of people complete full vaccination to be ready for the booster; two, streamlining the dose's administration. The second will be more challenging. Health officials need to ensure that booster shots are given on time to ensure maximum protective effects. The first two doses trigger antibodies, which are understood to last over six to eight months. However, the vaccine-generated antibodies, while waning, leave a "memory signature" for T-cells—part of the immune system that develops from stem cells in the bone marrow to fight infection—to take over the fight against a possible viral resurgence. How far the "memory signature" lasts depends on the individual's body. It is found to be compromised in senior citizens and those with comorbidities and immuno-compromised health.

Therefore, apart from just determining which vaccines would be best suited for booster doses, there is a need to have a robust system in place to prioritise the right segments of people.

The US wants to grab a major share of the Indian defence hardware market. But any imposition of sanctions will dampen chances of defence cooperation gaining further traction

## S-400 CAATSA SANCTIONS BALL IN U.S. COURT

PINAK RANJAN CHAKRAVARTY



Former Ambassador and Secretary in MEA and Visiting Fellow at the ORF, Delhi

WITH the Russian announcement that deliveries of its advanced S-400 surface-to-air anti-aircraft defence system to India are to begin shortly, the die has been cast for a major challenge to India-US bilateral ties. The S-400 shipments will arrive before Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India. US President Joe Biden's administration has to now decide whether or not to impose sanctions on India under the American domestic legislation that goes by the acronym CAATSA or "Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act". This law was an outcome of partisan American domestic politics and the growing downside in ties between the US and Russia, and also with Iran and North Korea.

The India-Russia deal for five S-400 systems worth around \$5.5 billion had elicited a warning from the Trump administration that New Delhi would attract sanctions under CAATSA. India has always rejected jurisdiction of a third country's domestic law and predictably, ignored the American warning. India had honed in on the S-400 because China too had acquired the same system, the most advanced in this category of anti-aircraft defence systems. China has deployed a few S-400 systems in Tibet. Moreover, India has had a long-term defence relationship with Russia, though she has diversified her foreign defence procurement in the last two decades, including buying

around \$20 billion worth of defence equipment from the US. India's decision to acquire the S-400 was a prescient one, in the light of bloody clashes between Indian and Chinese forces along the LAC in Ladakh and the subsequent aggressive military build-up by China along it.

One aspect of CAATSA is that it targets countries that buy major defence systems from Russia. America wanted to punish Russia for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the alleged interference in the American presidential election in 2016. CAATSA seeks to undermine Russia's defence and intelligence sectors and deny Moscow her share of the international military hardware market. The US has targeted Russia's defence exports and the oil and gas sectors because together, they contribute a major chunk to that nation's exports.

Turkey, a NATO ally, has come under CAATSA sanctions for the purchase of the S-400 system. These sanctions include denials of export licences, loans and credits by American financial institutions to the importing Turkish entity and visa to its personnel and blocking of their assets in the US. America also blocked sale of the fifth generation fighter aircraft for which Turkey had made advance payment. Turkey's rocky relationship with the US was triggered by the failed military coup in 2016 against President Erdogan that Ankara blamed on Washington and the Turkish



AMIT BANDRE

preacher Fethullah Gulen who lives in exile in America. Turkey has moved closer to Russia and China and is planning to acquire more S-400 systems.

India is no Turkey and Washington has to do a deep think about imposing sanctions. The State Department should re-read its old files on its non-proliferation strategy that it used unsuccessfully to try and coerce India to give up the nuclear weapons option. The dramatic turnaround came during President George Bush's administration, when the US and India entered into agreements to recognise New Delhi as a nuclear weapons power. Coercion through sanctions will not work against New Delhi. The India-US nuclear deal was a result of a fait accompli and the recognition of a rising China that was seeking hegemony in Asia. Today, China is seeking global hegemony. It has made it clear that it seeks to replace the US as the global hegemon. The formation of the Quad, AUKUS and Malabar exercises are all geared to

signal to China the dangers of her hegemonic overreach. The geostrategic landscape has changed irrevocably and India will play a pivotal role in the coming decades to maintain the strategic balance in Asia.

During the Cold War, the US was a regular supplier of military hardware to Pakistan. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and later, after 9/11, Pakistan continued to receive billions in financial and military aid from the US. Even after the Taliban was driven out, America's aid kept flowing. US administrations provided waiver after waiver from sanctions to shield Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme and China's assistance to Islamabad's nuclear and missile programmes. The US conveniently coined the term "grandfathering" when the issuing of missile technology by China to Pakistan came under scrutiny because of the clear breach of MTCR obligations. While the US was pursuing its national interests, it is undeniable that a collateral interest was to keep India in check because of her close ties with the USSR and later Russia. Pakistan's role as a proxy of the US and now of China has India as the target.

Some US senators have urged the administration to opt for a waiver, using provisions in CAATSA. While the US claims that no decision has been taken, some senior former officials have raised the issue of American technology transfers to India being compromised, under-

mining interoperability, and the S-400 as a target for Chinese cyberwarfare. There is, however, acknowledgement that India does need such advanced air defence systems in view of the security threats from the China-Pakistan axis. Basically, the US wants to grab a major share of the Indian defence hardware market. As for leakage of sensitive American military technology, the major source has been Pakistan, a non-NATO ally, and China the beneficiary.

CAATSA sanctions, if applied, will be against the current strategic rationale. Imposition of sanctions will dampen chances of defence cooperation gaining further traction. There is already an entrenched belief that Russia is a far more reliable partner than the US and there is no overhang of domestic legislation, which is an American tool for coercion. In the Indian establishment, those who have always regarded the US as an unreliable partner and believe that the Anglo-American alliance has been partial to Pakistan will gain added strength. But above all, CAATSA sanctions, if applied, will bolster and serve China's interest and to an extent that of Russia, both of whom for different reasons want to undermine the growing India-US ties. The sanctions ball is in the American court.

(The author is also a founding Director of DeepStrat, a think tank) (prchakravarty@gmail.com)

## HOW THE PALLAVAS ADMINISTERED LAND

MADHUSUDHANAN KALAIHELVAN



Architect and conservationist interested in Indian heritage and culture

SOUTH Indian history is generally identified as a combination of accounts from the Chera, Chola and Pandya dynasties. It was only after the advent of archaeological and epigraphic studies that the Pallavas got their due recognition and their contributions towards the overall development of Tamil Nadu was brought to light. The very term 'Pallava' went through several debates over its origin and meaning. Finally, academicians accepted it to be of Sanskrit origin, meaning an indigenous tender creeper (*Bryonia grandis*). With available sources, we can conclude their active existence between the 3rd-9th century CE. Several copper plates and inscriptions help us understand the polity and governance under their rule. Extending from the south of today's Andhra till the northern banks of River Kaveri, their rule was a forerunner to that of the mighty Cholas.

A few old inscriptions help us define the territorial extent of their rule in the early stages. The Maidavolu inscription (305 CE) identifies their rule quite close to the Krishna river basins. On the western side, it seems to have extended till today's Bellary district in Karnata-

taka. From around the 4th-5th century CE, this demarcation seems to shift focus to a Kanchipuram-centric rule. The copper plates issued by the Pallava kings during different times help us understand the societal setup and the nature of governance to a great extent. The Hirahadagalli plates of Siva Skanda Varman from 338 CE in Prakrit language and Brahmi script is one of the oldest sets of records and throws light on the administrative setup that was prevailing. The copper plate records donation of a village to a certain Gola Sarman, a Brahmin belonging to *Atreya gotram*. The meticulous detailing of the order certainly draws our attention. The administrative hierarchy is clearly listed and includes designations such as *Rajakumara* (the viceroy), *Senapati* (army commander), *Rashtrika* (governor) and *Desadhikrita* (regional administrative officer). The names of these officers are clearly mentioned. This is followed by local officers and the list of designations include *gramabhujaka* (beneficiaries of local revenue), *vallava* (confidential officers), *go-valla* (officer in charge of cattle), *amatya* (interim officers trained in warfare and medical

practice), *aranyadhikrita* (officer in charge of forest tracts), *ghumika* (division commanders), *tutika* (agents) and *neyika* (leaders of platoons). The king in his capacity declares that this gift is done "for increase of ourselves and of our family in respect of our good deeds, length of life, strength and fame as also victory and prosperity".

The designations are so well demarcated that it gives us a general idea about the administrative hierarchy and the distribution of power down a clear structure. Gifting of a village to an individual in a particular division demands that a list of officials involved in various departments are informed. This is similar to transfer of power over land ownership. Moreover in this case, it is given as a gift by the king and hence made tax-free. To ensure that all the bureaucrats are well informed about it and there is no doubt anytime in the future, the document puts it all in black and white.

The copper plates issued by Pallava kings help us understand the nature of governance to a great extent. The Hirahadagalli plates of Siva Skanda Varman from 338 CE in Prakrit language and Brahmi script is one of the oldest sets of records and throws light on the administrative setup that was prevailing

Let us now take a look at a similar land gift record from the times of Nandi Varma Pallava, whose rule extended between 731-795 CE. The set of copper plate records grant of Tandantottam, a village in the Chola heartland, to a group of 213 Brahmins where the place is divided into 244 shares to be distributed among them. While a few shares are given to officials concerned with the village's administration, major beneficiaries are listed as scholars qualified in various texts. Unlike the earlier grant that records the importance of protecting *dharma*, quotes *dharma sastras* and has a long list of officials, this plate enlists the terms and conditions to be followed by the beneficiaries.

The norms include prohibition on altering the edges of an individual's share of land. It further describes the conditions to construct and maintain a head of water that sources the life-giving liquid for cultivation from a canal adjacent to the river. Here again stringent rules to ensure no disturbance is made to the existing water head are enlisted. But notable changes are seen here wherein several professional duties collected from various artisans, other conveyance fees and taxes of different kinds were collected by the scholars who were not liable to pay any of these to the king as earlier. In other words the Brahmins were entitled to collect and use them.

Oil merchants owing mills,

weavers who owned looms, people with private wells and potters were all taxed. A certain charge was paid during registration of marriages too. Toddy drawing, brokerage, cattle rearing, salt making, selling areca nuts, grains and pulses were other professions that were taxed.

The two copper plates and the grants that are etched on them are clean indicators of societal changes between the early and the last phase of Pallava rule. Gifting land or villages was considered a part of the king's duty to the Brahmins. While the earlier plate speaks about a piece of land to an individual and his successors, Nandi Varman's record speaks about a complete settlement being gifted along with rights to enjoy the tax duties collected from people practising other professions. While quotes from *dharma sastras* are seen in detail in the first, the second one does not consider it important. These donations seem to have been popularised and accepted by the society as standard norms. The list of officials discussed in the first plate is missing in the second, which enlists various different tax policies that seem to have again evolved over years.

Development of society causes changes on the social, cultural and economic fronts. A more efficient administration policy could be framed considering these lessons from history.

(madhu.kalai0324@gmail.com)

### MAIL BAG WRITE TO: letters@morningstandard.in

#### Admitting failure anathema

This is with reference to *Colossal notes ban failure buried in silence* (Nov 17). Five years down the line, it has been proven beyond a pale of doubt that the demonisation exercise undertaken by the Centre was a total flop and none of the purported objectives were achieved. However as the columnist has rightly averred, admission of failure has always been anathema for this dispensation, which only believes in blowing its own trumpet over its successes. The demerits of demonisation have however been pronounced and the suffering endured by numerous Indians is testimony to it. **CV Aravind, Bengaluru**

#### Double-edged sword

Demonetisation was intended to crack down on black money and dry up financing of cross-border terror. But the well-meant move proved to be a double-edged sword. Such a decision had to be abrupt for its success. It is the abruptness that brought misery to a large section of people and broke the back of businesses as they were caught unawares. **Dr George Jacob, Kochi**

#### Helped people buy houses

The galloping prices of real estate due to speculative and black money investment were arrested after the

notes ban, and ordinary people could afford to buy houses. Other expected benefits might not have been fully achieved, possibly due to the pandemic and high fuel prices. **R Narasimhan, Chennai**

#### Boost to digital payments

I read with interest the honourable former Kerala finance minister's column. As a common man in this vast country, I along with many other middle-class citizens do feel that the menace of black money was considerably curtailed. The direct tax net has widened, terror activities have come down and the digital payments

economy has grown multifold. Aren't these important yardsticks? It's for the ordinary citizen to judge. **G Sankunny, Kozhikode**

#### Hatred on social media

This is with reference to *Gurumurthy calls for total ban on 'anarchic' social media* (Nov 17). Many anti-social elements have taken advantage of the anonymity offered by such platforms to spread fake news and hatred. Since it has not been possible to enforce any checks till now, Gurumurthy has rightly called for a ban as in the name of freedom of speech, anyone can spew venom there. **K R Srinivasan, Secunderabad**

#### Cannot ban it

I am a great admirer of S Gurumurthy but disagree with him on the issue of banning social media. In any case, self-regulation by the Press Council too is perfunctory. Thankfully when it comes to elections, so far these biased opinions have not affected the voters. **CV Vijay Kumar, Bengaluru**

#### On the plight of dogs

The article *Those who deserve to be in the Doghouse* (Nov 13) was well-written and hilarious. The author gave a lot of information about pet and stray dogs and about their plight in India. **R DN Rao, Hyderabad**



Jairam Ramesh @Jairam\_Ramesh  
The text of what PM says is unity. The sub-text which he & his acolytes want to impose is uniformity—a destroyer of our many diversities



Derek O'Brien @derekobrienmp  
No short cuts. No cutting deals. We are here to stay in Goa. We are here for the long term. The long haul. We are with the people



Ravi Shankar Prasad @rsprasad  
The #PAHAL scheme clearly brings out benefits to beneficiaries, continues to eliminate fake connections & ensures subsidies reach genuine customer

# Hindutva-Hinduism debate splits Congress

Some leaders say Rahul's remark can be counterproductive, others feel it is needed to remain electorally relevant

RICHA SHARMA @ New Delhi

AS the Hindutva vs Hinduism debate rages in Congress following former party chief Rahul Gandhi's recent comments, there is a split in the leadership. Some are worried that the party should avoid getting into this debate ahead of Assembly elections while others feel the party needs to talk about it to remain electorally relevant in its fight against BJP.

Rahul's comments that killing innocent people is not Hinduism but Hindutva invited wrath from various fronts. But crucially, his own party now appears divided over the matter. Senior leader and MP Manish Tewari said Congress might have started a slide down on a slippery slope by deviating from the Nehruvian ideal of secularism and that he was confused about the Hinduism vs Hindutva debate.

"In the Hinduism Versus Hindutva debate, some people in Congress miss a fundamental point. If I were to believe that my religious identity should be the basis of my politics, then I should be in a Majoritarian or Minoritarian Political Party. I am in the Congress because I believe in the Nehruvian ideal that religion is a private space activity," Tewari said on Twitter.

Many in the grand old party feel that getting into this debate ahead of upcoming Assembly elections could be suicidal and that party leaders should avoid getting into this debate. The party is already battling refer-



ences made by another senior party leader Salman Khurshid equating Hindutva with ISIS and Boko Haram.

However, some others in the party are for 'soft Hindutva' to reach out to people. They say the party cannot woo people if it is seen as only for the minority sections. "The party cannot ignore the majority (Hindus) and have to reach out to them to win elections. It does not mean following the BJP style of spreading hate and anger in the name of religion. But making such (like Khurshid) statements will dent our chances and we will be projected as against the majority," said a leader from Uttar Pradesh. Plagued with infighting in a few states, this internal debate is something Congress could have done without.

## Double dose greater than one for the first time, says ministry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Centre on Wednesday underlined that the number of fully Covid-19 vaccinated adults in the country has surpassed the number of those with only one jab for the first time.

The country had in total administered 1,13,68,79,685 doses till Wednesday morning. Of these, 67,82,042 doses were given in the last 24 hours. The total inoculations were achieved through 1,16,73,459 sessions.

Of these, 75,57,24,081 were administered as first dose and 38,11,55,604 as second dose. "The number of fully vaccinated individuals (38,11,55,604) exceeds those who have been administered a single dose (37,45,68,477)," said a statement from the health ministry.

This month, the Centre launched a door-to-door vaccination campaign to ensure that all the adult population is covered with at least the first dose. Those due for second doses are motivated to take it.

"Healthcare workers are conducting door-to-door vaccinations of eligible people across India with a special focus on districts where less than 50 per cent of the eligible population has been vaccinated," the ministry statement added.



SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

UNPRECEDENTED delay in admission of PG doctors in medical colleges across India this year has forced resident doctors to demand a quick decision on the issue so that the burden on them, working at nearly one-third of the sanctioned strength, is eased.

The National Eligibility Council Entrance Test-PG saw a long delay and even after the

## Clutch of J&K Congress leaders close to Azad sends resignation letters to Sonia

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

IN a major jolt to Jammu and Kashmir Congress, about a dozen senior leaders including

former ministers and legislators loyal to Ghulam Nabi Azad have revolted against the unit chief Ghulam Ahmed Mir and resigned demanding a change in guard.

Party sources said leaders GM Saroori, Jugal Kishore Sharma, Vikar Rasool, Dr Manohar Lal Sharma, Ghulam Nabi Monga, Naresh Gupta, Subash Gupta, Amin Bhat, Anwar Bhat, Inayat Ali

and others in a joint statement to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi have submitted their resignation from party positions.

Those who have resigned belong both to Kashmir and Jammu and all of them are close to former J&K Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad. They have maintained that they are leaving the party.

In the letter to Sonia, the leaders have alleged that under Mir, Congress is heading towards a disastrous situation and over 200 leaders, including former ministers, MLAs, MLCs, PCC office-bearers, district presidents and AICC Members

**IN the Hinduism vs Hindutva debate, some people miss a fundamental point... I am in the Congress because I believe in the Nehruvian ideal that religion is a private space activity**

Manish Tewari, Congress MP

### FOR 'SOFT HINDUTVA'

However, there are leaders in Congress who think taking a mild religious line is needed to remain attached to the majority and fight the BJP

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at Matgajendra Nath Shiv Mandir in MP's Chitrakoot | PTI

## SC shield for trio in Tripura UAPA case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered that no coercive action should be taken until further orders against journalist Shyam Meera Singh and two lawyers, who had sought a Tripura Police case against them under the anti-terror UAPA be junked. This law allows detaining of a person for six months without charge and is already under review of the top court.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India NV Ramana issued notice to the Tripura government on the petition challenging the FIR registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for reports and posts during violence in the state last month including Singh's tweet saying "Tripura is burning".

Apart from Singh, the plea was filed by Supreme Court lawyers Anshu Indori (from National Confederation of Human Rights Organisation) and Mukesh (from Peoples' Union of Civil Liberties). Both visited Tripura as part of an independent fact-finding team.

The plea had also sought a court-monitored probe, a declaration that some parts of the UAPA are unconstitutional and argued that states being allowed to use UAPA to criminalise fact-finding will lead to a chilling effect on freedom of

speech, and only facts convenient to the government will come out.

The fact-finding team, the plea further said, did not question the sovereignty or territorial integrity of India and that Singh's "Tripura is burning" tweet was "factual reporting".

The FIR had accused Singh and others of spreading fake news and distorted or objectionable content about what the state government dismissed as allegations of mosques vandalised and local Muslim communities attacked after communal violence in Bangladesh. They face charges ranging from criminal conspiracy to spreading fake news.



### Notice to Centre

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Centre on a plea challenging certain provisions of the UAPA. A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana issued notice to the Centre and tagged the plea filed by former IAS officer Amitabha Pande and others with a similar petition. Senior advocate C U Singh, appearing for the petitioners, submitted that the UAPA is being used to quell dissent. "Heard Mr C U Singh, senior counsel appearing for the petitioners and carefully perused the material available on record. Issue notice. Liberty is also granted to serve the Standing counsel for the Union of India," the bench said.

## US asks women travellers to be cautious in India

NEW DELHI: The US has issued a level-2 travel advisory for India, warning American citizens to exercise increased caution while visiting India. Flagging rape, the US also tells citizens to not visit certain places in India. The Bureau of Consular Affairs at the US State Department in its advisory issued on November 15, urged US citizens not to travel to Jammu and Kashmir due to terrorism and civil unrest, and also within 10 kilometres of India-Pakistan border due to the potential for armed conflict. "Indian authorities report rape is one of the fastest-growing crimes in India. Violent crimes, such as sexual assault, have occurred at tourist sites and in other locations," it said. US had issued a similar advice to the women travellers in 2019 too. It had advised to avoid travelling alone and exercise extra caution.



The retiring rooms unveiled at Mumbai Central station on Wednesday | EXPRESS

## Swanky railway rooms in Mumbai, more in pipeline

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

RAILWAY travel is undergoing a change. Close on the heels of India's first world-class station in Madhya Pradesh, comes retiring rooms made in the 'pod' concept. The first such rooms were opened at Mumbai Central station on Wednesday by Minister of State for Railways, Raosaheb Patil Danve.

Those willing to stay overnight stay at an affordable rate, will get value for money in this service started by IRCTC. These are small and compact rooms with wi-fi, luggage space, TV, air-conditioners with other facilities. For 12 hours, the charge is ₹999 and for 24 hours ₹1,999," said the IRCTC.

The railways is planning more such amenities for the passengers. "IRCTC has commissioned the first pod-concept retiring rooms for those on short trips or group of students on study trips. Travellers will experience a new facility when they reach Mumbai Central,"

said an IRCTC official. The contract to develop these rooms was awarded in February to Urban Pod Pvt Ltd. The same company has been given the responsibility of operating and running these room service for the next nine years.

"Each room has wi-fi, luggage space, toiletries, shower room and washroom in common areas, air-purifier, AC, reading light. Small TV sets, lockers, mirror and mobile charging points and smoke detectors are also there," said a statement of IRCTC. Sources claimed this will be the game-changer for train passengers.

Altogether, 48 pod retiring rooms have been developed under different categories — 30 classic rooms, seven reserved for women, one for the differently-abled and 10 private rooms. Railway sources said this concept would be introduced in other main railway stations in Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata after studying the occupancy ratio of the facility in Mumbai Central.

## RESIDENT DOCTORS DEMAND DECISION ON PG ADMISSIONS

test was held in September after nearly nine months, there is now a stay on the process of counselling as some candidates have challenged the reservation policy adopted for admission.

The examination, conducted usually in December-January, was first deferred to April in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. In April, when the second wave of the pandemic hit the country, the government announced the test would not be conducted before August 31, which would allow final year students and interns to focus on clinical duties. The test was finally held on September 11 and results were out in October.

The delay in admissions, due to the ongoing litigation, has meant that medical colleges, which have nearly 85,000 junior residents from

the three batches, are effectively working with just one-third of the force.

"Resident doctors are the backbone of medical colleges but the delay means first year PG students have not joined yet, while third year students have already passed out. Very few of them are later reabsorbed in institutions as senior residents," pointed out Rohan Krishnan, president of the Federation of All India Medical Association.

This, he said, has put extraordinary burden on the existing junior residents who are made to do double shifts to make up for the reduced work force and are burnt out. Krishnan demanded that the PM and the health minister should intervene to ensure that the Supreme Court gives a judgement during the next hearing on November 24.

## IAF & Army conduct airlift exercise in Northern Sector

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

INDIAN Air Force and Indian Army conducted a major joint airlift exercise on Wednesday with the aim of strengthening logistics supply in the Northern Sector, which includes the border with Pakistan and China. The exercise was named 'Operation Hercules'.

The Ministry of Defence in its statement said, "The effort was a real-time demonstration of the inherent heavy lift capability of the Indian Air Force, which has played a major role in ensuring the ability to quickly respond to any contingency during the past."

The platforms utilised for the airlift were C-17, IL-76 and An-32 aircraft, which took off

from one of the forward bases of Western Air Command. This would augment winter stocking in operational areas as the region would get cut off for the next 4-5 months from the rest of the country due to winter and the forces would need ration and resources. The standoff in Eastern Ladakh continues since May 2020, with a major deployment of around

60,000 troops from both sides. **New Corps Commander**

Lt Gen Anindya Sengupta is expected to take over as Leh-based Corps Commander by the end of this month. Lt Gen PGK Menon, the current Corps Commander, has completed his tenure. Lt Gen Sengupta will head the Corps Commanders talks with China.

### POSTCARD TO PM

## Campaign to seek views of youths on India at 100 years of freedom

PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

THE Central government will launch the 'India 2.0 postcard' campaign to seek views of youths and students on how they want to see the nation in 2027 — when the country completes 100 years of independence.

The government will encourage them to send suggestions through postcards printed specially for the purpose. Officials of the culture ministry, which is leading the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav programme, said the

initiative would also enable youths and students to discuss the struggle made for freedom by the countrymen.

Dates haven't been decided yet, but the campaign will run sometime in January. "We will request children to write postcards to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on discussions related to freedom that took place around them, in their families. And what kind of development do they want in the country. They will send us post-

cards and the government will collate their ideas and process them through artificial algorithms and pull out things that people want to happen for 2027," said an official.

This campaign is called 'Ideas at 75', which is one of the themes of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, launched to celebrate 75 years of independence. Officials said suggestions from youths would help the government understand how to work on development and sustainability.

## Pak enacts law to help Jadhav file review appeal

PTI @ Islamabad

PAKISTAN'S Parliament in its joint sitting on Wednesday enacted a law to give Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav the right to file a review appeal against his conviction by a military court.

Jadhav, a 51-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017. India approached the International Court of Justice against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the sentence.

After hearing both sides, the Hague-based ICJ issued a verdict in July, 2019, asking Pakistan to give India consular ac-

cess to Jadhav and also ensure review of his conviction.

On Wednesday, the joint sitting comprising members of the Senate and the National Assembly was called to pass a set of laws which were passed by the latter in June this year; including one to enable Jadhav to appeal against his conviction, but those laws failed to get the nod of the Upper House.

The ICJ (Review and Re-consideration) Bill, 2021 aimed to fulfill the obligation under the verdict of ICJ and was presented by Law Minister Farogh Nasim and passed by the joint sitting of the House through voice vote. The law allows Jadhav to challenge his conviction in the high court through a review process which was a re-



requirement of the ICJ verdict. The joint sitting is called when differences between the National Assembly and Senate are unbridgeable. The current impasse was due to the fact that the ruling Tehreek-i-Insaf and allied parties enjoy majority in the National Assembly but are in minority in the Senate or the Upper House.

Earlier, the ICJ (Review and Re-consideration) Bill, 2020 was among the 21 bills passed by the National Assembly in June, but the Senate refused to pass them. The government had also tried to enforce the ICJ verdict through promulgation of a special ordinance in 2019. When the government promulgated an ordinance to let Jadhav file a review, he refused. Later, the Pakistan government through its defence secretary filed a case in the Islamabad High Court to appoint a defence counsel for Jadhav.

The IHC formed a three-member larger bench in August 2020 which has repeatedly asked India to nominate a lawyer from Pakistan for Jadhav but New Delhi so far refused.

CASE CRACKED

Bihar Police claimed to have cracked the kidnap and murder case of journalist and RTI activist Avinash Jha alias Buddhinath, insisting he was killed due to a "love triangle". Police have so far arrested six people

3 KILLED

AS LORRY RAMS ROADSIDE STALLS IN UP'S SHRAVASTI



INDIA	Max	Min	Mumbai	Max	Min
Ahmedabad	29	20	Mumbai	35	25
Bhopal	28	14	Panaji	35	23
Jaipur	27	11	Patna	28	15
Amritsar	25	10	Lucknow	29	14
Chennai	27	23	Port Blair	30	25
Kolkata	29	19	Imphal	26	15
Srinagar	12	01	Chandigarh	26	10

# Kin of 3 killed in encounter reject claim of police

Demand return of bodies buried 100-odd kms from Srinagar by cops, proper inquiry

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

WITH families of three of the four persons killed in Hyderpora encounter in Srinagar claiming the men were innocent, the encounter has become controversial.

The three families have also demanded return of the bodies which have been buried by the police quietly in north Kashmir's Handwara, for proper burial and inquiry.

"I want justice for my husband Dr Mudasir Gul. I want to see his face. My one-year-old daughter wants to see his face. Why you killed Mudasir and why you orphaned my daughter. My daughter is one-year-old and she says only one word 'baba, baba'. Give her baba back," said Humaira Mudasir.

Mudasir was among the four persons killed in Hyderpora en-

counter and according to IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar he was an over ground worker (OGW) and running an illegal call centre in a private building.

"Police can kill me and my daughter if my husband was proven an OGW as claimed by them. Give us evidence of Mudasir being an OGW. He was a doctor by profession and earning his livelihood in a clean manner," said Humaira.

Mudasir's family staged a protest at the Press Enclave in Srinagar to demand the return of his body and inquiry into the incident. Family of another deceased Altaf Ahmad Bhat, who was owner of the building where the encounter happened and was among the four killed, also protested. The police detained them later.

Altaf's brother said he is a government employee and re-



Kin of Dr Mudasir Gul and Altaf Ahmad Bhat protest seeking return of the bodies in Srinagar on Wednesday | ZAHOR PUNJABI

mains in contact with police. "Had there been any allegation against my brother, police would have informed me. For 30 years, my brother had been doing business in Hyderpora area. He has got his own complex in the area and was also a builder. He was a taxpayer."

IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar while expressing regret over Altaf's killing said the deceased would be counted among the "harbourers" of militants. According to police, a Pakistani militant Haider alias Bilal Bhai, his associate and hybrid militant Amir Ahmad a

resident of Banihal, Dr Mudasir Gul (an OGW) and Altaf Ahmad Bhat (building owner) were killed in the encounter.

Aamir Ahmed's father Abdul Latif Magray said he had killed a militant in Ramban in 2006 and how could his son be a militant. "Denial of my son's body is the reward of my fight against militants," he said and demanded the return of his son's body.

The police have quietly buried bodies of the four killed in the Hyderpora encounter in a graveyard in Handwara, some 100km from Srinagar.

## TRF commander among 5 militants killed in two encounters in Kulgam

Srinagar: The Resistance Front (TRF) commander Afaq Sikander was among five militants killed on Wednesday in twin encounters with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district, police said. The gunfights broke out in Goplapora and Pombay areas of Kulgam. IGP (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said one of the two slain militants in Goplapora was the commander of the TRF. He said three militants were killed in another gunfight in Pombay also.

## EX-MUMBAI TOP COP DECLARED 'OFFENDER'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai

A magistrate court here on Wednesday declared former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh a "proclaimed offender" in an extortion case. Besides Param Bir Singh, co-accused Vinay Singh and Riyaz Bhatti were also proclaimed offenders by Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate S B Bhajipale. The Mumbai Police Crime Branch informed the court that non-bailable warrants were issued on October 30 against the trio, but they were not available at their respective addresses. Special Public Prosecutor Shekhar Jagtap said the three seemed to have gone into hiding the moment the case was registered against them.

The case refers to alleged extortion calls made to builder-hoteller Bimal Agarwal between January 2020 and March 2021. The accused in the case also include dismissed cop Sachin Waze, and two others — Sumit Singh alias Chintu and Alpesh Patel.

# Wave of change will wipe out BJP in 2022: Akhilesh

GHAZIPUR (UP): Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday said he sensed a "wave of change" in Uttar Pradesh that will "wipe out" the BJP in the 2022 Assembly polls as he held a 'Vijay Rath Yatra' on the Purvanchal Expressway inaugurated a day ago by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He claimed the 341-km-long expressway was initiated by the SP when it was in power in the state. He also alleged that the Purvanchal Expressway is still "incomplete".

In a dig at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the SP chief claimed that it was "bulls and bulldozers that were moving around in the state".

Yadav was referring to the problem of stray cattle in the state and the chief minister's claim of bulldozers demolishing unauthorised properties. "I see a wave of change in the

state... the BJP will be wiped out. I can assure you that in the coming days, Uttar Pradesh will see a change and that will be for peace. There will definitely be a change in 2022.

"It was the SP's dream of building the Purvanchal Expressway to reduce travelling time between Lucknow and Delhi. It was to be an expressway of prosperity."

Attacking the state government, he said petrol and diesel have become costlier. "These are the very people who had said that poor with slippers will travel by air. But the way the prices fuel have gone up, riding a motorcycle has become difficult."

Referring to the promises the BJP made to the people, Yadav said, "Unemployed youths waited for jobs for five years. Where are the jobs? All sections of the society are ready to bring a change in the state." PTI



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav addresses a rally in Ghazipur on Wednesday | PTI

# Agencies told to strengthen intelligence gathering in J&K

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

UNION Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Wednesday directed security agencies to strengthen intelligence gathering as he reviewed the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of rise in civilian killings and violence in the Valley.

The meeting happened on a day when security forces in Jammu and Kashmir killed five militants in operations in two separate gunfights in Kulgam district on Wednesday. Further, two active associates of proscribed outfit LeT were apprehended in Pulwama on Wednesday.

The chiefs of the Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force, Intelligence Bureau and senior officials of the home ministry attended the meeting. "Agencies were asked to keep a close watch on social media updates by suspicious elements and directed to

strengthen intelligence-gathering networks," officials said. According to official statistics, a total of 28 civilians were killed by militants till last month this year. Out of this, five people belonged to local Hindu or Sikh communities and two were non-local Hindu labourers. Most of the targeted killings have been committed

by newly recruited militants or those who are about to join the militant ranks.

Till the end of October this year, 97 militant attacks have been reported in the UT, of which 71 were on security forces and 26 on civilians. In 2020, a total of 105 targeted attacks were reported — 80 on security forces and 25 on civilians.

## BSF IN BENGAL 'Jurisdiction extension gives no extra power'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata

REACTING to the objection raised by West Bengal government to extending the BSF's jurisdiction from 15 to 50 km from the Bangladesh border, the ADG of the paramilitary force, Y B Khurania, said the agency has limited powers and no authority to intervene in the state's law and order affairs. He also said the allegation that BSF personnel harassed women in the name of searching was very unfortunate.

"We don't interfere in the state's law and order affairs. We don't have the power to file FIRs. We focus on smuggling and infiltration. We maintain a good relation with the state police and exchange information with them. The notification (increasing jurisdiction) doesn't give additional power to the BSF," he said.

Khurania said the BSF would continue to function in the 50 km jurisdiction in the same way as it had functioned in the earlier jurisdiction.

Refuting the TMC government's allegation of women being harassed by the BSF personnel, Khurania said, "This (claim) is unfortunate and baseless. We have more than 4,000 women staff and soldiers. CCTVs are installed at all entry points of the border area."

# Mosquito-borne diseases bite Maximum City

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

AFTER a decline in Covid cases in Mumbai, dengue, malaria and chikungunya cases are rising. The financial capital of the country has reported 57 chikungunya cases this year as against nil in the previous two years.

Sources in the civic body, the BMC, said 4,731 malaria cases with no fatality have been reported in the city. The number of cases was 5,007 with one death the previous year.

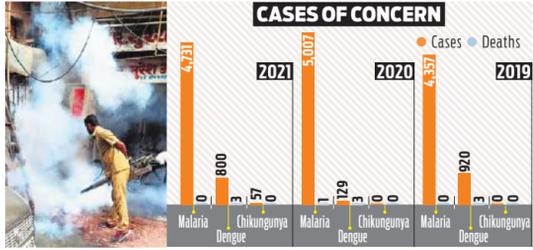
Similarly, 800 dengue cases with three deaths have been reported as against 129 cases and three deaths the previous year. In 2019, there were 920 cases and as many deaths. Chikungunya has returned to the city after two years.

## MP govt withdraws all Covid-related restrictions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bhopal

MADHYA Pradesh government has withdrawn all coronavirus-related restrictions in the state with immediate effect.

Announcing the decision on Wednesday, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said there was "complete control" over the Covid-19 pandemic in Madhya Pradesh. "So, we have decided to withdraw all the restrictions imposed during the pandemic with immediate effect," he said in a statement. "Now all social, political,



gunya has been more than 2,000, a massive rise from last year's figure of 782 cases. Health officials attributed the spike to intermittent rain. In Mumbai, doctors said there is a rise in chikungunya

and dengue cases. "It is a matter of concern. We have asked pesticide control officers to focus on curbing the mosquito breeding," said a BMC official. The rise in viral and chikungunya cases prompted the state health department to intensify surveillance.

Dr Pradip Awate, the state surveillance officer, said field officers are conducting door-to-door surveillance. "Every year, our field officers conduct two surveys that include entomological tests and fever. They check for fever cases and mosquito breeding grounds. We have asked our team to keep the record of all cases and start the treatment as well," he said.

## GREEN ENERGY

# Engineer uses algae in water to extract bio-fuel

MUKESH RANJAN @ Ranchi

AT a small fuel station in Ranchi, people buy fuel for their vehicles that is made not from imported crude oil but from microalgae found in the ponds in Jharkhand. Not just environment-friendly, this fuel comes much cheaper too — ₹78 per litre compared to ₹92 per litre for diesel.

The bio-fuel is the brainchild of 42-year-old engineering graduate Vishal Prasad Gupta who now plans to manufacture it on a large scale once MoUs

are signed with the Ranchi Municipal Corporation for taking microalgae out from the water bodies.

According to Gupta, not only is the bio-fuel far less polluting than petrol/diesel, removing the microalgae from the water bodies will also help clean them. Due to the presence of microalgae, normal pH value of water bodies remains around 8-9, making them alkaline, he said. Gupta claimed the bio-fuel

gives more mileage, is renewable and reduces air pollution.

He is manufacturing the bio-fuel at a small plant set up on the outskirts of Ranchi after obtaining approval from Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Gupta claims the microalgae-based fuel can be used in any EM590 diesel engine manufactured these days in India. "Compared to other bio-fuels, it can be prepared within the shortest period of 20 days,"

he said. "I am selling 2,000-2,500 litres every day at my pump."

Gupta has been given a go-ahead by the Petroleum Conservation Research Association and has been appreciated by Tata Motors, which said the bio-diesel has increased the efficiency of its vehicles without causing any harm to the engine. Dalmia Bharat Cement is also using it in its equipment.

The State Urban Development Authority believes if Gupta's claims are true, it will bring a revolution in the country.



## 'Secret ops' reason for I-T raids on Ajit Pawar kin

The Income Tax department's search at the residence of Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's sister has taken the state's political circles by surprise. It was unexpected that the I-T sleuths would raid Ajit Pawar's family members. A major political reason attributed to the development is the move by 20 BJP MLAs to jump ship to the NCP. The deputy CM has been handling this highly confidential political operation which has sent alarms across the BJP state camp. The I-T raid comes as a message to Pawar that if he dares to welcome BJP MLAs, he and his family members will have to face the music.



SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI

Our correspondent in Maharashtra

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## MUMBAI DIARY

### Sonia to meet Sharma on complaint against edu minister

Congress national president Sonia Gandhi will soon meet party state general secretary Rajesh Sharma to discuss his complaint against Maharashtra School Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad after he raised questions over the latter's conduct. Earlier, Sharma had written to Sonia Gandhi stating that Gaikwad had not been effective in ensuring the education of poor students. The minister's move in okaying the acquisition of two colleges by private players has been flagged by the general secretary. Sharma had said that he met several Congress leaders and ministers but none bat an eye. Following this, he addressed the complaint against Varsha Gaikwad to the party national president. Now, she has agreed to meet the general secretary in Delhi.

### Aaditya Thackeray receives climate action award

Maharashtra environment minister Aaditya Thackeray has received the Inspiring Regional Leadership Award from Under2 Coalition for Climate Action — a global network of states and provinces on climate action — on the sidelines of COP26 in Glasgow, the UK, on Sunday. However, another controversy is brewing over a few bureaucrats without the Centre's approval having travelled to Glasgow as part of the state delegation. These officials include Ashish Singh, who is personal assistant to Maharashtra chief minister, and his wife Valsa Nair Singh.



### Youth Cong president, Mumbai chief tussle deepens further

Infighting within the Congress is not new. The tussle between Mumbai Congress president Bhai Jagtap with Youth Congress president and MLA Zeeshan Siddiqui has hit a new low with the former directing derogatory comments against the latter. They literally fought during a Congress rally in Mumbai. Siddiqui was not happy with Bhai Jagtap because Jagtap spent his MLC fund in Siddiqui's constituency. It was said that it was a deliberate attempt by Jagtap to interfere in the affairs of Siddiqui's constituency and make him look bad.



4,000 pigs to be culled after a case of African swine fever was confirmed in Berlin on Wednesday



City	Temp	Cond	City	Temp	Cond	
Beijing	13	1	LC	Los Angeles	21	11
Colombo	28	25	TDS	Melbourne	26	11
Dhaka	31	29	TDS	Moscow	0	-2
Dubai	31	21	SNY	New York	21	7
Houston	18	9	SNY	Singapore	31	26
Istanbul	14	8	SNY	Toronto	9	1
London	14	9	LC	Washington	23	3

# Vancouver isolated from rest of Canada as mudslides block roads

Torrential rains kill one person; rocks and debris wash out highways trapping motorists

## VANCOUVER

AT least one person has died in torrential rains that trapped hundreds of motorists in mudslides, forced thousands to evacuate their homes and cut off Vancouver from the rest of Canada, police said.

Search and rescue teams recovered the body of a woman from a mudslide near Lillooet, 250 kilometers north of Vancouver, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said.

Staff Sergeant Janelle Shoihet added that investigators have received two missing person reports, but that they believe "there may have been other occupied vehicles that were lost in the slide."

"The total number of people and vehicles unaccounted for has not been confirmed," Shoihet said.

The rains had let up by late Tuesday afternoon. But mudslides, rocks and debris washed out several highways leading to



Homes surrounded by rising floodwaters in Abbotsford in Canada's British Columbia province on Tuesday | AP

Vancouver, trapping hundreds of motorists who were rescued by military helicopters by nightfall on Monday.

Local television showed video footage of the Trans Canada highway -- which connects the coastal city to the rest of the

country -- inundated. A bridge was also washed out.

Many other routes have also been closed, according to Drive BC, which said on Twitter: "Highways are closed until further notice."

As a result, motorists want-

ing to travel to or from Vancouver would have to travel south to the United States and back up into Canada.

Anyone taking this circuitous route, however, would have to show proof of a negative Covid-19 test when they reach Canadian border.

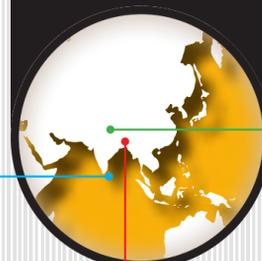
Landslides also cut off rail traffic to and from Vancouver -- one of Canada's busiest freight sea ports. "Both CN and CP Rail indicate that no rail traffic is currently able to transit between Kamloops and Vancouver," a port spokesperson told AFP.

In Ottawa, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government is "watching closely" the evolving situation in British Columbia.

He was to speak with the province's premier, John Horgan, later in the day to see what federal help might be needed.

"We'll be there to help in any way, shape or form," he told reporters. AFP

## ASIA MATTERS



### BANGLADESH

#### Law will decide if Zia can go abroad for treatment: Hasina

Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday described jailed ex-premier Khaleda Zia's application to travel abroad for medical treatment as a "legal matter", saying her government had done its part by conditionally releasing her from jail within the purview of her "executive authority". Zia, the 76-year-old chief of the main Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, is serving a 17-year jail term in two graft cases since February 2018. She has been suffering from arthritis, diabetes, kidney issues, lung ailments and eye problems

### NEPAL

#### E-passports launched

Nepal launched e-passport services on Wednesday with a 102-year-old academician and cultural expert becoming the first person to get the chip-based identification document. Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Khadka inaugurated the first e-passport personalisation centre at Tripureshor in Kathmandu. At the function, the minister handed over the first Nepali e-passport to litterateur Satya Mohan Joshi. Nepal launched machine-readable passports in 2010, replacing the handwritten travel documents. The handwritten passports were completely phased in 2015. Applicants for fresh passports can apply for the e-passports from November 18 onwards. However, the machine-readable passports will continue to remain valid till 2031

## Widespread damage amid record rains

One month's worth of rain have fallen over several regions of the Pacific Northwest since Saturday

### ATMOSPHERIC RIVER BLAMED

The rains were caused by an atmospheric river -- a huge plume of moisture extending over the Pacific and into Washington and Oregon

"A significant atmospheric river event continues to bring copious amounts of rain to the British Columbia's south coast," Environment Canada said

"Heavy rain will ease and strong westerly winds will develop this afternoon as the system moves inland"

### HUNDREDS SPENT THE NIGHT IN VEHICLES

On Tuesday, thousands of British Columbians were unable to return to their homes due to evacuation orders still in effect due to flooding in a dozen communities -- including all of Merritt and parts of Abbotsford -- and as many as 9,000 homes were without power



In Merritt, flooding compromised the wastewater treatment plant, while thousands in Abbotsford reportedly slept in their cars on an elevated road overnight, as farms in the Fraser Valley were inundated

Others took shelter at emergency sites set up across the province, with some also sleeping in church pews or at schools, local media said



75%

31,000

WASHINGTON STATE'S ELECTRICAL CUSTOMERS REMAINED WITHOUT POWER ON TUESDAY

### HOMES WILL NEED REPAIRS

Officials in the small city of Sumas, Washington, near the Canada border called the flood damage there devastating. Officials said on Facebook Tuesday that hundreds of people had been evacuated and estimated that 75% of homes had water damage

5.57 inches

(14.14 centimeters) of rain fell at Bellingham International Airport (in Washington state) from Saturday through Monday. The normal monthly rain total is 5.2 inches for November, according to official data

## TOUGH WINTER

High fuel costs drive Britain's inflation to 10-year high

### LONDON

BRITISH inflation spiked close to a ten-year high in October on increased energy and fuel bills and resurgent post-lockdown demand, data showed on Wednesday, sparking talk of a pre-Christmas interest rate hike.

The annual rate jumped to 4.2 per cent, the highest level since November 2011, the Office for National Statistics said.

That followed 3.1 per cent in September and was more than double the Bank of England's 2.0-per cent target.

In reaction, the pound jumped against the euro and dollar as traders priced in a December interest rate hike from the BoE.

The data "now makes it odds-on that all the pre-Christmas headlines will be of the Bank of England steals Christmas variety, if they do bite the bullet and belatedly nudge rates higher", said CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson.

Rising consumer prices ramp up the cost of living, especially when wages fail to keep pace.

The data "makes for uncomfortable reading and goes to show the punishing effects of higher energy and food prices on family finances," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell. "It almost certainly means the Bank of England will raise interest rates soon, potentially as soon as next month," he added.

Inflation leapt on higher prices for domestic electricity and gas, as well as motor fuel which faced shortages, the ONS said. Second-hand car prices are surging as a worldwide semiconductor shortage dents new vehicle production. A global supply crunch across various sectors and the soaring cost of raw materials are also fuelling inflationary pressures. PTI

# China, US to ease restrictions on each other's media workers

### WASHINGTON

THE United States and China have agreed to ease restrictions on journalist visas shortly after a long-awaited virtual summit between its two leaders, with Beijing on Wednesday calling the move a "hard-won" achievement.

Washington regularly denounces the deterioration in China's treatment of US media members, and has taken measures against Chinese media on US soil that have been accused of being Beijing's propaganda organs. In 2020, Beijing expelled Americans working for several major newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* as tensions soared between the two countries.

But in the wake of a virtual summit between US President

Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, officials from both countries said they had agreed to allow new journalist visas to be issued.

A State Department spokesman said Tuesday that discussions in recent months had led to "some initial progress" in "a few areas" of the media environment.

The official said China had "committed to issue visas for a group of US reporters, provided they are eligible under all applicable laws and regulations."

Beijing also promised to "permit US journalists already in the PRC (People's Republic of China) to freely depart and return, which they had previously been unable to do," the US official said.

Chinese state media said

both sides had reached an agreement, including to "reciprocally approve" the visas of new journalists.

Both sides agreed to extend the validity of journalist visas to one year, after both countries had largely capped permits to three months. Asked about the agreement on Wednesday,

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters that "this hard-won achievement is in line with the interests of media on both sides."

He added that Beijing hopes "both sides will put in place the relevant policies and measures as soon as possible." The State Department believes these measures will allow US media correspondents to return to China "to continue their important work." AFP



## RARE ADMISSION

# Lacked leadership over PLA for a while: Communist Party

### BEIJING

CHINA'S ruling Communist Party has acknowledged that its leadership over the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was lacking for a while and if it had not been solved it would not only have diminished the military's combat capacity, but also undermined the key political principle that the "Party commands the gun."

The high-profile Plenum of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held last week adopted the "landmark resolution" of its major achievements in the last 100 years besides clearing the decks for a record third term for 68-year-old President Xi Jinping.

Unlike other countries where the militaries operate under governments, under the Chinese system the military was

supposed to operate under the command of the CPC leadership. Xi is the General Secretary of the CPC and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the Chinese military. Besides sacking several top Generals for corruption, Xi has virtually carried out a public campaign that the military should function under the party leadership.

In a rare admission of problems between the party and the military, the CPC resolution said, "for a period of time, the Party's leadership over the military was obviously lacking. If this problem had not been completely solved, it would not only have diminished the military's combat capacity, but also undermined the key political principle that the Party commands the gun." PTI

# Taliban warns US of instability if assets not released

### KABUL

THE Taliban called on US Congress members on Wednesday to release Afghan assets frozen after their takeover of the country, warning economic turmoil at home could lead to trouble abroad.

In an open letter, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said the biggest challenge facing Afghanistan was financial insecurity, "and the roots of this concern lead back to the freezing of assets of our people by the US government."

Washington has seized nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank, and the aid-dependent economy has effectively collapsed -- with civil servants unpaid for months and the treasury unable to pay for imports.

Concerned nations have pledged hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, but are reluctant to commit funds unless the Taliban agree to a more inclu-



A Taliban fighter secures the area as people queue up to receive cash at a money distribution site organised by the World Food Program in Kabul | AP

sive government and to guarantee the rights of women and minorities.

"I present to you our compliments and would like to share a few thoughts on our bilateral relations," Muttaqi wrote, noting that 2021 was the centenary of Washington recognising Afghanistan's sovereignty.

In measured understatement, he added: "Akin to other world countries, our bilateral relations have also experienced ups and downs."

The Taliban have since returning to power gone to great lengths to convince the international community that they intend to do things differently

# S-400 deal: More calls for US sanction relief to India

### WASHINGTON

THE US relationship with India is deepening, a top Republican Senator has said, as he supported growing calls for a presidential CAATSA waiver to New Delhi on the purchase of S-400 missiles from Russia.

The S-400 is known as Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defence system.

Senator Tommy Tuberville said he favours granting India a sanctions waiver for its purchase of the Russian S-400 missile-defence system.

"Our relationship with India is deepening. We met with Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi and high-ranking officials to discuss Chinese aggressions toward India," Senator Tommy Tuberville said on Tuesday. The Senator was part of a Congressional delegation to India and Southeast Asia to have a firsthand impression of the dangers being posed by China in the region.

Talking about CAATSA, he said, "I think it should be waived," *Politico* reported on Monday. "We would have loved (for them) to have an Aegis system or a Patriot system ... but they decided to go another direction. So we'll see what Congress and President Biden say about this," he was quoted as saying.

The US has expressed its "concern" over the delivery of S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile systems from Russia to India. The CAATSA, which was brought in 2017, provides for punitive actions against any country engaged in transactions with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.

There are growing calls in the US urging the Biden administration to grant CAATSA waiver to India. In October, two powerful US Senators -- Mark Warner of the Democratic Party and John Cornyn of the Republican Party -- had urged President Biden not to impose provisions of CAATSA against India for buying the S-400 missile system as it is in US interest. "We strongly encourage you to grant a CAATSA waiver to India," they had written to Biden. PTI



Tommy Tuberville

## EXPRESS READ

### Uber resumes ride-sharing with restrictions in US

WASHINGTON: Ride-hailing giant Uber has resumed its ride-sharing service in the United States, a top executive announced Tuesday, offering customers in Miami a feature that was stopped last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The UberX Share option -- formerly called Uber Pool -- allows people to share rides with strangers at a reduced cost, and builds in precautions against the spread of the coronavirus. "609 days later, shared rides are back in the US," tweeted Andrew Macdonald, Uber's Senior Vice President of Mobility and Business Operations. Keeping Covid-19 in mind, drivers on the service can only transport two customers at a time and face masks are compulsory for everyone in the vehicle. Uber has re-introduced ride-sharing in several cities around the world.

this time -- though no female ministers have been named, and girls are still barred from returning to secondary school. "Practical steps have been taken towards good governance, security and transparency," Muttaqi wrote.

"No threat is posed to the region or world from Afghanistan and a pathway has been paved for positive cooperation."

Muttaqi said Afghans "understand the concerns of the international community", but that it was necessary for all sides to take positive steps to build trust.

He warned, however, that the economic situation could spark a mass exodus.

"If the current situation prevails, the Afghan government and people will face problems and will become a cause for mass migration in the region and world which will consequently create further humanitarian and economic issues," he said. AFP



# FM nudges India Inc to invest more, take risks

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

AS private investments continue to remain low, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday asked the industry not to delay investments and take more risks and help the economy to recover.

"I want India Inc. to be a lot more risk taking, build capacity and understand what India is looking for. We want the Indian industry to come forward and expand," Sitharaman said, in her address at Global Economic Policy Summit on Wednesday, hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

She said while the government is ready to take policy decisions, facilitate reforms and increasing capital expenditure

and expanding infrastructure, the industry cannot be sitting and watching, waiting for the risks to be subdued.

"Come forward, open up, expand, bring in new investment. You are seeing the kind of final finished commodities that are coming. You are seeing the kind of imports we are bringing of components which you are fully capable of manufacturing. FDIs are flowing in, there is no doubt. But can it also be visibly seen with India Inc to stand up and say yes, we are ramping up our capacities, no more we are sitting and watching when will the risks be far lesser," Sitharaman added.

Talking about India's dependence on imports, even on

essential items like PPE kits, Sitharaman said the private sector has to walk the extra mile to support growth momentum.

"I was very touched when Uday Kotak spoke about income disparities which are growing. It can't be bridged without you coming forward to offer jobs. It can't be bridged without you reducing the import bill for us," Sitharaman said, adding that to support the industry participation, the government is facilitating all reforms.

"Even as we want to be linked with the global value chains, we have to understand and take cognizance of the risks it has posed us," the finance minister said.



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the CII Global Economic Policy Summit 2021 "Rebuilding Economics" in New Delhi on Wednesday | SHEKHAR YADAV

**I want India Inc. to be a lot more risk taking, build capacity and understand what India is looking for. We want the Indian industry to come forward and expand** —Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister

# Paytm stock likely to debut at a discount

Ahead of listing, Paytm shares are traded at a discount of ₹20-30 in the grey market

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

CONTRARY to bumper listing of Zomato and Nykaa, stock of India's biggest fintech company — Paytm — is likely to make a discounted debut on the exchanges on Thursday, if trends in the grey market are to be believed.

Shares of Paytm on Wednesday were being traded at a discount of ₹20-30 in the unofficial market vis-à-vis its issue price of ₹2,150. This comes after the IPO, India's biggest at ₹18,300 crore, received a lukewarm response, getting subscribed by only 1.89 times.

Gaurav Garg, Head of Research, Capitalvia Global Research, said that Paytm's GMP has reduced consistently from ₹130 to ₹30 yesterday and today it is at around ₹-30. "This clearly indicates that the listing is going to be at discount. The trend show that the grey market premium (GMP) has kept on decreasing consistently and there are high chances that the listing will happen at a discount," adds Gupta.

GMP refers to the estimated price a stock might list at. Market participants see GMP as an indicator of the stock's performance on listing.

Ayush Agrawal, Sr. Research Analyst - Merchant Banking at Swastika Investmart, said, "The grey market premium of the company was around 2% be-



tween ₹40 and ₹50 when issue opened, which is the lowest compared to most of the recently listed IPO stocks. As major portion of the issue is OFS (offer for sale), we expect the shares to list in a flat ambit with negative close at -5% to -10%."

In its IPO, held between Nov 8 and 10, One97 Communications, the parent company of Paytm, raised ₹8,300 crore by issuing fresh shares, while existing shareholders and promoters sold shares worth ₹10,000 crore in the offer-for-sale component. In its first day of subscription, the IPO was subscribed by only 0.18 times. "₹1.4 lakh crore valuation valuation with revenue of just ₹3,000 crore and continuous losses is too much to ask for even in the on-going bull run. We are negative on the stock," said a leading analyst last week.

## HOME LOAN

## SAT allows PNB Housing Fin to withdraw its plea against Sebi

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has allowed PNB Housing Finance to withdraw its petition against Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

The Tribunal in an order passed on 16 November, allowed the housing finance company to withdraw the petition, PNB Housing Finance informed the exchanges.

PNB Housing Finance had moved the appellate tribunal after Sebi had asked it to halt a preferential allotment of shares and warrants to entities including Pluto Investments, an affiliate of the Carlyle Group, General Atlantic, Salisbury Investments Private Ltd, and Alpha Investments to raise ₹4,000 crore.

The Sebi stayed the deal after proxy advisory firm SES had raised concerns over the proposed deal and said it was not in favour of the minority shareholders as well as the promoter Punjab National Bank.

PNB Housing had challenged the Sebi order at the SAT, which had passed a split verdict, after which SEBI had filed an appeal against the SAT verdict at the Supreme Court. However, after questions were raised over the fairness of the deal, the board of PNB Housing Finance on Oct 14 decided to terminate the fund raising deal with the Carlyle-led group of investors citing pending legal issues which may delay regulatory approvals.

## Govt to complete divestment of 5-6 PSUs; LIC IPO may delay till June

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

EVEN as the government is confident of complete the divestment of 5-6 public sector units, they are yet to arrive at the valuation of LIC IPO and sources in the finance ministry fear it may not happen this fiscal year.

"After 19 years, we would possibly see 5-6 privatisations this year. Not only Air India but BPCL is in due diligence stage. BEML, Pawan Hans, NINL, these are the transactions in which financial bids can take place in December-January," Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management

(DIPAM), said at the CII's Global Economy Policy Summit.

Talking of the LIC IPO, he added that the government is working hard for it. "On LIC IPO, we are working very hard. For the capital market, it will be a very big event in the first quarter of 2022," Pandey said, adding that they are aiming at IPO of LIC to hit the market in fourth quarter of FY22.

However, sources from the ministry said the government is yet to arrive at the valuation of LIC and while there is target to arrive at valuation by December, there are many technical challenges, which is delaying

the process. "The intent is to come up with the IPO by March end, but we fear this may not happen this fiscal. Till date no consensus is on the embedded value. However when said that, the process will be completed by close to the deadline, maximum by June end," source said.

The government has set disinvestment target of ₹1.75 lakh crore for FY22. Presenting the Budget, the finance minister had said that strategic sale of IDBI Bank, BPCL, Shipping Corp, Container Corporation, Neelachal Ispat, Pawan Hans, AI, among others, would be completed during the year.



## TODAY'S STOCK PICK

Current Price ₹97.60  
Target Price ₹130  
BANK OF BARODA

The bank expects the growth momentum to continue led by retail segments, while corporate book to see gradual recovery. The asset quality outlook seems to be improving as the bank reported a decline in the GNPA/NNPA ratio by 75bp/20bp QoQ, while PCR stood stable at -67%. Furthermore, SMA 1/2 declined to 1.87% of loans. We estimate RoA/RoE of 0.7% / 10.9% by FY23E. We maintain our BUY rating.

—Motilal Oswal Financial Services

**Disclaimer:** The views and recommendations made above are that of the individual analyst or broking company, and not that of *The Morning Standard*

## TRAI DATA

## Jio tops among telcos in average 4G download speed

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

RELIANCE Jio has again topped the 4G download speed chart with average download speed of 21.9 megabit per second (Mbps) in October 2021, leaving competitors behind.

As per the latest data published by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, Vodafone Idea (VIL) network recorded average download speed of 15.6 Mbps in October, followed by Bharti Airtel with average 4G download speed of 13.2 Mbps.

However, Bharti Airtel and VI also reduced their gap with the Jio network as Airtel 4G data download speed increased to 13.2 Mbps in Oc-

tober from 5 Mbps in June and VIL 4G speed increased to 15.6 Mbps from 6.5 Mbps during the five months.

In terms of average upload data, VIL maintained its leadership in terms of 4G data upload speed in October.

It recorded an upload speed of 7.6 Mbps, the highest in the last five months. Similarly, Airtel and the Jio network also recorded their five-month high of 5.2 Mbps and 6.4 Mbps 4G data upload speed in October.

The average speed is computed by Trai based on the data it collects across India with the help of its MySpeed application on a real-time basis.



## Kyndryl sees India as its key market

UMA KANNAN @ Bengaluru

IT infrastructure services provider Kyndryl, which is a spinoff of IBM Corp's managed infrastructure business, wants to partner with India to help extend the benefits of the country's huge digital economy to reach more people and businesses.

"As enterprises everywhere reimagine how they do busi-

ness in the digital age, the world is going to turn to India as a model," said Kyndryl Chairman and CEO Martin Schroeter at the Bengaluru Tech Summit-2021 held here on Wednesday.

Kyndryl recently announced its global strategic partnership with Microsoft.

It is supporting complex infrastructure in areas like banking, telecom, and supply

chain that are key to providing citizen services across the country.

"India is a place that is brimming with innovative ideas, and it has been for a long time. The innovation from India has helped transform industries globally," he said, adding 65% of global GDP will be digitised by 2022, yet only half of all companies have started their transformation journeys.

## TV subscribers can soon opt for pay-per-view: Trai

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

TELECOM Regulatory Authority of India on Wednesday said it is working towards creating time-bound solutions and reforms in its policies so that Indian consumers can access global offerings such as pay-per-view and pay-per-programme in time. While addressing the 10th edition of the Big Picture Summit organised

by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) TRAI chairman PD Vaghela also mentioned TRAI is committed to ensure ease of doing business for the telecom and broadcast sector. "The regulator is working towards creating time-bound solutions and reforms in policies and hopes Indian consumers can access global offerings such as pay-per-view and pay-per-programme in time," said

Vaghela. Pay-per-view is a business model in which viewers can purchase a ticket in order to watch any video content. The model is quite successful abroad, but in India it is yet to be adopted.

Vaghela also thanked television broadcasters as they had done a great service by keeping homes entertained during the pandemic. He pointed out that around 46% of the population

had taken to watching TV all seven days of the week at the peak of the lockdown. "Trai's main motto is to create a level-playing field for all stakeholders... and ensure balance between broadcasters and distribution operators. The fact that our tariffs in broadcasting are among the lowest in the world exemplifies that Trai interventions have helped the consumers," said Vaghela.

## SpiceJet inks pact with Boeing to settle dues for grounding of 737 Max aircraft

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

LOSS-MAKING carrier SpiceJet said on Wednesday that it has entered into a settlement agreement with US-based aircraft manufacturer Boeing wherein the latter has agreed to settle the outstanding claims pertaining to the grounding of its 737 Max aircraft and its return to service.

This settlement, according to SpiceJet, would pave the way for the induction of "efficient and younger" MAX aircraft into its fleet and ensure the resumption of new aircraft deliveries from its order of 155 MAX aircraft. "The Company is pleased to announce that it has entered into a settlement agreement with Boeing wherein Boeing has agreed to provide certain accommodations and settle the



Crashes aftermath

Boeing as well as SpiceJet faced a major setback in March 2019 when aviation regulators around the world started grounding 737 MAX aircraft following its involvement in two fatal crashes

outstanding claims related to the grounding of 737 MAX aircraft and its return to service," SpiceJet said in a regulatory filing.

SpiceJet is Boeing's biggest customer for the MAX planes in India and at present has 13 such aircraft in its fleet. Boeing

as well as SpiceJet faced a major setback in March 2019 when aviation regulators around the world, including India, started grounding 737 MAX aircraft following its involvement in two fatal crashes that killed 346 people.

It was only in August this year that India's aviation regulator - Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) - gave green light to the country's airlines to fly the MAX jet. However, SpiceJet is yet to start flying the above mentioned aircraft.

SpiceJet, which recently reported losses for the seventh consecutive quarter, had also announced that it has finalised the terms of the settlement with CDB Aviation and Avolon, two of its major lessors of 737 MAX aircraft.

## EXPRESS READ

### Sebi comes out with investor charter

NEW DELHI: Sebi on Wednesday came out with investor charter. The charter includes rights and responsibilities of investors and dos and don'ts of investing in securities market, as per a public notice. The vision of the investor charter is "to protect the interests of investors by enabling them to understand the risks involved and invest in a fair, transparent, secure market, and to get services in a timely and efficient manner."

### JSW Steel in S&P DJSI Sustainability Index

NEW DELHI: JSW Steel on Wednesday said it has been included in the S&P Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) 2021 for the Emerging Markets. In a statement, JSW Steel said it is among the three steel companies from emerging markets that made it to the DJSI EM Index, which comprises 108 firms globally. "JSW Steel has been selected in the S&P Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) for the Emerging Markets for 2021," it said.

### Vedanta looks to list businesses separately

NEW DELHI: Vedanta Ltd on Wednesday said it is mulling a complete overhaul of its corporate structure, including demerger and listing of the aluminum, iron & steel, and oil and gas businesses as standalone entities to unlock shareholder value. Chairman Anil Agarwal told PTI that Vedanta's board has constituted a committee of directors to evaluate and recommend options to restructure the group.

## GROWING TRACTION

# Short-form videos to grab more eye balls of users in Indian market

UMA KANNAN @ Bengaluru

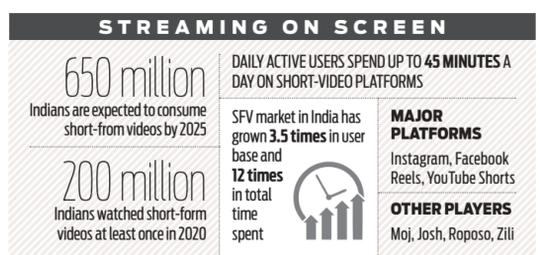
WITH an endless feed of videos to scroll through, Indian short-video platforms are attracting new users, as a new study suggests that over 50 million users in the country have posted at least one short video.

Thanks to the Indian short-form videos (SFV) market as it is dominated by Moj, Josh, Roposo and Zili, among other players, apart from Instagram and Facebook Reels and YouTube Shorts. Before the ban, TikTok used to be the largest player in the short-form video market in India. Many

SFVs in India accelerated their growth after the TikTok ban.

A recent report by Bain & Company says that over 200 million Indians watched short-form videos at least once in 2020. Top brands too have started using short-video platforms to reach out to their customers.

Flipkart recently announced its association with Moj, which has monthly active user base of over 160 million members. One of the main aims of this collaboration is to provide users with a seamless content and commerce experience on Moj as they can buy tagged Flipkart



marketplace products directly from the video screen.

Manohar Singh Charan, Chief Financial Officer, Mohalla Tech, the parent company of

Moj, said the creator economy-led revenue streams are globally seeing a massive upsurge. "With the explosive growth our app has had since its launch,

Moj has become home to the zeitgeist of the Indian youth," he said.

Bain & Company report says that daily active users spend up to 45 minutes a day on these platforms, and by 2025, 650 million Indians will consume short-form videos.

The SFV market in the country has grown 3.5 times in user base and 12 times in total time spent by all users on SFV platforms.

Augmented Reality based social media network Flam Founder Shourya Agarwal said, "The world will never go back to pictures and text the

same way, as short videos are already a thing of masses with hundreds of millions of creators and consumers. Going forward, people will move out of smartphones and move to more immersive 3D content with camera-first interfaces."

The future of SFV market will be dominated by tech-enabled hyper-personalisation and social-led engagement, a monetisation boom, innovations to onboard the next wave of users, emergence of a robust creator ecosystem, and birth of niche platforms within short video ecosystems, adds the report.



Novak Djokovic moved into the last four of the ATP Finals for the 10th time with a comfortable victory over Andrey Rublev in Turin on Wednesday. The World No 1, bidding to equal Roger Federer's record of six titles at the season-ending event, brushed aside Rublev 6-3, 6-2 to secure his 50th match win of the year. Djokovic, thanks to successive victories, has wrapped up top spot in the Green Group.

# FAN-TASTIC START FOR DRAVID, ROHIT

Playing in front of home crowd after long gap, India post thrilling win

ASHIM SUNAM @ Bengaluru

THERE were a number of subplots ahead of the first India-New Zealand T20I at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Wednesday. The two best players of both teams, Virat Kohli and Kane Williamson, were absent with the duo giving the series a miss alongside few others. The buzz in Indian cricket grounds was back with the presence of a capacity crowd. However, the biggest of them being the start of a new era in India cricket, headlined by India's new T20 captain Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid, the head coach. There is pressure on the new combination to build a side, which is capable of lifting the ICC T20 World Cup next year in Australia. The new era has started off on a bright note with India scripting a five-wicket win to take a 1-0 lead in the series. Though Kohli is not featuring in the series, India have never lacked firepower in their bat-

ting unit. And it was Suryakumar Yadav, who walked into bat at Kohli's position (number three), to steal the show ahead of Rohit and KL Rahul. He looked in top form, scoring 62 from 40 balls, including six fours and three sixes. It was an innings of the highest calibre, where he played shots all around the wicket with ridiculous ease. But his innings nearly went in vain with New Zealand pushing the game to the last over, where 10 runs were required. Rishabh Pant's four in the fourth ball helped India breathe a sigh of relief.

Though Suryakumar delivered, the platform was laid by openers Rahul and Rohit. A good start by them was more or less job half done and they precisely did that. Chasing 165 to win, India were on the charge in the first five overs as they raced to 50/0 with Rohit doing bulk of the scoring (17-ball 31) during the period. The duo did not even spare Trent Boult, New Zealand's best bowler,

who was hit for two sixes and two fours in his second over.

India lost the wicket of Rahul in the sixth over and in walked Suryakumar, who straightaway looked comfortable. He was not aggressive right from the outset as his 10-ball nine suggested. After getting used to the pace of the pitch, the Mumbaikar gradually played his shots to perfection, dealing in fours and sixes primarily. Even the brilliant Rohit could not match Suryakumar's strokeplay.

Even after Rohit was out in the 14th over, Suryakumar was not afraid to play his shots. He continued his dominance with three fours in the 16th over to put India on brink. But his cheekiness proved too much as he was bowled by Boult while going for a scoop. With 21 required in the last three overs, India should have romped home, but the game went down to the last over and Pant sealed the victory with two balls to spare.



Suryakumar Yadav hit a 40-ball 62 to help India chase down tricky score in the first T20I in Jaipur, on Wednesday | AFP

**Brief scores:**  
New Zealand 164/6 in 20 ovs (Guptill 70, Chapman 63; Ashwin 2/23, Bhuvneshwar 2/24) lost to India 166/5 in 19.4 ovs (Suryakumar 62, Rohit 48; Boult 2/31).

EXPRESS READ

**WTA Finals: Kontaveit vs Muguruza for top prize**

GUADALAJARA: Anett Kontaveit will face Garbine Muguruza in the final of the season-ending WTA Finals in Guadalajara. Sixth seed Muguruza overpowered Spanish compatriot Paula Badosa 6-3, 6-3. Eighth-seeded Estonian Kontaveit beat Greek fourth seed Maria Sakkari 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.

**Mixed day for Indian archers in Asian meet**

DHAKA: India's men's compound team won a bronze medal but the women team lost its play-off at the 22nd Asian Archery Championships on Wednesday. The men's team outplayed Bangladesh 235-223, while the women's team lost 208-220 to Kazakhstan in the bronze playoff.

**SAI Institutional Awards for 162 athletes**

NEW DELHI: The Sports Authority of India on Wednesday gave out its first-ever Institutional Awards to a total of 162 athletes and 84 coaches for their performance in national and international competitions. Cash awards amounting to ₹85.02 lakhs were conferred on the awardees.

**Srikanth and Prannoy enter second round**

BALL: Indian shuttlers Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy made positive starts to their men's singles campaign at the Indonesia Masters Super 750 badminton tournament. Srikanth staved beat France's Christo Popov 21-18, 15-21, 21-16. Prannoy saw off Malaysia's Liew Daren 22-20, 21-19.

## UNIQUE SPORTS SCIENCE ECOSYSTEM FOR ATHLETES

INDRANEEL DAS @ Chennai

SPORTS science was not an integral part of the sports development programme in Indian sport until the 2010 Commonwealth Games. Even after that, the progress had been tepid. In top Sports Authority of India centres, there have been instances when equipment was available but no expertise to operate them. Some centres, other than Patiala and Bengaluru, did not have enough physios or masseurs for trainees. Some did not have sports science specialists.

If SAI Sports Science head Dr Pralay Majumdar is to be believed, in the last couple of years, a few steps have been taken to ensure quality as well as quantity at most of the National Centres of Excellence in the country. "We have started this initiative in 2019 from New Delhi and taken it across the coun-

try," said Majumdar during an interaction on Wednesday. "Since then we have appointed some 190 persons to take care of sports science in 13 NCOEs as well as in our high performance centres in Patiala and Bengaluru."

Majumdar, who also heads the sports science division of SAI, felt soon SAI centres will have expertise, including high tech equipment, to compete with the best sports science centres in the country. "We have started the journey and soon we will have more experienced persons and technology to be the best in the country." Another objective, the SAI had outlined and Majumdar emphasised, was the creation of a unique sports science ecosystem through National Centre of Sports Sciences and Research (NCSSR). Around ₹150 crore has

been earmarked for this project. "The spokes are the 13 NCOEs centres and the hub is the NCSSR." The NCSSR's goal is to support high performance centres that would also double up as high-level research centre and usher in innovation. The NCSSR will also be an educational centre.

As of now, SAI is building and reinforcing its rehabilitation centres, but according to Majumdar, that would take some time. So until then, the TOPS team can have the support system from anywhere. If the athletes need rehabilitation elsewhere they are free to go. "We have 13 centres which are equally good but when you compare it with say some top private academies, we will need some time to reach that level. Some of them are for some specific sports. Our objective is to

cater to the needs of all athletes across the country. What kind of monitoring process we will follow is also in place."

"One vital thing I want to emphasise is you may have the best equipment but when it comes to expertise, we need that kind of manpower. We have recruited some competent persons who will make a strong system."

As for the ratio of athletes to physio and masseur, the doctor said as of now it is 1 is to 100 athletes but for those sport where the necessity of more physio and masseur arise, they will have more. As for the working in cross-purpose where some federations appoint their own sports science experts, Majumdar said there has been some mistrust but when it comes to monitoring and implementation both SAI and federation officials work together.

Full story: newindianexpress.com

## HC panel to probe Manika's claims

ANKITA UPADHYAY @ New Delhi

THE Delhi High Court on Wednesday appointed a three member committee to probe allegations of match fixing against national coach Soumyadeep Roy levelled by table tennis player Manika Batra.

A single bench of Justice Rekha Palli stated that the three member committee will look into the allegations levelled against Roy. The committee will comprise of Retired Supreme Court Judge AK Sikhari and Retired High Court judge Justice Mukul Mudgal and a sports person whose appointment will be decided later. The court posted the matter after 4 weeks for further hearing and said that it will decide whether an administrator has to be appointed for the table tennis federation.

The High Court order comes after the top ranked table tennis player Manika Batra moved a petition following her non-selection for the 25th ITTF Asian Table Tennis Championships, 2021 in Doha.

## Cloud over cue sports nat's post stay order

FIROZ MIRZA @ Chennai

IN what might prove to be a big setback to the Billiards and Snooker Federation of India (BSFI), the District Registrar of Societies has stayed the notice for conducting the national championships a week before the event was scheduled to begin in Bhopal.

The order dated November 10, which is in possession of this daily, also asked both the parties to appear before the authority concerned on November 30 with written replies, supported by relevant documents without fail.

Notably, Arvind Savur, coach of renowned cueist Pankaj Advani, has filed a complaint against the BSFI in June claiming the body is illegally convening an Extraordinary General Meeting and making efforts to shift its headquarters from Bangalore, Karnataka to Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

The advocate of the petitioner again submitted a memo on November 10, enclosing the copy of a letter dated November 2, wherein the BSFI proposed to organise the nationals from November 24 to 29. "In view of the aforesaid preamble, U/s 25 of the Karnataka Societies Registration Act 1960 and Rule 8 of the Karnataka Societies Registration Rule, 1961, the notice dated November 2, 2021, for conducting of the national championships-2021 from November 24 to 29, is stayed here-with pending enquiry with immediate effect and until further orders," read the order issued by SG Manjunath Singh, district registrar of societies, 4th zone, Bengaluru.

As per the letter issued by the BSFI to members units, the last date for paying entry fee was November 14. The entry fee for each participant in the senior men and women category was fixed as ₹2500 per event while it's ₹1000 per event in junior and sub-junior categories both for the male and female cueists. "How can the event be postponed now as players have already paid the entry fees and made their travel, lodging and boarding arrangements. Let's see what can be done now," said an official from the BSFI, who is also part of various committees formed to organise the nationals.

Earlier, the registrar of societies in its order dated June 16, 2021, had stayed holding an Extraordinary General Meeting terming the election of respondents (president and secretary-general) illegal. In yet another order dated August 25, 2021, it had stayed the notice dated August 20 issued by the BSFI calling for the meeting of the management committee on August 27. BSFI office-bearers, when contacted, refused to comment on the issue.



## Federer eyeing return 'one last time' in mid-2022

AFP @ Lausanne

ROGER FEDERER is targeting a return to the circuit in mid-2022, the Swiss star said Wednesday, hoping to play some big matches once again before bowing out in style. The 20-time Grand Slam champion, who turned 40 in August, is working his way back from a persistent right knee injury that restricted him to just five tournaments this year.

Federer said the Australian Open in January was out of the question, while participation in the French Open in May and June and his favourite major, Wimbledon in June and July, was highly unlikely.

"The truth is I would be incredibly surprised to play Wimbledon, which is to say that Australia does not even come into play," he said in an interview published in the Swiss newspapers 24Heures and Tribune de Geneve.

Federer had been out for more than a year with two surgeries on his right knee before getting back onto the tour in 2021. But he played only 13 matches, and underwent a third operation on the knee following his quarterfinal defeat at Wimbledon in July.

"This operation, I was going to have to do it anyway for my long-term well-being... to be able to ski with my children, to play football or tennis with my friends in the decades to come. My first motivation was to get back in shape for my life as a man," he said.

Federer said he will start light running again in January and then only take up "training that looks like tennis" in March-April. "I want to go and see one last time what I am capable of as a professional tennis player," he said.

"We would all like that I could say goodbye in my own way and on a tennis court."

SYED MUSHTAQ ALI

## Holdes TN face Sanju-led Kerala test

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

KERALA couldn't have asked for a bigger test in the quarter-final of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy as they come face to face with defending champions Tamil Nadu. On paper, the Vijay Shankar-led side will be the favourites, but Kerala, led by Sanju Samson, have been in good form in the tournament.

Sanju has scored 227 runs so far including three half-centuries and another unbeaten 45 against Bihar. In fact, Sanju has stayed unbeaten in four of the six matches so far and has been instrumental in helping Kerala finish off matches.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu look well on course of defending their title. Barring a defeat against Goa, they have looked the part in the other matches.

Four wins out of five in the group stages ensured that they pipped Maharashtra to top the group and secure direct qualification to the quarterfinal.

"We will have respect for our opponents because they are the defending champions. Traditionally, they have been a very good side over the years. But we will try to focus on our game and our cricket," said Kerala head coach Tinu Yohannan.

The biggest positive for Kerala in this campaign has been

their ability to fire as a collective unit. While Sanju has been in good nick, the other players have provided vital contributions.

Their openers Mohammed Azharuddeen and Rohan Kunnummal have given the side great starts while veteran batsman Sachin Baby has been consistent in the middle when called upon. Rohan's contributions at the top has meant that Kerala hasn't missed the injured Robin Uthappa a lot.

The bowling department has also fared well. In the absence of Sandeep Warrier, who now represents Tamil Nadu, and veteran pacer S Sreesanth, the other bowlers have stepped up.

The likes of Manu Krishnan, Midhun S and Asif KM have complemented senior bowlers like Jalaj Saxena and Basil Thampi. "I think the team is performing as a unit and all the players know what role they have to play. This has been crucial and we have not been relying on one individual," said Yohannan.

The contest between the likes of Warrier and T Natarajan against Sanju Samson will be an interesting match-up while the Kerala bowlers will be wary of N Jagadeesan in what promises to be an exciting contest between the southern rivals.

## Software to lift swimmers' performance

ASHIM SUNAM @ Bengaluru

IN the last few years, the Swimming Federation of India (SFI) has been putting its best feet forward to improve the swimming standards in the country. They have been looking into the scientific training methods as well. A short camp for Indian swimmers in Bengaluru under a well-known swim biomechanics expert Dr Genadijus Sokolovas, who has worked with swimming great Michael Phelps, earlier this year is a prime example. They have a long-time arrangement with the expert, who will also help with talent identification and development with

swimmers' progression being monitored.

Recently, the SFI also inaugurated the state of art start-turns and underwater biomechanics analysis system from Germany in the city. It was funded by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs, which costs around ₹45 lakhs. With cameras taking videos of the swimmers, the technical side of their starts and turns under the water can be analysed, which can help improve them as swimmers. The federation's secretary general, Monal Chokshi threw more light on how the system



will work. "What we have brought in is a five-camera system with complete analysis software, where four cameras are placed underwater at various points, generally, at the 5m, 10m, 15m and 25m mark. There is one camera on the deck. When the swimmers take a start and swim the 25m, the system will capture the video. Similarly, when they come to the wall and take a turn, the underwater cameras capture the video, which goes to the software. The software then analyses the trajectory, depth at which they went, velocity, reaction time and

so on. Also, the visual feedback can be given to the swimmer by the coach, who will see it in real time. They can then modify the start, turn, and technique so that the speed is not compromised," Chokshi explained.

As of now, the system is at Dolphin Aquatics in the Padukone-Draavid Centre for Sports Excellence. The technical support for the biomechanics side of the system will be given by the Abhinav Bindra Targetting Performance, which has its centre in the Padukone-Draavid Academy. Dolphin coaches are also being trained on the system usage — how to see the results and reporting etc.

FOOTBALL

## Dutch reach World Cup; Turkey, Ukraine enter play-offs

AFP @ Paris

THE Netherlands clinched the final automatic place in European qualifying for the 2022 World Cup as late goals from Steven Bergwijn and Memphis Depay sealed a 2-0 win over Norway on Tuesday, with Turkey and Ukraine grabbing play-off spots.

The Dutch, with injured coach Louis van Gaal watching from the stands in Rotterdam, only needed a point to top Group G and came through a nervy encounter to finish two points clear of second-placed Turkey, who pipped Norway to a play-off spot. Tottenham

winger Bergwijn smashed Arnaud Danjuma's cross into the top corner with six minutes left at De Kuip. Barcelona's Depay then made it two a minute into injury time as he slotted home Bergwijn's pass to seal the Netherlands a return to the tournament after missing out on Russia in 2018.

The Netherlands join Belgium, England, Germany, Denmark, France, Croatia, Switzerland, Spain and Serbia to have qualified directly from Europe.

In the play-offs, Turkey are alongside Euro 2020 winners Italy, Portugal, Scotland, Russia, Sweden, Poland, Wales,

North Macedonia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Austria, with the draw on November 26 for the games in March.

**Argentina qualify too**

MONTEVIDEO: Argentina qualified for next year's World Cup in Qatar as a point in their 0-0 draw with Brazil on Tuesday proved enough after defeats for Chile and Uruguay.

**Results: Europe:** Bosnia and Herzegovina 0-2 Ukraine 2, Finland 0-2 France, Czech Republic 2-0 Estonia, Wales 1-1 Belgium, Gibraltar 1-3 Latvia, Montenegro 1-2 Turkey, Netherlands 2-0 Norway.

**South America:** Bolivia 3-0 Uruguay, Venezuela 1-2 Peru, Colombia 0-0 Paraguay, Argentina 0-0 Brazil.



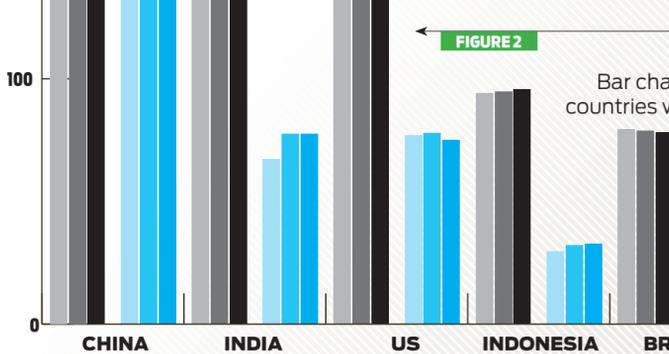
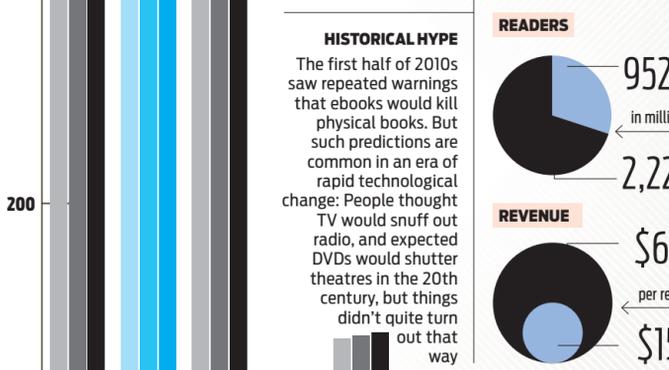
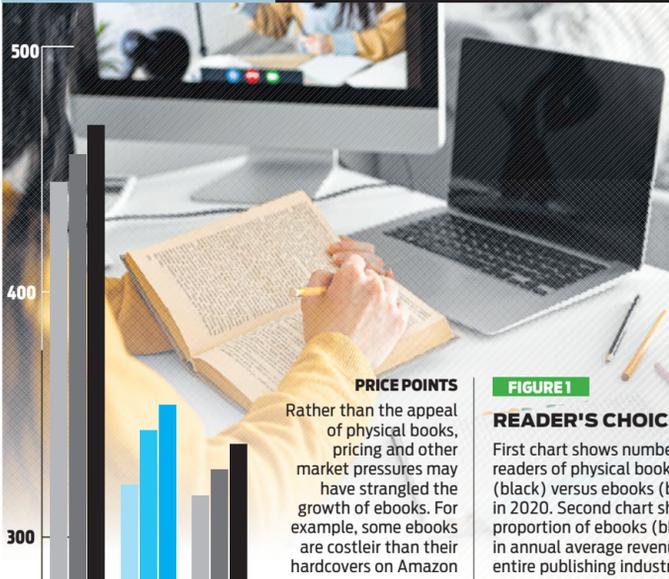
Argentina's Lionel Messi (c) in action against Brazil on Tuesday | AFP



The US government is making billions of dollars available to drugmakers to scale up production of mRNA Covid-19 vaccines in the hopes of building capacity to produce an extra 1 billion shots per year to share with the world.



More than 100,000 people died from drug overdoses in the United States during the 12 months ending April 2021, a leap of 28.5 percent on the year before, driven largely by opioids, data showed Wednesday.



# PRINT PREVAILS

The centuries-old technology of printing books, the most revolutionary advance in history, is continuing to be resilient against its much-prophesied nemesis: ebooks. Surveys indicate younger readers actually prefer physical books over digital ones, or enjoy hybrid experiences with both mediums. It is the older bookworms who prefer ebooks, given advantages such as adjustable font sizes. We take a look at data that shows print remains the king in readership and book publishing. **Aravindakshan S**

FIGURE 3

## BRIEF HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF PRINTING PIONEERS AND PUBLISHING

**800 CE**  
China sees the invention of wood-block printing, in which text is chiselled on a block backwards and pages are printed off of it

**971 CE**  
*Tripitaka*, a vast Buddhist canon, is printed using 130,000 wooden blocks — one for every page

**1250 CE**  
Korean civil minister Choe Yun-ui comes up with printing technique that involved small metal pieces that are coated with ink and contained backwards letters

**1440 CE**  
A printing press is created by **Johannes Gutenberg** in Mainz, Germany, using a method similar to the Korean one. Today, Gutenberg is accepted as the inventor of modern printing, though the technology existed much before his birth

**1998**  
First dedicated ebook readers in the US. The previous three decades had seen the gradual entry of ebooks within CD-ROMs and floppy disks

**2007 CE**  
The launch of Amazon Kindle makes ebooks mainstream and more accessible, sparking predictions of the death of physical books due to the “disruptive” impact of digital technology. The ebook revolution never actually materialised

**1930 CE**  
The idea of an electronic reading machine is expounded by Bob Brown, who wanted to read “hundred-thousand-word novels in 10 minutes” while being able to “adjust the type size and avoid paper cuts”

**1935 CE**  
Book publishing reaches the mass with the introduction of paperbacks by Allen Lane — the founder of the Penguin publishing house — which made buying books a much cheaper exercise

**An idea for an electronic simultaneous reading machine | The Architecture of Possibility, Michael Hara**

# Destroyed Afghan Bodhisattva mural recreated in Japan

## ARCHAEOLOGY

TOKYO: Japanese researchers have crafted a “super clone” of an Afghan mural destroyed by the Taliban, using a mix of traditional and digital techniques that they hope will salvage the work’s “spirit” for future generations.



Not a single fragment remains of the seventh-century cave painting demolished in 2001 along with two massive Buddha statues and other artefacts in Afghanistan’s Bamiyan valley, sparking outrage.

But a precise replica, the result of three years of state-of-the-art reproduction efforts, went on display at a museum in Tokyo in September and October, just weeks after the Taliban returned to power in Kabul.

The mural on the ceiling of a cave near the famous statues depicted a blue Bodhisattva — or someone on the path to becoming a Buddha.

At six metres long and three metres high (20 by 10 feet), the intricate full-size copy has been dubbed a “super clone” by the reproduction team at Tokyo University of the Arts.

“We have succeeded in recreating a very precise representation in three dimensions,” from its texture to the type of paint, said the team’s co-leader Takashi Inoue.

Japan is a major donor to Afghanistan and has long been involved in heritage protection efforts at Bamiyan, a crossroads of ancient civilisations considered to be one of the birthplaces of Japanese Buddhism.

The team digitally processed more than 100 photographs taken by Japanese archaeologists

of the mural before it was destroyed, to create a computerised model of its surface.

They then fed this data into a machine, which carved the exact shape into a styrofoam block. To complete the replica, artists applied a traditional paint in a lapis lazuli shade similar to the one used for the original mural.

Through this process, “we can reproduce designs that are very close to the real ones again and again, to hand down their spirit to future generations,” said Inoue, a specialist in Eurasian cultural heritage. “Let’s stop vandalism. Let’s preserve priceless culture — the heritage of mankind — together.”

Days ahead of the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in August, the Taliban overran Kabul, sparking fears of a return to their brutal reign of 1996 to 2001.

The new regime insists it wants to protect archaeological heritage from destruction.

On a recent visit to Bamiyan by AFP journalists, Taliban gunmen stood guarding the rock cavities that once housed the two Buddha statues.

## FACT OF THE MATTER

### Ray of hope for monarchs



#### CONSERVATION

There is a ray of hope for the vanishing orange-and-black Western monarch butterflies. The number wintering along California’s central coast is bouncing back after the population, whose presence is often a good indicator of ecosystem health, reached an all-time low last year. Experts pin their decline on climate change, habitat destruction and lack of food due to drought. An annual winter count last year by the Xerces Society recorded fewer than 2,000 butterflies, a massive decline from the tens of thousands tallied in recent years and the millions that clustered in trees from Northern California’s Mendocino County to Baja California, Mexico in the south in the 1980s. Now, their roosting sites are concentrated mostly on California’s central coast.

### Record sale of Kahlo work



#### ART

A rare painting by Frida Kahlo sold in a New York auction house Tuesday for almost \$35 million, a record price for a work by the iconic Mexican artist. At the same sale, a painting by French artist Pierre Soulages also broke a record for his work by reaching \$20.2 million dollars. As expected, the self-portrait of Kahlo entitled *Diego y yo* (Diego and me, 1949), where the face of the painter’s husband Diego Rivera appears on her forehead, smashed the former record of \$8 million set by a Kahlo in 2016. That made it the most expensive Latin American work of art in history sold at auction, the previous record having gone to a painting by Diego Rivera himself, whose artwork *Los Rivalets* (1931) sold for \$9.76 million in 2018.

# India smog blamed for Lahore dirty air

## POLLUTION

LAHORE: The Pakistani city of Lahore was declared the most polluted city in the world by an air quality monitor on Wednesday, as residents choking in acrid smog pleaded with officials to take action.

Instead of taking action, authorities are blaming India. Lahore had an air quality ranking of 348, well over the hazardous level of 300, according to IQAir, the Swiss technology company that operates the AirVisual monitoring platform.

“Children are experiencing breathing diseases... for God’s sake, find a solution,” labourer Muhammad Saeed told AFP. Air pollution has worsened in Pakistan in recent years, as a mixture of low-grade diesel fumes, smoke from seasonal crop burn off, and colder wind-temperatures coalesce into stagnant clouds of smog.

Lahore — a bustling megacity of more than 11 million people in Pakistan’s Punjab province near the border with India

— consistently ranks among the worst cities in the world for air pollution.

In recent years residents have built their own air purifiers and taken out lawsuits against government officials in desperate bids to clean the air — but authorities have been slow to act, blaming the smog on India or claiming the figures are exaggerated.

“We are poor people, can’t even afford a doctor’s charges,” shopkeeper Ikram Ahmed told AFP. “We can only plead with them to control the pollution. I am not a literate person, but I have read that Lahore has the worst air quality and then comes India’s Delhi. If it continues like this, we will die.”

“Before, I used to come (for a walk) with my children but now I don’t bring them out with me,” Saeed the labourer said.

“There are factories and small industries operating here, either shift them somewhere else, give them compensation or provide them with modern technology, so we can get rid of this smog.”



# Novavax files for EU Covid vaccine approval

## MEDICINE

THE European Union’s drug regulator said it received an application from Novavax to authorize the American biotechnology company’s coronavirus vaccine.

In a statement on Wednesday, the European Medicines

Agency said it had begun evaluating data submitted by Novavax for its two-dose vaccine. An expedited review process could potentially produce a decision within weeks.

Novavax’s COVID-19 vaccine is made using a different technology than others currently on the market, includ-

ing those made by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, and the messenger RNA vaccines produced by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech.

Novavax’s shot is made with lab-grown copies of the spike protein that coats the coronavirus, which then trigger an immune response.



## GENTLE TAKE-OFFS

Hot air balloons fly from Domri raj ghat at the launch of the International Balloon Festival in Varanasi on Wednesday | PTI

## FAMILY’S FOUNDATION

# Grandmothers are hard-wired to care deeply for you: Study

## RESEARCH

WASHINGTON: Scientists say they have proven what many people fortunate enough to grow up with their grandparents know all along: Grandmothers have strong nurturing instincts and are hard-wired to care deeply about their grandchildren.

A new study published in the Royal Society B on Tuesday is the first to provide a neural snapshot of the cherished intergenerational bond.

Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), researchers at Emory University in the southern US state of Georgia scanned the brains of 50 grandmothers who were

shown pictures of their grandchildren, who were between three and 12 years old.

As a control, they were also shown pictures of an unknown child, an adult parent of the same sex as their grandchild, and an unknown adult.

“They recruited areas of the brain that are involved with emotional empathy, and also areas of the brain that are involved in movement and motor simulation and preparation,” James Rilling, an anthropologist and neuroscientist who led the study told AFP.

“When they’re viewing these pictures of their grandchild, they’re really feeling what the grandchild is feeling. So when



A grandmother carries her laughing granddaughter in Yangshou, China

the child is expressing joy, they’re feeling that joy. When the children are expressing distress, they’re feeling that distress.”

The same motor related regions of the brain also light up in the brains of mothers, and are thought to be related to the

instinct to pick up a child or approach and interact with them.

By contrast, when the grandmothers viewed images of their adult children, there was a stronger activation of brain regions linked to cognitive empathy — trying to understand what a person is thinking or feeling and why, without as much emotional engagement.

This, said Rilling, might be linked to children’s cute appearance — scientifically known as “baby schema,” which the young of many species share in order to evoke a caregiving response.

Unlike other primates, humans are “cooperative breeders,” which means mothers get

help in rearing offspring.

Rilling, who had previously conducted similar research on fathers, had wanted to turn his attention toward grandmothers in order to explore a theory in anthropology known as the “grandmother hypothesis.”

“This holds that the evolutionary reason that human females tend to live long lives — well beyond their own reproductive years — is to provide benefits to their grown offspring and grandchildren.

Evidence supporting the hypothesis has been found in societies including Hadza hunter-gatherers of Tanzania, where grandmothers provide nourishing tubers to grandkids.