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THE GROWTH WE DESERVE

BY NAUSHAD FORBES
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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNNY



Cabinet clears Akash missile export, forms panel for faster nod

KRISHN KAUSHIK

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE UNION Cabinet Wednesday approved export of the Akash surface-to-air missile to "friendly countries" and constituted a committee, headed by the Defence Minister, for faster approval of export of defence platforms.

The export version of Akash, an official statement said, will be different from the system currently deployed with the Indian armed forces. The Akash SAM, with a range of 25 km, was inducted into the IAF in 2014 and in the Indian Army in 2015.

According to the official statement, Akash is an important missile of the country with over 96 per cent indigenisation. Following its induction in the armed forces, many friendly countries, the statement said, showed interest in Akash during international exhibitions, DefExpo, Aero India.

The Cabinet approval will facilitate Indian manufactures to participate in RFI/RFP issued by various countries. "So far, Indian defence exports included parts/components etc. The export of big platforms was minimal. This initiative of the Cabinet would help the country improve its defence products and make them globally competitive," the statement said.

"Under Atma Nirbhar Bharat, India is growing in its capabilities of manufacturing a wide variety of defence platforms and missiles," it said.

Besides Akash, there is interest in other major platforms like the coastal surveillance system, radars and air platforms. "To provide faster approvals for export of such platforms, a Committee comprising Raksha Mantri, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

EXPLAINED



POLITICS: A FORECAST FOR FRICTION

PAGE 9

SOME HEADWAY AFTER MARATHON MEETING OVER FARM LAWS

Govt agrees on power subsidy, stubble curbs; talks on MSP, repeal to continue

Tomar: mutual consensus; finally, something positive: BKU (Ugrahan)

HARIKISHAN SHARMA & RAAKHI JAGGA
NEW DELHI, LUOHIANA, DECEMBER 30

MAKING HEADWAY in talks for the first time since farmers opposed to the new agriculture laws showed up at the gates of Delhi more than a month ago, the Centre Wednesday said there had been "mutual consensus" on two of the four demands raised by the farmer unions. The two sides agreed to meet again on January 4.

The Centre agreed to "decriminalise" stubble burning by excluding farmers from the ambit of the 'Commission for the Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance 2020', and drop those provisions of the draft Electricity Amendment Bill, 2020, which are intended to change the existing mode of subsidy payment to consumers.

There was no headway on the demands to repeal the three newly enacted farm laws and provide legal guarantee on the MSP or minimum support price. These will be discussed when the two sides meet again next week.

Emerging from the meeting, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said, "There has been mutual consensus (*aapsi razamandi*) between **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar shares lunch with farmers' representatives in New Delhi on Wednesday. *PTI*

Sikh brothers protect country, can't question their integrity: Rajnath

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh Wednesday disapproved of remarks like 'Naxal' and 'Khalistani' for farmers opposed to the new agriculture laws, saying "such allegations should not be made by anyone" against any farmer. He also recalled the sacrifices of the Sikh community



'Deepest respect for farmers'

and said "there can be no question on their integrity".

In an interview with news agency ANI, when he was asked **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

First thaw in the chill: underlining agreement, language of compromise

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

AFTER OVER a month, and five rounds of frosty talks, there was some conciliation and progress in resolving the stand-off, and a lot more bonhomie between the farmer unions and the government on Wednesday.

For the first time, there were some takeaways: a perceptible

change in the gesture on the part of the government, and some positive outcome that opens more space for further discussion and a resolution.

If Home Minister Rajnath Singh eulogised the Sikh community in general, and the farmers in particular in an interview to news agency ANI earlier Wednesday, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, and his **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

UK clears Oxford shot, regulatory panel considers nod in India too

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE UNITED Kingdom drug regulator cleared the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine for use on Wednesday, making it very likely that Covishield, the variant of the vaccine being tested and manufactured under licence by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), will become the first vaccine to be approved for use in this country. A final decision on the clearance is likely to come by the end of this week.

Following the nod for the vaccine in the UK, a subject expert committee (SEC) of the Indian regulator was considering a request from SII for similar approval in India under **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

EXPLAINED

Significant development

INDIA IS heavily invested in the Oxford-AstraZeneca and Bharat Biotech vaccines, both of which are being manufactured in large volumes here. Covishield and Covaxin don't require super-cold storage temperatures, and are likely to be significantly cheaper than the mRNA options.

US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris receives the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine in Washington DC on Tuesday. *AP*

Flight ban extended till Jan 7, UK variant found in 20 samples

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M & PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE UNION Health Ministry on Wednesday recommended to the Civil Aviation Ministry to extend the temporary suspension of flights originating from the United Kingdom until January 7. The number of samples detected in India with the new, more contagious strain of the novel coronavirus — the UK "variant under investigation" VUI-202012/01 — is now 20, the government said.

Based on inputs received from the Joint Monitoring Group (JMG) headed by Prof Balram

Bhargava, DG, Indian Council of Medical Research, and the National Task Force headed jointly by Dr V K Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, and Prof Bhargava, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan on Wednesday wrote to his counterpart in Civil Aviation, recommending that the flight ban, initially announced from December 23 until December 31, be extended.

"Temporary suspension of flights originating from the UK into India be further extended till January 7, 2021. Thereafter, strictly regulated resumption of limited number of flights originating from the UK into India **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Security personnel at the site of the gunfight, on the outskirts of Srinagar on Wednesday. *PTI*

Three killed in J&K, police say militants, their families deny

BASHAARAT MASOOD

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 30

THREE YOUTHS were killed in Srinagar in the early hours of Wednesday in an "encounter", with the Army and police claiming that they were terrorists planning a big strike along the Srinagar-Baramulla highway. Soon after the photos of the men surfaced on social media, families came forward claiming the three were innocent and had no militant links.

As per the J&K Police, Zubair

Ahmad of Shopian, and Ajaz Ahmad Ganai and Athar Mushtaq of Pulwama were "hardcore" militant associates, though it admitted their names were not in the list of terrorists. Ajaz was the son of a policeman. IGP, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar said they were investigating the case and "will come to a conclusion soon".

While the first statement attributed the encounter to a joint operation by the police, Army and CRPF, later on Wednesday, the police said it had joined only later with the CRPF. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

WORLD



U.S. DETECTS FIRST CASE OF COVID-19 VARIANT

UK LAWMAKERS CLEAR POST-BREXIT TRADE DEAL WITH EU
PAGE 12

Kapil Gurjar with the BJP's Ghaziabad district convenor Sanjeev Sharma

KAPIL GURJAR, the 25-year-old man who allegedly fired at least two shots about 50 metres from the stage at the Shaheen Bagh anti-CAA protest on February 1, joined the BJP's Ghaziabad unit on Wednesday. Hours later, the party revoked his membership, claiming that it was not aware of his criminal antecedents.

House razed after Ujjain clash, a neighbour crosses fault-lines to shelter family of 19 displaced

IRAM SIDDIQUE
UJJAIN, DECEMBER 30

IT WAS stone-pelting on a march of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), allegedly raising provocative slogans while passing through Begum Bagh here, that brought the Ujjain district administration to the Muslim-dominated locality on December 26. Abdul Rafeeq's house was razed in the action that followed.

His family of 19 has since then been sheltered in one room of her house by his neighbour Meera Bai, who agrees with Rafeeq that there was no reason for the police to pull down his two-storey home.

A daily wage, who built the house over the past 35 years on a *patta* allotted to him by the government, Rafeeq says the police were looking for two women, identified as Heena and Yasmeen, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Abdul Rafeeq in front of his demolished house. *Vishnukant Tiwari*PAGE 1
ANCHORSREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 30

ON DECEMBER 16 afternoon, P Sunil, 24, hugged his five-month-old son for a long time as he and his wife Ramya, 23, watched TV at their home in Kismatpur in Hyderabad. Then, he went into another room, and hanged himself.

In the days since, the police have found that on that morning, Sunil had received dozens of phone calls and messages from numbers linked to instant loan apps. "I knew he had taken loans

through the apps. He was unable to repay as he had lost his job during the lockdown, and he got calls continuously, even at night, full of abuses. They threatened to file FIRs, to lock his bank account, defame him. He was worried all the time. To repay one loan, he took another, and ended up with over Rs 2 lakh debt," says Ramya, now at her in-laws' house in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

In the past few days, the Telangana Police has received at least 90 complaints from similar victims, who borrowed money through apps that clear loans within half-an-hour, charging a

high interest, and believed to be working in tandem. A defaulter is subjected to constant harassment, over phone, including messages of fake FIRs and court notices, and humiliated before friends and relatives. There have been reports of three suicides, and one attempted suicide.

The police of Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda in Telangana have written to Google to take down 158 instant loan apps from Google Play Store. The Telangana Police has raided offices and call centres in Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Pune and Gurugram, from where hun-



Kirmi Mounika with her brothers. She died on Dec 16

dreds of staff members made calls to customers. The 14 arrested include a Chinese national, behind allegedly 11 of the apps.

Cyberabad Police Commissioner V C Sajjanar said they fear "thousands may be suffering the abuse and harassment silently, afraid to seek help". A preliminary investigation has revealed close to 1.4 crore transactions worth nearly Rs 21,000 crore, as per a Hyderabad Police release, reported by *PTI*.

D Balraj, Sub-Inspector at Rajendranagar Police Station, who is investigating Sunil's case, said Sunil had 30 instant loan

apps. "Due to the high interest rates, he had to repay almost double the amount he had borrowed. He got a new job and was to join a week later, but the recovery agents had started calling up his contacts."

Sunil used to work as a developer at a gaming company at Madhapur in Hyderabad, before he was laid off. He initially used a credit card to pay his bills, but when the dues mounted, started borrowing from instant loan apps.

Before she consumed pesticide on December 12, Kirmi Mounika, 24, sent a message to the Fly Cash instant loan app, one

of 55 on her phone, saying, "Already you spoiled my life." Four days later, Mounika, the sole earning member of her family, with three younger brothers who are still studying, was dead.

After a B.Sc in Agriculture, Mounika had joined work as an agriculture extension officer in Rajgopalpet village in Telangana, earning Rs 37,000 per month. "She was lively, hardworking. She had joined two years ago and was already a role model among young officers," says P Sravan Kumar, District Agriculture Officer.

Apart from taking care of household expenses, Mounika's

salary paid for the tuition and hostel fees of her three brothers. The police have found that she first borrowed Rs 16,832 on November 1 from Cash Bean. As the due date of November 7 arrived, she borrowed Rs 22,000 from Credit Bean on November 5. "From November 1 till December 9 she borrowed Rs 2.71 lakh, of which she had repaid about Rs 2.50 lakh. From the way the money, ranging from Rs 2,800 to Rs 7,000, was deposited in her account, it seems that she took a loan from one app to repay the other. Also, some apps **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

2020 IN REVIEW: 10 LANDMARK GLOBAL EVENTS THAT SHAPED THE YEAR

Here are ten moments that made global headlines in 2020. From the impact of coronavirus to Joe Biden getting elected as the US President, take a look at the events that stood out.

BEST OF E P UNNY

BEST OF E P UNNY

UNNY PICKS HIS MOST TELLING CARTOONS

The Indian Express cartoonist on a year we would all like to forget

ENTERTAINMENT

NIMRAT KAUR REVISITS THE LUNCHBOX

Today, Nimrat Kaur has carved a niche for herself

EXPRESS AUDIO

BJP-JD(U) tensions, chargesheet in fake encounter, Rajinikanth's political no-show

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

These and more in today's episode of the '3 Things' podcast

FROM PAGE ONE

Power subsidy, stubble curbs

the government and farmer unions on two of four issues that union leaders placed for discussion at the meeting today.”

He said union leaders wanted farmers kept out of the ambit of the Air Quality Management Ordinance.

“The government told them that we are aware of their concern and both sides have agreed on this matter,” he said. “Their objections were related to criminal action against farmers, we will decriminalise it.”

On the draft Electricity Amendment Bill, Tomar said, “The unions demanded that the existing system of power subsidy paid by the state to the consumers should continue. Mutual consensus has been reached on that demand as well.” “There were four points on the agenda. Out of these, *aapsi razamandi* (mutual consensus) has been reached on two — or 50 per cent. The meeting took place in a very pleasant atmosphere,” he said.

“Unions have been demanding the repeal of the three farm laws and we have tried to tell them that the government is ready to discuss provisions on which farmers have problems,” he said.

“Similarly, on MSP, the government has been saying that the MSP will continue and the government is ready to give it in writing. We are firm on that, but they feel that the MSP should get the (legal) guarantee. So, discussions will continue in respect to the laws and MSP. We will meet again on January 4 and discuss these subjects.”

A ministerial committee, headed by Tomar and comprising Food Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Som Prakash, represented the government in the talks while the farmers sent 41 representatives — including BKU general secretary Yaduveer Singh Malik. The meeting, which began at 2.30 pm, ended around 7 pm.

During the meeting, sources said, government representatives proposed a committee to deliberate on the demands of the farmers regarding the three farm laws. But farmer leaders did not agree to the proposal.

Commenting on the outcome of the meeting, Samyukt Kisan Morcha leader Darshan Pal said, “The meetings is not 50 per cent successful, it’s only 25 per cent successful as consensus has emerged on two smaller issues while the two bigger issues still remain unresolved.”

Joginder Singh Ugrahan, BKU (Ugrahan) president, said: “When we started the meeting, we were not hopeful, but they agreed to two of our demands... Finally, something positive has come out of these talks.”

Jagmohan Singh Patiala, BKU (Dakaunda) general secretary and working committee member of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), said: “The central government is bowing to public anger... On January 4, they will talk on our main demands... Considering the positive gesture of the government, we have postponed the tractor march of Samyukt Kisan Morcha to January 4.”

Akash export

External Affairs Minister and National Security Advisor has been created.”

This committee, the statement said, would authorise subsequent export of major indigenous platforms to various countries. The committee would also explore available options including the Government-to-Government route.

Shaheen Bagh shooter

against Gurjar at the Shaheen Bagh Police Station. He is out on bail, with a chargesheet yet to be registered in the case.

In the statement revoking Gurjar’s membership, the BJP called him a former BSP leader.

Earlier in the day, welcoming Gurjar into the BJP at an event held in Ghaziabad, party district convenor Sanjeev Sharma said, “Kapil Gurjar joined with dozens of his associates. He has influence in the area. He has been influenced by the party’s policies, work being done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ji. He has also been influenced by efforts made by our Pradesh Adhyaksh Swatantra Dev Singh ji... All these people worked for Hindutva for different parties. They met the Pradesh Adhyaksh and he directed me to induct them into the BJP.”

Gurjar said: “We are with the BJP, it is strengthening Hindutva and wants to take it forward. Everything they do is mostly for Hindus. I have always wanted to do something big for Hindutva and for the nation. This is why I have joined the BJP. Before this, I was not associated with any other party. I am also part of the RSS.”

Hours later, Sharma issued a press note, which read: “In the mahanagar office today, some persons from BSP were inducted into the party. In the same crowd, Kapil Gurjar was present. We were not aware of his involvement in the Shaheen Bagh matter. The moment the party was made aware, we cancelled his membership.”

AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said the induction of Gurjar proved that the BJP had used the Shaheen Bagh protest to polarise votes ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, as alleged by the party. “Later, many prominent leaders of Shaheen Bagh joined the BJP (the party claimed to have inducted several people from the area, including the protesters, in August). And now Kapil Gurjar. It essentially means that those who scripted Shaheen Bagh were also in the BJP, while those who attacked the protests also belonged to the BJP. It proves the BJP vitiated Delhi’s atmosphere for votes.”

In a statement reported by PTI, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said, “We reiterate that Gurjar is an AAP supporter... Kapil Gurjar and his AAP leader Sanjay Singh wanted to create political sensation, but they knew it was impossible to manage his induction in the Delhi BJP, so they silently made him join the BJP in Ghaziabad.” The police had said the weapon used by Gurjar in the February 1 incident had been procured seven years ago for celebratory firing. “The recovered weapon was sent to Forensic Science Laboratory. The chargesheet is yet to be submitted to court since forensic report is required first,” said a senior police officer.

Flight ban

may be considered. The specifics of such a mechanism may be worked out by the Ministry of Civil Aviation in consultation with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare,” Bhushan wrote. Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri also tweeted about the temporary suspension of flights to & from the UK.

According to official data updated on Wednesday, the UK variant of the virus has now been detected in eight samples at the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Delhi; seven samples at the NIMHANS, Bengaluru; two samples at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad; and one sample each at the National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBG), Kalyani; National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune; and the CSIR Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), New Delhi. A total 107 Covid-19 positive samples have been subjected to genome sequencing, the government said.

Also on Wednesday, the Health Secretary wrote to all Chief Secretaries on the surge of cases being reported in Europe, and on the need to keep a strict vigil during New Year celebrations. The Health Secretary also underlined to states the need to conduct an assessment of the situation, and to impose local restrictions from December 30 to January 1. “However, there shall be no restrictions on inter-state and intra-state movement of persons and goods,” he said.

The new strain of the virus has been found in at least 13 countries, including Germany, France, the Netherlands, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. While UK flights have been stopped, flights between India and several of these countries are still operating.

Following the decision to extend the UK flights suspension, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said in an order on Wednesday that the restriction will not apply to international all-cargo flights, and flights that are specifically approved by the regulator.

Officials said that once flights resume after January 7, mandatory RT-PCR testing of all those arriving from the UK could be one of the main requirements at airports.

UK clears Oxford shot

emergency circumstances, a senior government official said.

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, which has developed Covaxin, was learnt to have also made a presentation before the independent expert committee on Wednesday to push for emergency approval.

The SEC was unable to come to a decision till Wednesday evening, and has decided to reconvene in the new year. Sources close to the development told The

First thaw in the chill

colleagues Piyush Goyal and Som Prakash shared *langar* food for lunch during the meeting.

There was ‘mutual consensus’ on two demands of farm unions raised in earlier rounds of talks — exclusion of farmers from the purview of the NCR air quality ordinance and changes in the Draft Electricity Bill ensuring security on power subsidy.

The government and the farm unions agreed to discuss the two remaining items in the four-point agenda proposed by the farmers. These two relate to repeal of farm laws and legal guarantee for MSP.

Rajnath Singh set the tone for the day well before the meeting. He disapproved the use of remarks like “Naxals” or “Khalistanis” made by some of his party and ministerial colleagues against the farmers. “Allegations should not be made by anyone

against the Sikh community and farmers,” he said.

After Tomar, Goyal and Som Prakash, leading the government side in the talks, shared food brought for farmer leaders from the gurudwara, the latter reciprocated and had *chai-samosa* served by the government.

While the concessions agreed to the government may not be seen as substantive by farmers, Wednesday’s progress provided a ray of hope.

Section 14(1) of the air quality ordinance provides for imprisonment up to five years and fine up to Rs 1 crore or both for acts which contribute to pollution. Farmers feared this provision may be used against them for stubble burning.

The second demand on which both sides have agreed is related to the draft Electricity Amendment Bill, which seeks to

amend Section 62 and Section 65 of the Electricity Act, 2003. The proposed provision states that the Appropriate Commission shall fix tariffs for retail sale of electricity without accounting for subsidy, which, if any, under section 65 of the Act, shall be provided by the government directly to the consumer. The Bill is at the draft stage so the proposed changes can be redrafted.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Samyukt Kisan Morcha leader Darshan Pal said, “The government gave several alternatives including forming a committee. But finally, they (the government side) asked us to suggest something, which should not have the word repeal, and on which both sides may come to an agreement. We told them that we will discuss in this regard and talk to our lawyer.”

Sikh brothers protect country: Rajnath

about some from his own party who were giving farmers the labels of Naxal and Khalistani, Singh said: “I think that such allegations against farmers... I don’t know who has said what... should not be made by anyone. Kisan kisan hai (a farmer is a farmer). From the bottom of our hearts, we express our deepest respect for farmers. At all times, our heads bow in respect for the farmers of India. They are our annadata.”

“Whenever there has been a spell of economic crisis in the country, if there’s anyone who has taken up the task of stabilising the economy, it has been the farmer. Even in times of economic recession and economic slump. Speak to the economists, they will tell you this. Our farmers are the strength of our country’s economy, agriculture its backbone,” he said.

“India can never forget the

sacrifices made by our Sikh brothers in defence of national pride. It can never be forgotten. And our Sikh brothers have contributed in a very big way to protect India’s culture. Their contribution in defence of India’s pride, India’s culture was there in the past, is there today and will be there tomorrow,” he said.

Reiterating that the three farm laws have been made for the farmers, he said they should wait for its implementation to see the results.

A former agriculture minister, Singh said: “My suggestion to the farmers is that there should be a logical debate on every clause of the farm laws. If they feel that there is anything that is against the interests of farmers, the government will do the needful to address their problems.”

“The fact is that the three farm Bills have been made keeping in mind the interests of farmers.

der. Seventeen others have been booked, 10 of them under the stringent NSA.

While three FIRs have been registered — by Abdul Shakir, a resident of Begum Bagh, by the BJYM’s Navdeep Singh Raghuvanshi, and by a trust of the nearby Bharat Mata Temple — the police say they have evidence only against residents of Begum Bagh so far.

According to District Collector Ashesh Singh, the demolition drive was meant to hurt “criminals who resort to such acts of stone-pelting” economically. He added that while Heena and Yasmeen were indeed pelting stones from Meera’s terrace, Yasmeen lived at Rafeeq’s house.

Asked why no action had been taken on the complaint against the BJYM, the District Collector said, “The residents claimed that the clashes erupted as those in the rally hurled abuses and chanted offensive slogans, but they have not been able to come up with any concrete evidence. We are ready to take action if any video proving it is brought to our notice.”

Several incidents of violence following rallies carried out by Hindu right-wing groups have been reported in Madhya Pradesh’s Malwa region recently. In Mandasaur, the police have registered an FIR against five people, who allegedly tried to bring down a mosque in Dorana village, while taking out a rally to collect donations for construction of the Ram temple. On Tuesday, clashes were reported in Indore following a similar cash-collection drive, with the police booking four people.

At Begum Bagh in Ujjain, there is an unsettling silence, with the police deployed all over.

Says Nafeesa, “I pleaded with the two women constables that we were not involved in the pelting, but they simply turned to me and said, ‘Had you been involved, you would have been behind bars’, and continued the demolition.” Rafeeq says they had been gathering items for the wedding of his granddaughter, and found some of their belongings later floating in the gutter nearby.

Yasmeen’s daughters, meanwhile, are running around to get their mother bail. Elder daughter Reshma says, “We just want to see that she is safe and well once.”

Three killed in J&K

The allegations of fake encounter come four days after the J&K Police filed a chargesheet against an Army officer and two civilians over the killing of three labourers from Rajouri in another such encounter, at Shopian in July. Then, too, the police had said it was acting on Army inputs.

On Tuesday evening, security personnel had cordoned off a house located outside the Hokersar wetland in Srinagar. The forces claimed that the three men holed up inside opened fire on them, triggering an “encounter”

that continued intermittently through the night. On Wednesday, the police and Army claimed to have killed three “terrorists”.

“For the past many days, intelligence inputs were pouring in about the movement of militants on the (Srinagar-Baramulla) national highway. Yesterday we developed leads and came to know that militants are hiding in a house,” General Officer Commanding, Kilo Force, H Sahi said at a press briefing. “They were asked to surrender. However, they responded with firing and the operation was suspended for the night. When the operation was resumed in the morning, they were again given an offer to surrender. However, they again started firing and hurled grenades at the forces, which gave us an indication they had no intention to surrender.”

In the revised statement issued on Wednesday evening, the J&K Police said that about 5.30 pm, “troops of 02 RR (Rashtriya Rifles)” launched a cordon operation on “a specific input”, and were attacked with grenades and indiscriminate firing. “On receipt of this information, Srinagar police immediately along with police component Srinagar (Special Operations Group) and Valley QAT (Quick Action Team) CRPF rushed to the spot.”

As soon as the photos of the youths started circulating, a family from south Kashmir’s Pulwama reached the Police Control Room (PCR) in Srinagar, accusing the forces of killing innocent men. “He (Ajaz) had tea with me at 10 in the morning on Tuesday. He said he was going to the Board (Board of School Education),” Ajaz’s grandfather Bashir Ahmad Gansai said, alleging that he had been dragged out of a car and shot. “Why was my child killed? What did he do? We need answers.” Ajaz’s policeman father is posted in Central Kashmir’s Ganderbal.

The Ganais were soon joined in the protest outside the PCR by another family from Shopian. “Please hand me the body of my child. I only need his body,” a woman wailed. Zubair’s brother Irfan Ahmad Lone said he would talk to the media on Thursday.

Former Chief Minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti demanded that authorities “come clean”.

ICP Kumar told *The Indian Express*, “It is true their names aren’t mentioned in our list of terrorists but two of them are hardcore associates of terrorists (overground workers)... Reported third might have joined very recently... Moreover, they were given the opportunity to surrender twice yesterday evening and today morning but they didn’t surrender.”

Instant loan racket

appear to have pressured her or talked her into downloading new apps. She kept repaying till December 9, by which time she owed more than Rs 1 lakh as interest and the apps had started sending messages to her contacts,” said Rameshwar Rao, ACP, Siddipet Division.

After this, the police said, Mounika stopped borrowing and sent messages seeking two-three days’ time. Like found in other cases, the recovery agents then deployed a combination of tactics — they made hundreds of calls and flooded her phone with text and WhatsApp messages, sending fake FIRs, bogus court notices, and fake letters marked to the RBI to block her bank accounts, Aadhaar and PAN. On December 11, they sent messages to the contacts in her phone, including her best friend Sahaja and her mother. On December 12, while she was packing to attend Sahaja’s marriage at Warangal, the instant loan apps started sending messages to WhatsApp groups of her office colleagues and relatives with her photo, branding her as a defaulter. At 5 pm the same day, Mounika consumed pesticide.

Mounika’s father Kimi Bhooapani is an ex-sarpanch, and while not well-off, the family had some political connections in Nangunur Mandal. “I don’t know why she took those loans. If I had known, I would have stopped her,” says Bhooapani.

Not knowing that she is dead, recovery agents have been making at least 40 calls daily and sent at least 250 messages in the last few days to Mounika’s phone.

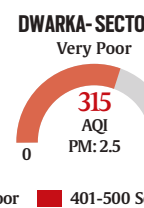
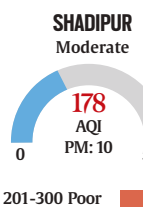
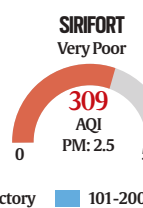
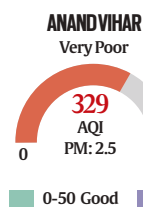
Two days after Mounika’s death, D Santhosh, 36, consumed pesticide at his home in Malkapur, after sending a video to his friend B Subramanyam saying he got trapped in a debt cycle. On December 23, Santhosh passed away. “He blamed five instant loan app companies. If he ignored their calls, they called his family... It seems there wasn’t a minute’s respite,” Subramanyam says.

Santhosh worked as site in-charge at S L Trans at Ramagundam Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited. He lived alone, with his family settled in Visakhapatnam. “During the lockdown he borrowed money. He repaid most of it but was caught in a cycle. He took Rs 9,319 from Udhara Loan; Rs 9,197 from Ruffilo; Rs 4,230 from Reepay; Rs 16,660 from AAA; and Rs 11,770 from Loan Gram. He ended up with a debt of Rs 51,176, the interest which was another Rs 50,000,” DCP P Ravinder said.

According to the police, most of the instant loan apps don’t have RBI approval. Police Commissioner Sajjanar said, “Once a person avails a loan, other app operators talk them into taking more loans. In many instances, after a customer has repaid the full amount, more sums are credited without a customer asking for it. The app operators set the trap carefully, not revealing all the details. If a person is in urgent need of Rs 5,000, he or she will get only Rs 3,800 or so, after deduction of ‘processing fees and GST’. Customers are hence forced to take loans from other apps.”

Having secured consent to access the contact list, photos, documents etc while clearing the loan, the apps have such details with them.

The call centres raided belong to, among others, Liufang Technologies, Hotful Technologies, Pinprint Technologies and Nabloom Technologies, registered in Bengaluru; and Onion Credit, CredFox Technologies Pvt Ltd and Digipeergo Tech Pvt Ltd, in Hyderabad. Digipeergo is owned by Chinese national Xizha Zhang. In Pune, police raided Jiyang Liang Infotech, which was operating 10 instant loan apps.



0-50 Good 51-100 Satisfactory 101-200 Moderate 201-300 Poor 301-400 Very Poor 401-500 Severe

S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: Dec 31
Mainly clear sky.
Moderate to dense fog
in the morning.
MAX: 19 | **MIN: 3**
1.5° C below normal | 4° C below normal

AT SINGHU

On sidelines of protest, a makeshift school, 90 pupils, and teachers from Punjab, Kerala

MALLICA JOSHI
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

MOHAMMAD NISHAN (19) had planned to travel from Kerala's Malappuram to Srinagar as part of a long trip with friends earlier this month.

The group of three had to stop in Delhi for a day to pick up a friend before travelling to Shimla, and later to Kashmir. But they abandoned their travel plans at Singhu border, where they are now helping teach children from nearby slums and villages in a temporary school at the protest site.

The school was started by a few protesters three weeks ago after they saw several children, mostly ragpickers from the Delhi-Haryana borders, milling around.

"I saw a lot of young children at the protest site. They would see us and start shouting slogans with us, but they were emulating, not learning," said Kanwaljeet Kaur (30), a teacher-trainer from Amritsar who has



been part of the protest for over three weeks now.

The school started with 12 children, who would come to the site each day to pick up garbage.

Three weeks down the line, eight volunteers — three of them permanent — are teaching 90

children between 11 am and 2 pm each day.

When Nishan and his friends joined the protest on Monday, volunteering at the school seemed like the easiest step, despite a language barrier — he and his friends do not speak Hindi

and the children speak nearly no English.

"We taught them numbers and alphabets, mostly through actions. Kids catch on very fast. They also love to draw," said Nishan, as they wrote 'Kisan mazdoor ekta zindabad' in



Eight volunteers teach around 90 children between 11 am and 2 pm every day

Malayalam on a poster. A man from Punjab sat with them, outlining the letters with a black pen. He does not understand the language.

On Tuesday, Ravi and his friends drew on a chart paper that six others shared. They

would have otherwise spent this time looking for plastic bottles to sell, he said.

At the school, Kaur says the excitement levels are high.

"We thought we would have to drag the children here but after the first few days, we have had to make no effort to get children here. We had decided that we would teach them only English and Hindi as we did not want to impose our language on them, but a group of five children insisted that they wanted to learn Punjabi as well, so we teach that as well now," she said.

Surdeep Singh (37) is also among the farmers who are volunteering at the school.

"The older children now bring their siblings who are 3-4 years old. We are learning to tackle them as they require a different kind of care. Most who come here have never been to school. Those who have, have not seen the inside of a school in almost a year as schools in Delhi haven't reopened because of the pandemic. They energy is infectious," he said.



Women listen to speeches at Tikri Wednesday. Amit Mehra

At Tikri, many bring children to the protest

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

HAILING FROM Churu district in Rajasthan, Bhanwari Lotasra (28), a mother of two, celebrated her younger daughter's fourth birthday with a cake on Wednesday at the Tikri border, where she has been camping with other protesters agitating against the farm laws for the past 26 days.

Lotasra, who is currently pursuing LLB from a local college in Churu, comes from a family of farmers though her husband is a government employee. She, along with her two children — aged 9 and 4 — is at Tikri while her 55-year-old father-in-law, a farmer, is protesting at the Shahjahanpur border.

"I am the daughter of a farmer, and these farm laws will kill the livelihood of farmers. If they bring in contract farming, what will our children do in their future?" she said, as she cradled her daughter, who had earlier cut a birthday cake bought by fellow protesters.

Like her, many women have been camping at the protest for days with their children.

A government employee from Punjab's Barnala district, Sandeep (31), who was with her 9-year-old son Gurkeet Singh, and her husband, who runs a local store there, have been alternating their visits to the Tikri protest site.

At Tikri for the past five days, she said, "My son completed his exams, which are happening in the online mode, here... My husband was here at Tikri for around 15 days before returning. Now I am here. We are alternating."

Rajneet Kaur (31), also from Barnala, is with her 12-year-old daughter Parmeet Kaur at Tikri for the past five days. Separated from her husband, Kaur, who lives with her mother, is a farm labourer. Her daughter, who is in Class 7, said, "I sometimes get my books and study in the trolley."

Raghubir Singh (53) arrived on Wednesday with nine other family members, including his three young nieces and a nephew, in a small truck, for a four-day stay at the protest.

His nephew, Taranjeet Singh (13), who is in Class 8, said, "Right now we have holidays till mid-January, maybe February, so I am not studying anything currently."

BRIEFLY

No vehicles at CP on New Year's eve

New Delhi: On New Year's eve, no vehicle will be allowed into Connaught Place without passes, police said Wednesday.

Jamia to hold online open book exam

New Delhi: Taking a cue from DU, Jamia Millia Islamia will hold online open book exams for all students mid-January. The university had earlier scrapped the online proctored mode of exams after facing criticism. **ENS**

Biting cold grips Delhi

New Delhi: A cold wave swept through Delhi on Wednesday as the minimum temperature dipped to 3.5 degrees Celsius, the IMD said. It is likely to get even colder on New Year's Eve, it predicted, as dry and icy winds barreled through the plains. **PTI**

Make 21 permitted drinking age, suggests Delhi govt panel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

A DELHI government committee has suggested making 21 the permitted drinking age and reducing the number of dry days to three in a year. Officials said the proposals are aimed at earning more revenue from the sale of liquor and stopping malpractices like smuggling and tax evasion.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had formed the committee under the chairmanship of the excise commissioner in September. Liquor is among the largest sources of revenue in Delhi, with the local administration earning around Rs 5,400 crore from its sale in 2019-20.

In September 2019, the Delhi High Court had ruled that the Delhi Excise Act bars the sale of alcohol to people aged below 25. It does not set 25 years as the minimum age for drinking, the court had said, dismissing a petition that sought lowering of the age cap. Section 23 of the Delhi Excise Act states: "No person or licensed vendor or his employee or agent shall sell or deliver any liquor to any person apparently under the age of 25 years, whether for consumption by self or others."

The report drafted by the



The proposals are aimed at increasing revenue

committee states, "The permitted drinking age may be fixed at 21 years in parity with neighbouring states like Uttar Pradesh and Haryana."

The report, viewed by *The Indian Express*, has not yet been made public to invite suggestions from stakeholders. The recommendations will be made a part of the excise policy only if the Delhi government's council of ministers approve them.

Other suggestions made by the committee include reducing the number of dry days to three, in line with neighbouring Haryana, Punjab and UP.

It has suggested setting up of three retail liquor vends in all 272 municipal wards of the capital to ensure "equitable access

of liquor supply to all residents of NCT of Delhi so that there are no unserved and underserved areas by ward-wise allocation of vends".

In the area coming under the New Delhi Municipal Council, there should be 24 vends, the panel has suggested, apart from one government corporation vend each in the 70 assembly constituencies and six retail vends at the IGI Airport.

Currently, there are 864 liquor vends in Delhi though the distribution is not uniform. "The retail licenses other than government corporations be allotted through lottery system once every 2 years," states the committee report.

The panel has also recommended bringing a new policy for issuing retail licenses to departmental stores for selling beer, wine and other "soft liquor categories", and promoting ease of business for hotels, clubs and restaurants through reforms in the hospitality sector policies.

To promote consumer choice and prevent "brand pushing", the panel wants the government to revise the minimum sale criteria for brand registration of Indian Made Foreign Liquor to ensure the presence of reputed brands having reasonable presence nationally in the entry segment.

Man murders friend, roams with body on scooter in locality

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

UPSET OVER not receiving the money he had loaned, a 24-year-old man allegedly killed his friend in Rohini, stuffed his body in a gunny bag, rode with it on a scooter and dumped it at a vacant plot on Tuesday.

CCTV footage from Prem Nagar shows the accused roaming on his two-wheeler with a white gunny bag on the footrest. This went on for 10-15 minutes before the accused dumped the bag. DCP (Rohini) PK Mishra said, "We received a call from locals who saw the gunny bag with bloodstains on it. We went to the spot and took the body to Sanjay Gandhi (hospital) for autopsy."

Police said they found CCTV clips from the area where a man was seen roaming on a blue scooter with a white gunny bag. "He had a gunny bag that looked similar to the one that was recovered from the spot. We deployed informers and spoke to locals. The rider was then identified as Ankit," said DCP Mishra.

Ankit (24), who lives in Prem Nagar-III, was apprehended. Police said they found the scooter



CCTV grab of the accused on his scooter with the gunny bag placed on the foot rest

at his place. Ankit confessed during questioning, police said.

He told police that during the lockdown, he had lent Rs 77,000 to his friend Ravi (35). On Monday night, he called Ravi and asked him to return the money, but he asked for more time. "An argument broke out and Ankit allegedly hit Ravi's head against the wall and strangled him with a plastic cable," said a senior police officer. The accused then looked for a place to dump the body and found a vacant plot near a small water canal.

Ankit works as a tailor and owns a small shop. He and Ravi worked together. Police said Ravi needed money after the shop was shut during the lockdown.

Policy to transplant trees notified in city

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE DELHI government Wednesday notified the Tree Transplantation Policy 2020, which mandates that 80 percent of trees removed for any development project will be transplanted instead of being cut. The policy also says that 80 percent of the transplanted trees must survive after being moved.

The norm of planting 10 trees for each tree affected will also continue, the policy says. "The policy also notifies a proper procedure that is required to be followed for tree transplantation at any project site. A tree survey shall be carried out at the time of project

feasibility assessment and site identification to obtain the required information for developing site planning and tree preservation proposals. The applicant shall select one of the technical agencies among the agencies empanelled for carrying out tree transplantation work. Tree committees will be responsible for carrying out regular monitoring of all projects involving compensatory plantation or tree transplantation of 100 or more trees/saplings in their local areas..." a statement by the Delhi government said.

The policy says the Department of Forests and Wildlife will have to keep a detailed and up to date record on its website every month of every application approved for tree felling.

Couple die after inhaling toxic fumes from *angithi*

New Delhi: A 38-year-old man and his wife died after they inhaled toxic fumes from an *angithi* in their room in Samalka village near IGI airport, police said Wednesday.

They were found dead by their three children — aged 11, 7 and 5 — who called relatives when they didn't open the

door in the morning.

The couple, Ram Pravesh (38) and Kavita (34), were rushed to the hospital where they were declared dead on arrival. DCP (Southwest) Ingat Pratap Singh said, "Our crime team inspected the spot and it seems that they died of suffocation." **ENS**

उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की वरिष्ठ नागरिकों हेतु सामुदायिक पुलिसिंग योजना

सवेरा

विगत एक वर्ष में 7 लाख से अधिक वरिष्ठ नागरिक पंजीकृत

हमारा उद्देश्य

किसी भी आपात स्थिति में त्वरित सहायता पहुंचाकर वरिष्ठ नागरिकों में सुरक्षा की भावना को प्रबल करना

पंजीकरण करने की प्रक्रिया

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- स्थानीय थाने के माध्यम से

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6 GOVT & POLITICS

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



GREET TO BE FIT

PRESIDENT RAM Nath Kovind has chosen videos of his morning jogging on the beach to give a new year message. The President's official Twitter handle shared visuals of him jogging on the pristine Ghoghla beach in Diu and posted: "As we enter 2021, after a difficult year that has tested us all, let us rise together and make an endeavor to remain fit and healthy. May the coming year bring good health and prosperity in our lives." In October 2019, visuals of Prime Minister Narendra Modi strolling on Mamallapuram beach and his plogging exercise went viral on social media. Recently, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu had also given details of his exercise regime to inspire people to adopt a healthy way of living.

NEW BRIEF

MAHARASHTRA DGP Subodh Kumar Jaiswal was on Wednesday appointed the new chief of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) by the Centre, ending speculation that he was in the reckoning for the CBI top post, which gets vacant in February. Jaiswal, who has had disagreements with the MVA government in Maharashtra of late, had served in the Research and Analysis Wing for over a decade before becoming the Mumbai Police commissioner in 2017, and later the Maharashtra Police chief.

FOR PEACEFUL PROTEST

US CONGRESSMAN Andy Levin, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has called on the Indian government to respect the right to peaceful protest in response to the ongoing farmers' protest on the borders of the national capital. A statement was issued after Sikh groups in the US lobbied for it. Almost half a million Sikhs live in the US, and some have been contributing donations to groups supporting these protests.

Cabinet gives nod to missions in 3 countries, development of Paradip Port dock

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE CABINET on Wednesday approved creation of missions in Estonia, Paraguay and Dominican Republic, development of a western dock at Paradip Port and three projects for industrial corridor nodes and transport hubs.

In two different projects worth an estimated Rs 7,725 crore, the Cabinet approved proposals of the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) for construction of various trunk infrastructure components for Krishnapatnam Industrial Area in Andhra Pradesh (Rs 2,139.44 crore), Tumakuru Industrial Area in Karnataka (Rs 1,701.81 crore) and a Multi Modal Logistics Hub (MMLH) and Multi Modal Transport Hub (MMTH) at Dadri in Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh (Rs 3,883.80 crore).

The projects, the government said in a statement, will have an "estimated employment generation of more than 2.8 lakh persons". The Krishnapatnam and Tumakuru projects "have been planned on the backbone of multi-modal connectivity infrastructure" and approved to "kickstart the development in Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor Project", it said.

The Paradip Port project for deepening and optimisation of Inner Harbour Facilities, includ-



Jagdeep Dhankhar addresses the media in Delhi. PTI

ing development of western dock on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode, will make the port able to handle cape size vessels with an ultimate capacity of 25 MTPA (million tonnes per annum) in two phases of 12.50 MTPA each. The Cabinet also gave its nod for opening of three Indian missions, which will "help expand India's diplomatic footprint, deepen political relations, enable growth of bilateral trade, investment and economic engagements, facilitate stronger people-to-people contacts, bolster political outreach in multilateral fora and help garner support for India's foreign policy objectives".

Briefing reporters on the decisions taken by the Union Cabinet, Union minister Prakash Javadekar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always pitched for maintaining good relations with all countries and the move was part of the efforts to further strengthen ties with other nations.

Bengal, Punjab and Bihar provided security to highest number of VIPs while states such as Chhattisgarh – which recorded 112 incidents of Maoist encounters, 46 civilian deaths and 77 IED explosions in 2019 – put the least number of VIPs under protection.

While West Bengal and Punjab put under protection VIPs in excess of 3,000 and 2,500 respectively, Chhattisgarh provided protection to just 315 people.

"Police protection, if given on actual security concerns, will never exceed a few hundred in any state. But it is common knowledge that police protection is given for political reasons. Then in much of North

Amid farm protests, jolt to BJP-JJP in Haryana civic polls; no big gain for Cong

SUKHBIRSIWACH
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 30

EVEN AS groups of protesting farmers from Haryana sit outside the national capital, and the opposition to the new farm laws spread in the state, the BJP-JJP alliance suffered a jolt in mayoral polls for three Municipal Corporations – Ambala, Panchkula and Sonapat.

The polls were held on December 27, and counting took place Wednesday.

The BJP only won the mayoral poll in Panchkula, while the Congress could not secure big gains even as it won in Sonapat. In Ambala, former Union Minister Venod Sharma's wife Shakti Rani Sharma won the mayoral poll.

It was for the first time that direct elections were held for mayoral posts in the three cities.

Elections were also held for the civic chief post for Rewari municipal council and three municipal committees of Dharuhera, Uklana and Sampla.



Nikhil Madaan, who won the Sonapat mayoral election, with Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Singh Hooda on Wednesday.

The BJP won the post in Rewari while an Independent candidate backed by former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda won the Sampla MC president's post.

The JJP of Dushyant Chautala suffered a major setback with the party losing the poll battle for the

civic body chief in Uklana and Dharuhera. BJP and JJP had fought the civic body polls jointly.

In November, the ruling combine had failed to win the Baroda Assembly bypolls in Sonapat, with the Congress retaining the seat.

In 2018, the BJP had won may-

oral polls in Hisar, Karnal, Panipat, Rohtak and Yamunanagar.

Haryana BJP president Om Prakash Dhankar, however, expressed satisfaction over the results, stating they have won the poll for chief of civic bodies in Panchkula and Rewari, while Congress's official nominee could win only the Sonapat mayoral poll.

"In three Municipal Corporations, the BJP-JJP alliance have performed well in ward elections too where the votes were cast for 20 wards for each of the cities. In Panchkula, we have won in 11 wards, in Sonapat 10 and in Ambala, we have won 8," Dhankar said.

Another senior BJP leader said, "There was impact of the current environment (because of ongoing farmer agitation) on civic body polls even as the elections were fought on local issues."

Former CM Bhupinder Hooda said, "Congress has secured a big victory in Sonapat where the party nominee has won by a margin of about 14,000 votes. While the BJP mayoral candidate (in Panchkula) and (Rewari) civic body chief

could secure a win by just about 2,000 votes in each place. The BJP has suffered major losses and the people have shown that they are against it."

Congress's Nikhil Madaan secured over 72,118 votes to become the first mayor of Sonapat. BJP's Lalit Batra got 58,300 votes.

The former Chief Minister also called for introspection by Congress over its defeat in Panchkula and Ambala polls.

The results have also indicated ongoing infighting in Congress. Sources close to Hooda claim he was not called for campaigning in Ambala and Panchkula, which fall in the Ambala parliamentary constituency of state party president Kumari Selja. "Wherever, Hooda went, the Congress candidates have performed well. You take examples of Sonapat and Sampla. Even in Rewari, we have won some wards where voting had taken place for councillors and Hooda had gone for campaigning," said a close associate of Hooda.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

After talks with party, Gujarat BJP MP set to withdraw resignation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GANDHINAGAR, DECEMBER 30

A DAY after tendering his resignation from the party, Mansukh Vasava, BJP MP from Bharuch constituency, on Wednesday said that he has changed his decision following discussions with the party leadership.

A former Union minister and six-time MP from the tribal-dominated Bharuch constituency in central Gujarat, Vasava had Tuesday said that he did not have any issues with the government or the party and was quitting due to health-related issues.

On Wednesday, he held a half-an-hour meeting with Chief Minister Vijay Rupani in the state capital and later addressed the media in the presence of senior Cabinet minister Ganpat Vasava.

"I have pain in my back and neck. And I resigned with the sole objective of taking rest. Doctors who are treating me are also of the opinion that I will get relief from the pain only if I take rest. Else, I do not have any prob-



Mansukh Vasava

lem with the government or the party," Vasava told reporters.

"I have spoken with the (BJP's) central leadership. So, they say that 'if you continue as an MP then, your treatment will be done from government expenses. If you cease to be an MP, then the government will not be able to give you that much relief. So, you take rest and other party workers in the region will take over your responsibilities'. The party is making an arrangement accordingly. And therefore, I am withdrawing my decision (to resign)," Vasava added without naming the leaders.

On Tuesday, Paatil had said that Vasava's resentment was mainly over the issue of declaration of an eco-sensitive zone in his region and that they are "trying to persuade him".

Family mischievously being linked to PMC Bank scam, says Raut

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 30

SHIV SENA MP Sanjay Raut on Wednesday said his family was "mischievously" being linked to the PMC Bank scam and challenged BJP leaders to prove the allegations or face legal action.

Raut said the public was aware how "caged parrots were being released for political vendetta". "My family's name is mischievously being linked to the PMC Bank and HDIL scam. I challenge them to prove it or face legal action. Enough is enough," he said in a statement.

The ED had served a notice to Raut's wife Varsha, asking her to appear before it on Tuesday for



'Enough is enough'

an inquiry in connection with a loan of Rs 55 lakh that she took from a friend to buy a house. She, however, sought time from the ED and is likely to appear before it on January 5.

Since then, BJP leaders have linked her loan with the PMC Bank scam.

Shiv Sena mouthpiece Saamana on Wednesday also slammed the BJP for asking Raut if the Constitution was acceptable to him.

providing protection to VIPs.

According to the data, West Bengal provided protection to 3,142 VIPs in 2019 recording an increase of about 13 per cent over 2018. It deployed over 6,000 police personnel on this job. Punjab put close to 2,600 VIPs under protection of over 7,700 personnel.

Bihar is a close third with over 2,300 VIPs under protection but it stands out as it trimmed its VIP list by almost 50 per cent as compared to 2018. In that year, the state had over 4,600 VIPs under protection. Curiously, though, this trimming had little impact on deployment of police personnel on VIP duty in the state.

Conversely, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Manipur and Chhattisgarh – which have all faced violent extremism or insurgency – have put far lesser number of VIPs under protection. In J&K, only 1,184 VIPs were put under protection in 2019, with close to 3,000 personnel being deployed. Assam had 1,199 VIPs under protection of 4,000 personnel, while Manipur had just over 200 VIPs under protection of over 2,000 personnel. Chhattisgarh had 315 VIPs under protection of 2,700 personnel.

The least number of VIPs under police protection in any major state were in Goa (32) followed by Odisha (48) and Kerala (57).



Nitish Kumar at the Rajdhani (Secretariat) reservoir, in Patna. PTI

Nitish dismisses RJD leader's claim on 17 JD(U) legislators

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, DECEMBER 30

BIHAR CHIEF Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday dismissed an RJD leader's claim of 17 JD(U) MLAs being in touch with them.

The JD(U) has 43 MLAs in the 243-member Assembly. The NDA currently holds 125 seats in the Assembly, while the RJD, the Congress and the Left parties hold 75 and 19 seats and 16 seats, respectively.

Taking questions from the media during the inspection of a park here, the Bihar Chief Minister said, "What the Opposition is saying is baseless. There is no such thing."

On Wednesday, senior RJD leader and former minister Shyam Rajak had claimed, "Seventeen JD (U) MLAs have been in touch with us. Once it comes to the two-thirds number of 28, they can defect."

Following the JD(U)'s criticism of its ally after six out of its seven MLAs in Arunachal Pradesh joined the BJP, the RJD has been looking to exploit the growing differences within the NDA.

Another RJD leader Uday Narayan Choudhary has said Nitish Kumar should help Tejashwi Prasad Yadav become the Chief Minister and the Opposition could project Nitish as the Prime Minister candidate in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

BJP spokesperson Nikhil Anand said, "We do not need to reiterate that our alliance is unbreakable... RJD has been daydreaming about coming to power. Statements of RJD leaders are baseless and ludicrous."

AJD (U) leader said they had succeeded in sending across a clear message to BJP about adhering to the "coalition dharma" in view of the Arunachal Pradesh development.

BJP says it may seek Rajinikanth 'support' for 2021 TN polls

PRESSTrust OF INDIA
CHENNAI, DECEMBER 30

THE BJP on Wednesday said it may seek the support of superstar Rajinikanth for the 2021 assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, a day after the actor said he has abandoned his plan to make a political foray.

Asserting that its alliance with the AIADMK was strong, BJP national general secretary CT Ravi, however, said the NDA was led by his party and 'Prime Minister Narendra Modi' in the state as well, apparently indicating that it was not steered by the ruling party, the senior partner.

In Tamil Nadu, AIADMK is the largest partner in the NDA and naturally, the Chief Minister will be from that party, Ravi told reporters here, answering a volley of questions on ties between the two parties. A formal decision would be made on the CM candidate once the Election Commission issues the poll notification, expected in April-May, he said, adding the strategy was part of the ongoing exercise to strengthen the BJP in the state.

The AIADMK has already announced incumbent K Palaniswami as its CM candidate. Earlier, former Indian team leg spinner and cricket commentator, Laxman Sivaramakrishnan and several local representatives joined the BJP.

On Rajinikanth's announcement that he would not launch a political party, Ravi praised the actor, saying he had always protected the national and Tamil Nadu's interests. Asked if his party would seek his support, he said, "I hope, we will ask him."

Bengal Governor hits back as TMC MPs seek his removal

In letter to Kovind, MPs cite 'breach of oath, open support to political party'; Dhankhar says 'free and fair polls not held'

DIPANKAR GHOSE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

FIVE TRINAMOL Congress MPs, from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, have written to President Ram Nath Kovind, demanding the removal of West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar for "serious breach of oath of office". The MPs wrote that the Governor has "failed to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution, and repeatedly breached law declared by the Supreme Court" while "openly supporting a political party".

Meanwhile, speaking to the media in Kolkata, Dhankhar, who has been locked in a seemingly interminable battle with the Mamata Banerjee government, shot back, asserting his duty is to ensure that people get the opportunity to exercise their franchise without fear. "Free and fair elec-



Jagdeep Dhankhar

tions without fear are not held (in the state)," he said, adding that it does not concern him for whom the people vote, but it is his duty to make sure that they get to exercise their franchise without any intimidation. He also urged the government machinery to be neutral during the West Bengal Assembly elections.

The Governor denied the TMC's allegations and said he was prepared to undergo any test to prove his neutrality. "I am miles away from politics. I appeal to them to take my agnipariksha and check if I ever did anything antithetical. All my steps are influenced by constitutional re-

sponsibilities," he said.

The BJP weighed in, with the party's national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya remarking that the "TMC is doing this as it is scared" as the "Governor is acting within his constitutional parameters as the head of the state". "I don't think the TMC's action of approaching the President for the removal of the Governor will have any impact. The President will go by his own understanding."

The letter, signed by MP's Sudip Bandyopadhyaya, Derek O'Brien, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Kalyan Banerjee, Dr Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar stated that Dhankhar has "been inducing divisive politics just because ruling parties at the state and at the Centre are political opponents".

WITH INPUTS
FROM ENS KOLKATA
FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Bengal, Punjab, Bihar have maximum VIPs with police security: BPR&D

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

MORE THAN 19,000 ministers, MPs, MLAs, judges and bureaucrats among other VIPs were provided protection by more than 66,000 police personnel in 2019, according to the latest data on police organisations published by Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).

Interestingly, none of the top states providing security to large number of VIPs are significantly impacted by insurgency of any kind or violent movement.

The data shows that West

India, particularly in Punjab, there is a VIP culture where the size of your entourage and the number of gunmen project your power," said a senior police officer.

While number of VIPs under protection dropped from 21,300 in 2018 to 19,467 in 2019, the corresponding deployment of police personnel for VIP protection went up from 63,061 to 66,043. This indicates VIPs in 2019 were provided higher grade of security compared to 2018.

Delhi deployed highest number of personnel (8,182) on VIP security duty despite just 501 VIPs being under its protection, according to the BPR&D data. It would

VIP PROTECTION				
STATES	Ministers, MPs, MLAs, Judges, Bureaucrats etc		Total no. of Police Personnel Deployed on Protection Duties	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
West Bengal	2,769	3,142	5,318	6,247
Punjab	2,522	2,594	7,834	7,714
Bihar	4,677	2,347	6,043	5,611
Haryana	1,493	1,355	3,556	3,074
Jharkhand	1,265	1,351	1,777	1,891
All India	21,300	19,467	63,061	66,043

translate to 16 personnel on an average protecting a single VIP.

The data is particularly reveal-

ing in the sense that not a single insurgency-affected state, barring Jharkhand, makes it to top five in

EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

KARNATAKA LS Speaker seeks probe into Gowda's death

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday called for a high-level probe by an independent agency into the death of Karnataka Legislative Council Deputy Chairman S L Dhame Gowda, who was found dead on railway tracks in Chikmagalur district. Gowda, 64, a JD(S) MLC was at the centre of a high drama on December 15 in the legislative council, which saw BJP, JD(S) and Congress members hurling abuses and pushing each other over a row on a no-confidence motion against Chairman K Pratapachandra Shetty. "The unfortunate incident in the House, when he was in Chair, is a serious attack on democracy. It is necessary to have a high-level probe," Birla said. **ENS**

HIMACHAL PRADESH Former CM taken to Mohali for treatment

Dharamshala: Former Himachal Pradesh CM Shanta Kumar, who is suffering from Covid, has been taken to Fortis Hospital Mohali for treatment, officials said on Wednesday, a day after his wife died from the virus. They said the 86-year-old leader and his son Vikram Sharma, who also tested positive for Covid, have been taken to the hospital as a precautionary measure. Kumar and five of his family members tested positive for the coronavirus last week. **PTI**

TRIPURA 'Will procure machines for Covid strain'

Agartala: After a UK returnee tested positive for Covid in Tripura, the state government has now decided to purchase sequencing machines to detect the new coronavirus strain, law minister Ratan Lal Nath said. However, authorities could not confirm if the man's samples had the new strain. The minister also said that among a set of precautions taken to contain the spread of Covid in Tripura, the Panchayati Raj Training Institute (PRTI) women's hostel was notified as an institutional quarantine centre for those infected with the mutated strain. **ENS**

MAHARASHTRA Avni cub injured, release postponed

Nagpur: The plan to release T1C2 — the three-year-old cub of Avni tigress who was shot dead in November 2018 — in the wild has been postponed as it has been injured in a suspected skirmish with another tiger across the fence of the enclosure inside the Pench Tiger Reserve, where it has been living for the past two years after being rescued in December 2018. "We have decided to wait for the injury to heal. Release before that might impede her way to un hindered life in open forest," said Principal Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Nitin Kakodkar. **ENS**

'Beaten for plucking leaves', UP Dalit man kills self; 2 arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 30

A DAY after a Dalit youth was found dead in Uttar Pradesh's Fatehpur, police on Wednesday arrested two persons on charges of abetment to suicide.

The victim, Dharampal Diwakar (25), lived in the district's Malwan area. His family said he committed suicide after being thrashed by the accused for plucking leaves from their mango tree.

No suicide note has been found.

Fatehpur SP Satpal said, "On the basis of the victim's family's complaint, we have lodged an FIR and arrested two persons. Investigation of the case is still on."

The arrested have been identified as Noor Mohammad (27)

and Salman (22). Police are conducting raids to trace Noor Mohammad's brother Ashiq Ali, who is also an accused.

As per the police complaint by Dharampal's father Rampati Diwakar, his son was plucking leaves from a mango tree on Tuesday and feeding his goats when the accused arrived and started thrashing him.

The matter was resolved following the intervention of locals. "Later, family members found Dharampal hanging from a hook in a store room," police said.

On Rampati's complaint, an FIR was lodged against Noor Mohammad, Ashiq Ali and Salman under IPC Section 306 (abetment of suicide) at the Malwan police station. Police also invoked the SC/ST Act against the accused.

Couple shot on way to court for marriage; her father key suspect

ENS & PTI
CHANDGARH, DECEMBER 30

A MAN and a woman who were on way to a court in Rohtak Wednesday to get married were shot dead in broad daylight in a suspected case of honour killing, police said.

The incident took place in front of Gate No. 1 of Maharshi Dayanand University when two persons, who had their faces covered with masks, opened fire at the 25-year-old man and the 27-year-old woman, police said. Preliminary investigations revealed that the woman's father had opened fire at the duo killing them at the spot.

The parents of the man and the woman were to meet for working out some modalities for the court marriage. However, the woman's family did not turn up, Deputy Superintendent of Police



Police officials at the scene of the double murder in Rohtak on Wednesday. *Manoj Dhaka*

Sajjan Singh said.

The two were supposed to join the families but were shot dead on way. The man's brother who was accompanying him was seriously wounded, the DSP said. "A case has been registered

for murder and other relevant provisions of the law against some members of the woman's family on the complaint given by the deceased man's family," the officer said, adding an investigation was on.

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

303 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN
CASES: 1,02,44,852 **ACTIVE CASES: 2,62,272**
DEATHS: 1,48,439
TESTS: 17,09,22,030 **RECOVERIES: 98,34,141**

DEC 29	CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERIES	TESTS
	20,549	286	26,572	11,20,281



STATES WITH RISING ACTIVE CASES

	ACTIVE CASES	RISE IN LAST WEEK
Kerala	64,932	3,404
Sikkim	631	159
Daman	40	3

STATES WHERE ACTIVE CASES ARE DECLINING

	ACTIVE CASES	DECLINE IN LAST WEEK
Maharashtra	54,537	3,839
West Bengal	12,788	3,460
Chhattisgarh	12,472	3,407

STATES REPORTING MAXIMUM CASES

	ON DEC 29	TOTAL
Kerala	5,887	7,49,451
Maharashtra	3,018	19,25,066
West Bengal	1,244	549,715

STATES REPORTING MAXIMUM DEATHS

	ON DEC 29	TOTAL
Maharashtra	68	50,508
West Bengal	30	9,655
Delhi	28	10,502

Data as on December 29, released by Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Indian Council of Medical Research and state governments. Often the numbers released every day contain data from previous days as well. As such, trends based on daily numbers are only indicative and not definitive

2 families unable to travel to Beijing due to curbs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, DECEMBER 30

SOME INDIANS who tested positive for Covid-19 upon arrival in Wuhan from New Delhi on a Vande Bharat Mission flight on October 30 are not able to return to Beijing even though they have, since then, tested negative after repeated quarantine periods.

Nineteen people tested positive for coronavirus in the Wuhan Vande Bharat flight, which was the last to have operated between the two countries.

In the flight, 277 Indians were flown into Wuhan and 157 people were flown to New Delhi.

While most of the 19 Indians were allowed to go to their respective cities following negative tests, three Beijing-bound families were unable to move.

One family returned to India after failing to reach Beijing, while another family is stuck in Shanghai waiting for Beijing health authorities to unblock their passports. The third family continues to serve repeated quarantine periods in Wuhan even after they tested negative. Their additional quarantine period is due to end on January 7.

The Indian Embassy has taken up their plight with authorities in Beijing but no action has been taken so far, officials said.

Rajnath: India for peace, but those who provoke won't be spared

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said that India wants peace and wants good relations with everyone, but anyone who provokes the country will not be spared.

He also spoke about India and China holding talks to find a resolution over the nearly eight-month military standoff in eastern Ladakh, adding that the maintenance of the status quo is not a positive development.

Speaking to ANI news agency, Singh, when asked about possible collusion between Pakistan and China, said, "I don't want to pre-empt anything. We are highly focused. *Jo humko chhedga, toh use hum chhodenge nahi. Bas, chahe jo bhi ho.* (If someone provokes us, we won't spare them, no matter who it is.) But we try to maintain good relations with everyone."

In a veiled reference to China, the minister said, "If some country is expansionist, and tries to occupy India's land, tries to snatch it, then India has that strength and capability that it will not let its land go into the hands of any other nation."

When asked about the military standoff between India and China in eastern Ladakh, Singh said talks between the two



Rajnath Singh

countries are on at the diplomatic and the military levels, "*lekin abhi tak koi kamiyaabi mil nahi paayi hai* (there has been no success yet)".

Singh said India has always wanted peace, not just with China, but with everyone. "For a long time there have been perceptual differences between India and China about the boundary. It would have been good if these (differences) had ended... Even previous governments tried towards ending these differences through talks, but a solution could not be found," he said.

He added, "Till the status quo is maintained, it is natural that (military) deployment cannot be reduced. Our deployment will not come down, and I don't think their deployment will reduce... I don't think it is a positive development. But yes, talks are going on, and we expect to find a positive solution through talks."

Khadse skips ED visit, cites Covid symptoms

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 30

SENIOR NCP leader Eknath Khadse on Wednesday said he couldn't appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) office here in response to its summons as he was having Covid-19 symptoms. Khadse added that he would appear before the law enforcement agency soon after completing his 14-day quarantine period.

Last week, the ED had sent notice to the former Maharashtra revenue minister over the Bhosari land deal case in Pune. The former BJP leader, who joined the Sharad Pawar-led NCP in October, was asked to report to the ED on December 30.

Confirming the summons, Khadse had said, "I have received the notice related to the Bhosari land deal in Pune. The deal in

question was in the name of my wife, Mandakini. But since I am part of the family, I have received the notice as well."

On his inability to appear before the ED on Wednesday, the NCP leader said that he had mild cough and fever. "I have been told to follow quarantine for 14 days. Once done, I will visit the ED office," he said.

Khadse cited "being sidelined" in the party organisation as his reason for quitting the BJP. "I have nothing to fear or hide regarding the land deal... Several investigations, including one by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), have been initiated into it, and the ACB has already given me a clean chit," he told *The Indian Express*.

The NCP leader also expressed surprise as to why the ED, which generally looks into financial disputes involving over Rs 100 crore, is probing a land deal worth around just Rs 4 crore.

Sabarimala opens for festival; temple chief priest in quarantine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SABARIMALA, DECEMBER 30

MARKING THE beginning of the second phase of the annual pilgrimage season, the Lord Ayyappa temple here opened for the Makaravilakku festival on Wednesday, even as the chief priest quarantined himself after coming into contact with three Covid-positive people.

Although the portals of the hill shrine were opened at 5 pm, devotees would be allowed to enter from Thursday morning, officials of the Tranvancore Devaswom Board (TDB), which manages the shrine, said.

The auspicious Makaravilakku festival falls on January 14 and the shrine would be closed on January 20.

According to a TDB official, the 'melsanthi' (chief priest), VK Jayarajan Potti, has quarantined himself since Tuesday.

"Three persons, whom he had close contact with, tested positive for Covid-19. So he is in quarantine now at Sabarimala itself. As of now, it will not affect the daily rituals of the shrine," he said. **PTI**

Post-mortem report says Sheetal Amte choked to death, say police

VIVEK DESHPANDE
NAGPUR, DECEMBER 30

ALTHOUGH THE final forensic report of viscera is yet to arrive, the possibility of a determined effort to end life is appearing thin in the case of Sheetal Amte-Karajgi's death on November 30.

On December 3, *The Indian Express* reported the death may have been caused by "choking".

Chandrapur Deputy Superintendent of Police Nilesh Pande said, "That's what the post-mortem report states. We haven't yet received the forensic report. We will be able to speak on it with a sense of finality only after that."

Sheetal, 39, grand-daughter of late social activist Baba Amte and CEO of Maharogi Seva Samiti (MSS), which runs Amtes' projects, died at her residence on November 30. Police registered a case of accidental death.

The Amte family had been caught in a feud between Sheetal and her elder brother Kaustubh over control of some projects.

On Wednesday, police also confirmed that Sheetal was suffering from depression and had attempted suicide in June.

ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE HOME TO STATUE OF UNITY, KEVADIA TOURISM CIRCUIT

Gujarat to withdraw revenue record entry in Narmada

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
VADODARA, DECEMBER 30

THE GUJARAT government on Wednesday decided to withdraw revenue record entry from the lands of 121 villages falling under the eco-sensitive zone in Narmada district, which is home to the Statue of Unity and the Kevadia tourism circuit.

The development comes a day after BJP Lok Sabha MP from Bharuch, Mansukh Vasava, submitted his resignation from the party to state BJP chief CR Paatil.

Last week Mansukh had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointing out issues in the notifying of the tribal lands under eco-sensitive zones.

While Vasava announced his decision to withdraw the resig-

nation Wednesday, the state BJP tribal cell leaders said the government had decided to "correct the mistake" made by the Narmada district administration that had led to "deep anguish and misunderstanding" among the tribal communities.

The district administration, however, maintained that it is following the guidelines of the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in matters of the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ).

On Wednesday, tribal leaders of the BJP, including Vasava, also attended a meeting chaired by state minister Ganpat Vasava to "look into the issues" of the tribal communities in Narmada after notices were issued by the taluka mamlatdars to execute the MoEFCC's May 2016 notification.

Senior party leaders said a resolution was passed stating the state government would issue a new guideline and thereby "withdraw the revenue record entry" for the eco-sensitive zones earmarked in 14 villages of Garudeshwar taluka where the entries have been made so far.

Former BJP MLA from Dediapada, Motilal Vasava, who is the head of the party's state tribal cell, told *The Indian Express*, "In the meeting, we put forth the fact that the misunderstanding among the tribals regarding the notification has created a major issue, which the Opposition was exploiting... The district administration had wrongly made entries in the revenue records and included rights of the state government which gave an impression to the tribals that the former

has become an owner of their land... This mistake has to be corrected, and so, the government will make an announcement within a day or two."

While the party leaders shifted the blame on to the district administration, the Narmada district authorities maintain that they were only following the "guidelines" of the MoEFCC. Resident Additional Collector of Narmada, HK Vyas, told *The Indian Express* that the entry in the revenue record was made as per the "provisions" in the "beeja haq" (other rights) column of the land records, which must reflect the status of the lands as "eco-sensitive zone".

He also clarified that the withdrawal of the physical entry would not change the status of the land or the zone.

"There has been a misunderstanding that the state government is trying to seek ownership on the lands. The fact is that the entire area, all 121 villages included, have been under the ESZ since May 5, 2016... However, the execution of the notification, as per the provisions, was not done... The exercise was undertaken recently after requests from the Deputy Conservator of Forest (DCF) Narmada, but was misunderstood..."

The officer added that following the resolution of the state government to "withdraw" the revenue record entry, marking lands as ESZ, the respective revenue officers will now "physically verify" the status of the lands on a case-to-case basis if an application is made by a local for any action on the land.

DIP/Shabdarth/0523/20-21



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

For 5 days running, daily deaths below 300, down from peak of 1,000-plus



Testing at Mumbai's Dadar Terminus on Wednesday. Amit Chakravarty

FOR THE last five days now, the number of coronavirus-related deaths in the country has remained below 300. At its peak, more than 1,000 deaths were being reported every day.

As on Tuesday, close to 1.5 lakh people had died in the country due to coronavirus-related complications, the third highest in the world after the United States and Brazil. This number is less than 1.5 per cent of the total number of people who have so far been infected by the virus.

More than a third of these deaths have happened in Maharashtra, where the death count is now more than 50,000, including those that the state has categorised as having caused by co-morbid conditions. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have both counted more than 12,000 deaths, while Delhi has seen over 10,000 fatalities until now.

There have been about 110 deaths per million of India's population, which is less than half of the world average of about 230. There are several countries, including the United States, the UK and some other European countries, where this number is more than 1,000.

The drop in the daily death count

MOST COVID-19 DEATHS

Maharashtra	50,508 (34%)
Karnataka	12,093 (8%)
Tamil Nadu	12,092 (8%)
Delhi	10,052 (7%)
West Bengal	9,655 (6%)

In parentheses, percentage of total deaths, rounded off

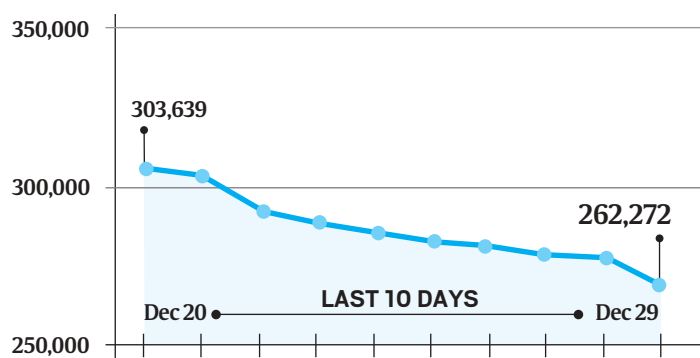
is following the decline in the infections that are being detected every day. For more than two weeks now, the detection of new cases has remained below 30,000, and this is declining progressively.

In the last one week, fewer than 21,000 cases have been reported every day on an average. There is usually a two-to-three-week lag between a patient getting infected, and succumbing to the disease. As the number of new cases fall, so will the death count. When the epidemic is finally over, the total death count is expected to be well below one per cent of the number of people who got infected.

AMITABH SINHA

INDIA ACTIVE CASES

262,272



Note: The Dec 29 figure in this graph is based on the government update on Dec 30

INDIA TOTAL CASES

10,244,852

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on Dec 30

WORLD TOTAL CASES

82,282,392

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on Dec 30

A forecast for friction

2020 started and is ending on a stormy note; 2021 may be no different. The government could face protests on the street, and hard-fought Assembly elections could raise political temperatures. Major diplomatic challenges lie ahead. For the Opposition, 2021 could be a make-or-break year.



RAVISH TIWARI & MANOJ CG

POLITICAL EDITOR
DY ASSOCIATE EDITOR

THE UNPRECEDENTED Covid-19 shutdown briefly interrupted political activity, but politics as such did not come to a standstill. In 2020, dissent found a louder voice than had been heard in the recent past, and arguments and clashes of ideology turned more raucous and bitter.

The year began with multitudes on the streets against the divisive CAA and NRC — protests that ended in bloodshed in Delhi. The pandemic took over but the government's handling of the crisis divided the polity once again. The Chinese aggression triggered heated debate before India entered election mode again. The so-called "love jihad" laws and the tragic incident in Hathras brought forth outrage and anger. And as the year wound down, thousands of people were on the streets again, demanding the withdrawal of the new farm laws.

2020 started and is ending on a stormy note — and 2021 may be no different.

The deadlock over the farmers' agitation continues — and it remains to be seen whether these protests will put other sectors too in agitation mode against the government's seemingly high-handed approach towards issues of popular concern. The Budget session of Parliament could witness — and reflect — the social and economic anxieties that had been bottled up under the pandemic curbs.

The Assembly election in West Bengal and other states could bring important indications, and the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine could kick up new controversies. As the year enters its second half, the drumbeat of the battle for Uttar Pradesh in early 2022 will get louder and more frenzied.

Leaderless agitations, powered by mobilisation on the Internet

The BJP-led government's political and administrative moves — the effective abrogation of Article 370, and the passage of the triple talaq, citizenship amendment, and farm sector laws — as well as the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic has bared the social and economic anxieties of large sections of the population.

The nationwide anti-CAA protests and the ongoing farmers' agitation at the borders of Delhi, although directed against the central government, have appeared to be crowd-sourced in nature and shape — and have reflected an ambivalence towards established opposition political parties. The palpable leaderlessness of the popular sentiment in both these major recent agitations contrasts with the anti-corruption movement during the UPA 2 regime, which had a clear leadership.

This aspect has, in fact, been in evidence for some time now — in the previous term of the Narendra Modi government, it was re-



Illustration: Mithun Chakraborty

flected in the spontaneous and largely leaderless Dalit protests that broke out in several parts of the country against the Supreme Court's ruling that diluted the SC/ST prevention of atrocities Act. The government had then responded quickly to defuse the crisis.

Again, the amplification of the #MeToo discourse was the outcome of a largely leaderless popular push that resulted in the resignation of a Union Minister. Where the anti-CAA and farmers' protests are different though, is in their manifest tenacity and willingness to play the long game.

While the ruling dispensation has sought to blame the Opposition for these protests, the fact that the protests have managed to sustain themselves without core support from the Opposition political parties is significant. The established political institutions — both on the ruling and Opposition sides — will be assessing this new trend, which is likely to not only survive, but thrive with the proliferation of Internet-enabled mobile phones across the country.

The similarly leaderless #BlackLivesMatter mobilisation ahead of the presidential election in the United States indicated the global spread of the trend of impromptu mobilisation of communities and groups using mobile phones, to give collective expression to their frustration. As new stresses emerge in post-pandemic society worldwide, more of this is likely to be seen everywhere.

Task for the BJP: managing the narrative as elections approach

2021 is going to be a crucial year for the BJP-led central government, which had prioritised its core ideological agenda — Article 370, Ram Temple, triple talaq law, and the CAA — over addressing the downward slide of the economy, which had seen multiple quarters of declining growth rate even before the pandemic hit. The distress brought by the pandemic has now pervaded through the economy — and has the potential to overturn the political gains that the ruling dispensation had hoped to make by pushing its ideological agenda. Negotiating the

major socio-political challenges — the threat of rising inequality, social tensions such as the farmers' agitation, the stresses on the federal structure as resource mobilisation becomes a serious issue — aggravated by the pandemic will test the mettle of the BJP government in 2021.

Assembly elections are due in the east (West Bengal and Assam) and south (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry) of the country in the first half of the new year, and each will have a degree of national significance.

West Bengal will be watched in the backdrop of the BJP's stellar showing in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, and Assam will test the

BJP's strength and appeal in the Northeast.

Tamil Nadu will see its first election without the two towering figures — M Karunanidhi and J Jayalalithaa — who dominated its politics for decades; Kerala will show whether the Congress is able to repeat its Lok Sabha election success, or the Left gets an opportunity to retain a degree of national significance. Kerala will also be a test for the BJP, which had pinned hopes on the Sabarimala temple entry issue, but has not yet seen the dividends it expected.

As 2021 ends, the battle will move to the north and west, as political forces begin to gear up for Assembly elections in UP in early 2022, along with Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa, and Manipur.

For Opposition, especially Cong and Rahul, a time of reckoning

Electional outcomes in Haryana, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Delhi, and Bihar since the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 have indicated a certain pushback against the BJP at the provincial level. At the national level, however, the Opposition parties have been found wanting, especially when compared to the popular pushback seen in the anti-CAA students' protests and the farmers' agitation. With numbers in Rajya Sabha turning more in favour of the BJP, the focus will remain on the strength and abilities of the Opposition.

The tussle for a rebalancing of power within the Gandhi-family-led Congress will continue. The first push for introspection by a section of senior leaders in August 2019 hasn't yet played out fully. The party has

bought time with the promise of an AICC session in early 2021. The outcome of the churn in the Congress has the potential to shape the course of Opposition politics in 2021. It will decide whether the Congress retains its relevance at the centre of Opposition politics or is overrun by ambitious regional leaders. The shape the convulsions in the Congress take will be inextricably linked to the political fate of Rahul Gandhi.

The electoral outcomes in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu will have an impact on Opposition politics at the national level as well. The scale of victory or defeat of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress and MK Stalin's DMK will determine the role regional forces play in the national Opposition.

Beyond borders: China, the US, and the world in India's policy

While these elections and the economic crisis will ensure enough tension in domestic politics, 2021 can be a crucial year for the re-balancing of global power equations. The administration of President Joe Biden will have a very different view of the US role in a range of global issues including climate change and international trade. Multiple points of friction in the US-China relationship will impact nations around the world, including India. Handling the military stand-off on the LAC in eastern Ladakh will remain a key focus area for New Delhi in 2021; the way this crisis pans out will define the future of the bilateral relationship. Negotiating this stand-off will need calibrations in India's foreign policy stance vis-à-vis the US, Russia, and the immediate neighbourhood, especially Nepal, as well.

The BJP's domestic political posturing of muscular nationalism may have a bearing on how India approaches these tricky issues, which have many more moving parts than are within India's capability to control. The government has in the past used the surgical strikes against terror launch pads inside Pakistan for domestic political leverage; how it handles the LAC stand-off and a belligerent Nepal in this context remains to be seen.

Potential for friction in vaccine, Census; key court cases lined up

The issue that will command significant popular attention and could trigger a political slugfest will be the vaccination drive against Covid-19. With regulatory approval for one or several vaccine candidates expected within days, issues of access and costs will dominate discussions through 2021. Given the way the handling of the migration during the lockdown entered the Bihar Assembly election discourse, the vaccination drive has the potential to trigger intense politicking during the coming clutch of elections.

The Census is another administrative exercise that can trigger political contestation. The storm building up over the NPR exercise that was slated to begin in April 2020 was dissipated by the pandemic, and the exercise stands postponed indefinitely. With the end of the pandemic still nowhere near certain, the issue of the 2021 Census continues to hang in the balance.

The Budget exercise could always fuel discontent; the government will also have to navigate important cases in the Supreme Court, including the constitutional changes in Jammu and Kashmir, and the petitions against the CAA and the farm laws.

TOMORROW: TECHNOLOGY AT HOME AND WORK

When Enforcement Directorate attaches the property of an accused

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

EARLIER THIS month, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) issued orders for the attachment of several properties belonging to former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and leader of the National Conference Dr Farooq Abdullah in connection with its investigation into alleged money laundering in the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) case.

The attached properties include Farooq Abdullah's Gupkar Road residence in Srinagar, where he lives. They also include two other residential properties in Tangamarg and Sunjwan, apart from commercial properties on Srinagar's Residency Road.

Does this mean Farooq Abdullah is homeless now?

No. Provisional attachment orders issued by the ED do not lead to immediate sealing of a property. Farooq Abdullah can continue to live in his house while the matter remains pending in courts.

The ED order would be valid for 180 days, during which time it must be confirmed by the Adjudicating Authority under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). If it is not confirmed, the property would be automatically released from attachment. And if it is, the accused can

challenge the confirmation in the Appellate Tribunal within 45 days, and subsequently in the concerned High Court and the Supreme Court.

What does the law say on the attachment of property?

The purpose of attachment is to deprive an accused of the benefits of the attached asset. The law also provides for the property to remain out of bounds for the accused until the trial is complete.

However, properties that are in use are generally not sealed until the case reaches its logical conclusion. Usually, the accused secures release of the property in appellate tribunals or High Courts, or is able to get a stay, and continue to enjoy it while the matter remains pending in the courts.

Also, running businesses are not shut down. Therefore, a running hotel can, for example, be attached under the PMLA, and still continue its business.

In 2018, the ED attached the Holiday Inn Hotel at Delhi's IGI airport in connection with the Air India case. But the hotel continues to host guests as usual. The law provides for the resting of operational profits with the ED. But businesses can get a stay on this from the courts, for the matter to be finally decided in the eventual outcome of the case.

Also in 2018, the ED had attached 50% of former Finance Minister P Chidambaram's bungalow in New Delhi's Jor Bagh.



Farooq Abdullah's residence on Srinagar's Gupkar Road. Shuaib Masoodi/Archive

Chidambaram and his family continue to enjoy the property. The ED had last year issued an eviction notice to Chidambaram's son Karti, who has secured legal protection against the notice.

Omar Abdullah has claimed the attachment is wrong, as it is ancestral property.

Under PMLA, proceeds of crime —

money generated out of a criminal activity — is attached on the directions of the ED Director. However, if that wealth is not available, the agency can attach property equivalent to that value.

The PMLA defines "proceeds of crime" as "any property derived or obtained, directly or indirectly, by any person as a result of criminal activity relating to a scheduled offence or the value of any such

property, or where such property is taken or held outside the country, then the property equivalent in value held within the country or abroad".

While the idea of attachment of property equivalent to proceeds of crime has been contested, various court orders in the past have ruled in favour of ED's interpretation of the term "the value of any such property" to mean that the agency can attach any property of equivalent value with the accused.

The ED is, therefore, within its rights to attach Abdullah's ancestral property. Notably, one of the properties attached — in Jammu's Sunjwan — has also figured in the list of properties built on "encroached land" by the J&K administration following its probe into the Roshni Act cases.

The law also has a provision for the attachment of local property of equivalent value if investigations reveal that the accused has parked proceeds of crime abroad, and the same cannot be attached there.

What happens to assets that are sealed?

Attached properties may remain locked for years, and may start crumbling. There is a provision for a body to maintain such properties, but it has not been set up yet.

Attached vehicles are sent to warehouses owned by the Central Warehousing Corporation, where the ED pays to park the vehicle. As cases drag on for years, the vehicles rot. At the end of the

trial, neither the accused nor the ED recovers anything from the vehicle. The agency could, in fact, end up paying more rent than the value of the vehicle.

What is the JKCA case?

The case relates to alleged irregularities in grants given by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA). It is alleged that between 2002 and 2011, funds to the tune of over Rs 43 crore were siphoned off from the JKCA's coffers. These funds were part of the Rs 112 crore grant given by BCCI to JKCA.

The case came to light in 2012. But a special team of the state police failed to complete the investigation after two cricketers, Majid Yaqoob Dar and Nissar Ahmad Khan, approached the Jammu and Kashmir High Court with a PIL in 2015. On September 3, 2015, the court handed over the case to the CBI.

Based on the CBI case, the ED registered a case of money laundering in the matter. ED has claimed that its probe has found that during the period from 2005-06 to December 2011, JKCA received total funding of Rs 109.78 crore from BCCI, of which Rs 45 lakh were laundered during Abdullah's tenure as chairman of JKCA.

"Investigation reveals that Dr Farooq Abdullah was instrumental as well as beneficiary of the laundered funds of JKCA," the ED has said.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Dear Doctors

Physicians may once again have the ear of their communities.
To sustain this regained trust, we need to introspect



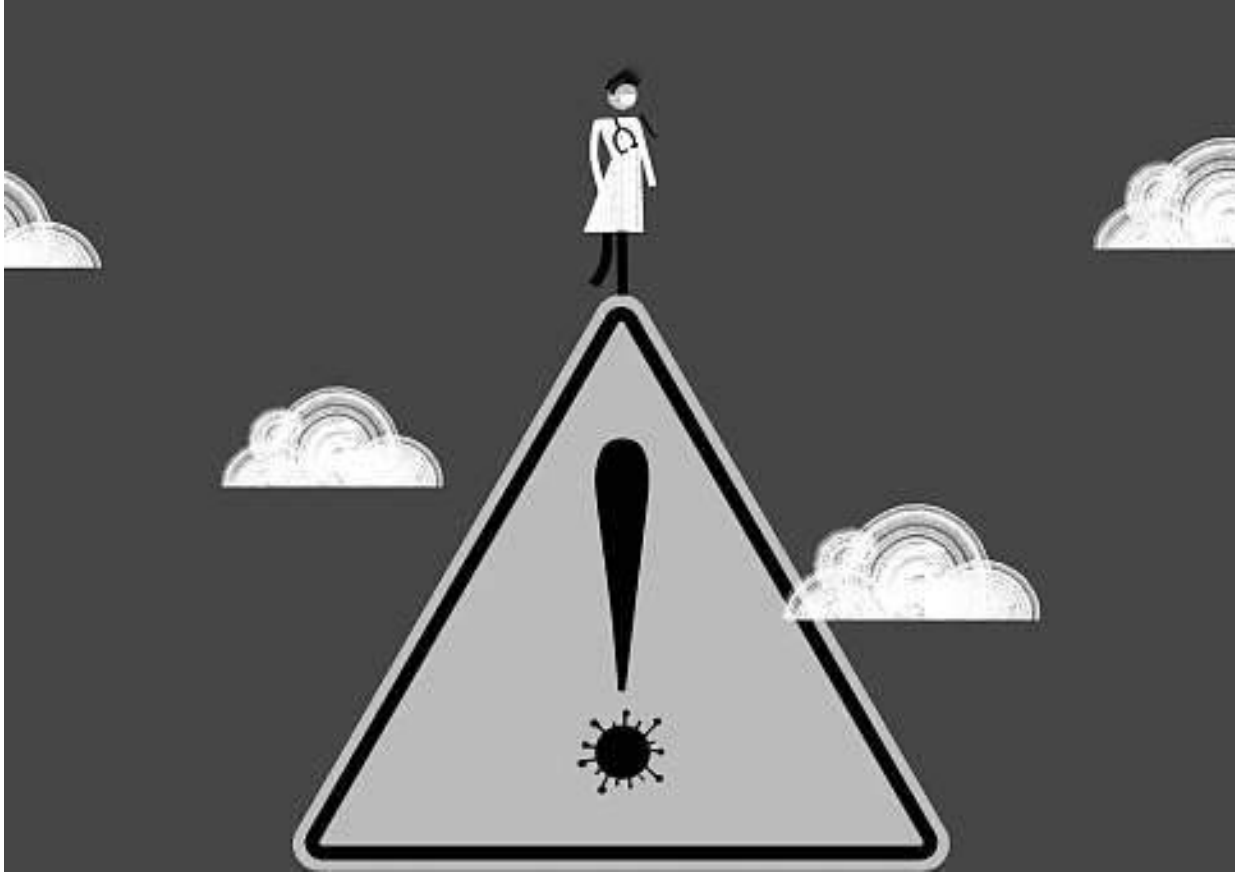
SATCHIT BALSARI

GLOBALLY, EIGHT CRORE people are reported to have been infected by COVID-19, and 18 lakh are dead. The true toll is, of course, much higher, as seroprevalence studies, including from India, have indicated. Thousands of others have already died, or will die, from loss of wages, loss of health-care, or starvation due to the pandemic. In the world's wealthiest country, there were 15 per cent more deaths in 2020 than in 2019, the highest year-on-year increase in a century. Citizens around the world are still being whiplashed from lockdown to lockdown as schools, factories, and offices open and shut, and wage jobs have nearly disappeared. And through all this, health systems around the world have resisted near inevitable collapse — out of sheer human grit, and a deep sense of duty. 2020 will be remembered as the year of mayhem, the year when governments let their peoples down. It will also be remembered as the year of science, and of scientists. It is also the year of healthcare providers around the world — women and men who woke up every morning, wondering whether today may be the day when they would “catch it” at work, and bring it home to their families, to their newborns, to their spouses, or to their parents. Will their pledge to save lives, imperil their own, and of those they most loved?

In a WhatsApp survey of my classmates from Grant Medical College and their colleagues, who are now across India, I learned that nearly 80 per cent continued to see patients in person, and an additional 17 per cent saw their patients remotely. Seventy-eight per cent of those that did not have adequate PPE continued to go to work because they felt it was the morally right thing to do. Nearly 41 per cent of all who went to work felt their skill sets were required. I have yet to encounter a single technician, nurse or doctor, anywhere, who did not show up to work when they were needed. That does not mean that every single one of them may not have hesitated as she stepped out of her home or lingered a little longer to hug her child.

The toll on healthcare providers has not been insignificant, though it, perhaps, pales in the face of utter economic devastation that millions around the world have suffered. But the daily stress of going to work and wondering whether the very skills one has honed over decades threaten to take you down as well, can be crippling. The little pleasures of clinical medicine are usually either wrapped in diagnostic and therapeutic triumphs — like the uneventful gliding of a breathing tube down a patient's windpipe, or, in simple human gestures, like leaning over and listening to a patient's whisper while holding their hand. A tight squeeze is sometimes as reassuring to the doctor as it is to the patient. But SARS-CoV-2 succeeded in draining most happiness from routine care. Every patient is a threat, every healthcare provider could be an asymptomatic carrier. The House of God is silent as everyone tiptoes around their perpetual anxiety.

Despite communities around the world acknowledging these healthcare heroes through daily applause and public recognition, frontline clinicians often had no say in



C R Sasikumar

critical decisions that directly affected them, their patients and their working environs. This lapse has been particularly stark in India. A letter circulated early in the pandemic by the public health department of Mumbai's premier medical college demanded that infected trainee-doctors explain how they got infected. A letter in mid-summer by India's premier research agency declared that India will have a vaccine on August 15. Unproven remedies were reportedly being peddled, as a matter of policy, for prevention and cure. Misguided overreach resulted in simultaneously crushing the private healthcare system in urban India and abandoning millions dependent on rural healthcare.

Such actions and inactions by those in charge risked the lives of patients and healthcare providers alike, around the world. In the United States, where I currently practise, the highest branches of government colluded to “let people get infected”. By the end of the year, most clinicians knew a healthcare provider lost to COVID-19. Globally, 7,000 had died by September. What healthcare providers are owed is not the clanging of pots, but accountability and a seat at the table, as we rebuild our broken world.

Practising clinicians, epidemiologists and infectious disease doctors were often underrepresented or completely absent in pandemic response planning, including in India. This pervasive lack of representation is not coincidental. In recent years, the commanding trust that physicians once enjoyed in society that allowed them to be powerful voices in daunting battles against landmines and nuclear weapons (where both efforts resulted in Nobels for physicians' organisations), has been gradually eroded for a variety of reasons. While corporatisation of healthcare is the primary driver in the West, the high-handedness and sometimes outright quackery practised by many providers in India has resulted in society's scepticism of the profession. Even during the pandemic, the medical profession was often represented by those without relevant subject matter expertise, or sometimes, outright histories of prior mismanagement.

AN EXPRESS IDEA SERIES

2021

COVID SHADOW, NEW YEAR LIGHT

The misery foisted on society by the pandemic has resulted in urgent calls for change. But change in healthcare, in most countries, remains profoundly myopic and confined to digitisation, remuneration and algorithmisation. This reductionist approach, seeking to correct a supply-demand mismatch, is unimaginative. As the pandemic has shown — and as have the gains in life expectancy over the past 100 years — the greatest strides will be made not only by treating, but by preventing malady.

Fortunately, the design and dispensation of bad advice, bad policy and bad medicine, even by those in white coats, was trounced by the clinical conduct of thousands at the bedside. For a fleeting moment, physicians might once again have the ear of their communities. To sustain this regained trust, introspection is, however, warranted. As a profession, our conduct has not been beyond reproach. “Cut-practice” and India's contribution to antibiotic resistance are two enduring and shameful examples.

The misery foisted on society by the pandemic has resulted in urgent calls for change. But change in healthcare, in most countries, remains profoundly myopic and confined to digitisation, remuneration and algorithmisation. This reductionist approach, seeking to correct a supply-demand mismatch, is unimaginative. As the pandemic has shown — and as have the gains in life expectancy over the past 100 years — the greatest strides will be made not only by treating, but by preventing malady.

There are remarkable examples of how Indian clinicians have engineered tectonic shifts in healthcare delivery in India, from making cardiac surgery affordable to the masses, to delivering scientifically sound medical care, door to door, in the remotest communities of Melghat, Gadchiroli, Jhagadia, Sehore or Bilaspur. The stories of Narayan Hrudayalaya, MAHAN Trust, SEARCH (Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health), SEWA-Rural, Sangath or Jan Swasthya Sahyog (JSS) have inspired legions of medical students in India and abroad because they capture what resonates at the heart of medicine — the spirit of service. A deep understanding of human ailment, and of the societal ills that cause it, is the foundation of their success.

The writer is emergency physician and assistant professor at Harvard's medical and public health schools

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“In our view, the success of China's COVID-19 fight is not because China is strict when it wants to be strict, but that China can have whatever it needs. China only focuses on actual results.”

—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

A phobia called love jihad

It speaks to Hindutva's long-running insecurities about conversion, and is driven by need to curb free will, silence protest



SABA NAQVI

ACCORDING TO A REPORT published in this newspaper (‘Walking home with friend after birthday party, Muslim youth booked under ‘love jihad’ law’, IE, December 25), a Muslim boy who stepped out with a young girl in Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, after a birthday party, landed in jail for apparently trying to induce the girl into marriage and conversion. The boy is now guilty till proven innocent, although the girl is vocal that her friend made no such attempt. The girl's father says the police dictated the complaint and pressured him into making it. The young man's future is potentially worse than that of other Muslim males picked up since the so-called love jihad laws came into effect in the state on November 24. This is because the girl is a Dalit, which means the punishment can be doubled to 10 years — the young man has also been charged under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act). His life has been blighted.

The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance operates at various levels. It comes no doubt from a visceral hatred of the Muslim male and the need to show him his place, a process that is of a piece with the political tactics and the hearts and minds of those who rule the nation's most populous state. It is, however, important to note that although the law has been used only against Muslim males, it is actually about banning mass conversion per se.

For the larger Hindutva project is fundamentally about consolidating Hindu society across caste differences and the Muslims are the punching bags. The prejudice and fear against them is designed to instil such unity. The badly and hastily-drafted ordinance was brought in months after the brutal Hathras gang rape in Uttar Pradesh — the victim from the Valmiki Dalit sub caste was raped, allegedly by upper caste men on September 14 (she would die two weeks later). As the police action invited charges of a cover up, the incident became an embarrassment for the state government. Leading national dailies would subsequently report that 200 Valmiki in Ghaziabad district in Uttar Pradesh had converted to Buddhism on October 14 in protest against the caste prejudice displayed in the handling of the Hathras rape/murder. The district administration would downplay the conversion.

Indeed, the words “love jihad” find no mention in the ordinance but it takes a serious view of any incident where two or more people (say an entire family) convert to another faith. It is designed to harass those who

wish to do so and makes the process the punishment. It is in this sphere too, that the ordinance is fundamentally against the vital principle of free will.

To put this in context, it's important to recognise how strongly the current system reacts against any retelling of caste atrocity. Bhima Koregaon, for instance, located 30 kilometres from Pune is a site where the Mahars (a Dalit sub caste to which Bhimrao Ambedkar belonged) have celebrated their role as soldiers in the British victory against the Peshwas in 1818. A gathering on January 1, 2018 to mark 200 years of that battle was attacked and subsequently, the attempt to tell the story through the subaltern perspective was criminalised. The name Bhima Koregaon is now associated with cases and arrests of activists/lawyers/academics.

Similarly, the leader of the Bhim Army from Saharanpur in UP often finds himself behind bars because he has another narrative to offer. Chandrashekhar Azad is a small player, yet he seems to invite repeated jail terms and house arrests. He has incidentally attached the name Ravan to his name, an act that some see as an insult to the belief in Rama, the God-King, for whom a splendid temple is being constructed at Ayodhya. Azad has repeatedly urged Dalits to assert their own distinct identity and not get submerged in the Hindutva stream.

As a new socio-political construct is being created by the BJP-RSS, there is a need to silence awkward voices. Mass conversions are few and far between but have an important protest tool used by Dalits since Ambedkar himself famously converted to Buddhism in 1956. There is no pretence at fair-play as the same law that criminalises conversion makes it possible for people to “reconvert” to their faith. This is to ensure that the “ghar wapsi” (home-coming) initiatives by RSS linked organisations to get people from tribal communities, Christians and Muslims to “return” to what they see as the Hindu fold, face no hurdle. In other words, you can check-in any time, but you can never leave.

There are many historical fears, essentially that of the caste Hindu male, that lie behind the new law. To sum it up in a sentence — it is about the historical belief that somehow their numbers will decline if Muslim men wed Hindu women and if Dalits and Adivasis have the option of leaving the Hindu fold. A study of the pamphlets and literature of the right wing groups such as the VHP and Bajrang Dal reveal a phobic obsession with the two themes of seduction and conversion.

As all these neuroses come into play, the rights of women have been completely subjugated in this law. Any relative of the woman can file a complaint to get the police and bureaucracy engaged in an inter-faith marriage. The law presumes the woman is a chattel of the family, community and relatives who now have greater agency than her and can invite police and bureaucrats to interfere in an adult's personal choice.

Naqvi, a senior journalist, is the author of Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi



NANDITESH NILAY

IN FEBRUARY 1922, a violent mob set a police station on fire at Chauri Chaura with 22 policemen trapped inside. The home secretary at that time called it a “rebellion against the Raj” but for Mahatma Gandhi, it was an “index finger” that pointed the way to possible anarchy and he called off the civil disobedience movement. He even went on a fast for five days as self-punishment for the violence. He was experimenting with the means of non-violence, and, for him, means were as necessary as the end. He wrote in *Young India*: “They say ‘means are after all means’. I would say means are, after all, everything. There is no wall of separation between means and ends.”

As the year winds down the protracted farmers' protest and the deadlock looks like continuing into the new year, this is a moment for reflection and concern.

Democracy needs a free and safe space for the expression of ideas but because there is no Gandhian leadership in and around us, the shadow of fear lurks. Although the government so far has shown restraint, visuals of barricades being broken, reports of cell-

phone towers being damaged, protests in Patna on Tuesday — all of these could erupt any time. We have already seen the tragic suicides of two farmers and any incident can take their peaceful protest into the tunnel of violence. That is why it is extremely important to break the deadlock through dialogue and minimise any chance of violence. That is why the Mahatma is an inspiration — for both sides.

For, his belief that means are as important as the end ensured that he never compromised on the means. Just the opposite seems to be the norm today — we compromise on the means, irrespective of our best intentions. Today, as the market evolves, we are becoming more consumers than citizens. The towering aspirations of consumerism have overshadowed the core values of citizenship.

This adds to our stress and anger when we find that we can't buy a solution off the shelf or when a solution is easier for those who have higher purchasing power. No wonder, then, that small arguments turn violent. Even on social media, any discourse rapidly disintegrates into words that pour scorn,

mock, demean, humiliate or abuse.

Therefore, during the farmers' protest, remembering Mahatma Gandhi becomes unavoidable. For all the stakeholders. For the government, for those leaders who are representing farmers' interests, and for the Opposition. Nobody should try to tarnish or belittle the farmers' concerns by grouping them as farmers from BJP or non-BJP-ruled states. When India celebrated her Independence, the Mahatma chose to fast as he was deeply saddened by the riots in Noakhali. He was the leader who felt the pain of divide and separation, his moral authority made people listen to him. So powerful was his impact that he seemed to seep into the psyche of the common man and woman.

We have forgotten our Mahatma. Remembering him cannot be in mere words but action as well. Nobel laureate Gunnar Myrdal put it well that most of India's troubling issues can be addressed if one sticks to the path Gandhi had forged.

The Prime Minister launched the grand Swachh Bharat Mission through the Mahatma's visionary glasses, the clean-up is-

n't merely physical. Skill India and Atmanirbhar Bharat have been inspired by the Mahatma's spirit of self-reliance but the means must be as paramount as the end — that's the most important message from the Mahatma that we need to live and think by every day. Swachh Bharat is not just physical, atmanirbharta isn't just about manufacturing — our children and the weak must feel safe and secure in this country.

That should be at the heart of the negotiations between the protesting farmers and the government. Both need to listen to each other because for them, and all of us, the end is the same — India's peace and prosperity. So both need to choose means that are wise, that are in tune with that end and build mutual trust and respect. We may not have a Mahatma in our midst today but we surely have his spirit with us as we enter what will, hopefully, be a happy new year.

The writer is the author of Being Good and Aaiye Insaan Banaen. He teaches and trains courses on ethics, values and behaviour

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ORIGINAL SIN

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘An American debt’ (IE, December 28). The appointment of Debra Anne Haaland, the first Native American as Secretary of Interior, is a milestone and a game-changer in the history of the US Administration. In popular perception, slavery is America's stain. But to be true to history, it is the forcible confinement of Native Americans in reservations and the killing of millions of them by White settlers to grab their land is the original sin.

C R Bain, Kolkata

SHORT CIRCUIT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Powering up’ (IE, December 30). The government has been incentivising electric vehicles for quite some time now, but unfortunately, the switch to pollution-free modes of transport is not happening. The Indian consumer, quite unmindful of pollution, is yet to take a fancy to electric vehicles. But then, he alone isn't to be blamed for this sorry state. All the noble intentions of the government have fallen flat so far due to demand unavailability and, more importantly, the lack of logistical support like charging stations.

Kamna Chhabra, Gurgaon

A GREAT WIN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘December 29’ (IE, December 30). Coming as that perfect New Year gift to the nation, India's fabulous win at the MCG assumes immense significance given the ignominy suffered by the team in the first

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Test at Adelaide. Undoubtedly, the success can be attributed to the cohesiveness, commitment and team spirit coupled with that indomitable will to succeed led by the new Captain Cool and master strategist, Ajinkya Rahane. The victory in the absence of stalwarts, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Mohammed Shami, makes it even sweeter.

SS Paul, Nadia

PLAN TRANSITION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial ‘Systems challenge’ (IE, December 29). The ideas proposed in the New Education Policy have hit all the right notes. The transition to the new regime has to be planned with the utmost precision keeping the socio-economic realities of our student community in mind. Distinguished alumni should be seen as stakeholders.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

TOP OF THE WORLD



Nawaz Sharif has been living in London since November last year

PAKISTAN

Sharif's passport will be cancelled on Feb 16, says Pak minister

THE PAKISTAN government on Wednesday said it will cancel the passport of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on February 16. Sharif, 70, leader of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), has been living in London since November last year after the Lahore High Court granted him permission to go abroad for four weeks for medical treatment. He was convicted in two corruption cases and was declared a proclaimed offender earlier this month by the Islamabad High Court after he failed to appear before it despite several warnings. Mirza Shahzad Akbar, an adviser to PM Imran Khan, said Pakistan had asked British authorities to deport Sharif. **PTI**

CHINA

HK activists get jail terms for border crossing

A CHINESE court sentenced 10 Hong Kong activists to between seven months and three years in jail on Wednesday for illegally crossing the border, in a case that has drawn international attention and concern over the defendants' treatment. The group had all faced charges in Hong Kong over anti-government protests in the Chinese-ruled city and they have been held incommunicado in a mainland prison since their boat was intercepted on Aug 23 after leaving Hong Kong, allegedly to go to the democratic island of Taiwan. **REUTERS**

USA

University settles lawsuit involving Indian-origin prof

A US university has reached a confidential settlement with an Indian-origin former professor whom it accused of stealing a student's research and selling it to a pharmaceutical company, costing the varsity millions of dollars, according to a report. The settlement ended the lawsuit the University of Missouri system had brought against former pharmacy professor Ashim Mitra, who worked at its Kansas City campus. That research helped lead to the development of a treatment for a condition known as dry eye and could be very profitable over time, *The Kansas City Star* reported. **PTI**

US detects Covid variant in man with no travel history, raising host of questions

Kamala Harris gets Moderna vaccine shot on live TV; US congressman-elect Letlow, 41, dies of Covid

AP & REUTERS

WILMINGTON, DENVER, DEC 30

A COLORADO National Guard member has the first reported US case of a new and seemingly more contagious variant of the coronavirus that has set off alarm in Britain, while a second case is suspected in another Guard member, health officials said Wednesday.

The two were sent on December 23 to work at a nursing home struggling with an outbreak of the virus in a small town outside Denver, said Dr Rachel Herlihy, the state's epidemiologist.

The confirmed case is in a Colorado man in his 20s who hadn't been travelling and has mild symptoms, officials said. He's isolating at his home near Denver, and the person with the suspected case is isolating in a hotel on Colorado's Eastern Plains, Herlihy said.

The cases have triggered a host of questions about how the variant arrived in the US and added urgency to the nation's vaccination drive. The variant is probably still rare in the US, but the lack of travel history in the first case means it is spreading, said scientist Trevor Bedford.

A state laboratory detected the cases after it began looking for signs of the variant after its spread was announced in England earlier this month, she said.

The new, mutated version was first identified in Britain, where infections are soaring and the number of hospitalised Covid-19 patients has surpassed the first peak. The variant has also been found in several other countries.

On Tuesday, Vice President-elect Kamala Harris received a Covid-19 vaccination on live television in a bid to boost public confidence in immunisations. Biden, 78, did so last week.

Harris, the first Black person and first Asian-American elected vice president, received the Moderna vaccine at a medical center in predominantly Black southeast Washington.

To date, Covid-19 has killed more than 334,000 in the US. One of the latest casualties of the virus was Representative-elect Luke Letlow, a Louisiana Republican, who died on Tuesday of Covid-19, his campaign said. Letlow, 41, announced on Dec 18 that he tested positive for virus.

NEPAL RULING PARTY IN CRISIS

Chinese team returns after failure to unite rival leaders

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

KATHMANDU, DECEMBER 30

A FOUR-MEMBER Chinese delegation led by Guo Yezhou, vice minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China, returned home from Kathmandu on Wednesday after its attempts to unite the divided Nepal Communist Party (NCP) in the wake of the dissolution of Parliament on Dec 20.

Over three days, the team had met Nepal President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, and rival NCP leaders Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Madhav Kumar Nepal in a bid



Hundreds of people line up in their vehicles at a stadium in Los Angeles as post-Christmas Covid-19 testing resumes during a surge in new cases. *Reuters*

Chinese drugmaker says vaccine is 79.3% effective in final tests

JOE MCDONALD & HUIZHONG WU

BEIJING, DECEMBER 30

A CHINESE drugmaker said Wednesday its coronavirus vaccine was found to be 79.3% effective at preventing infection in preliminary data from the final round of testing, moving Beijing closer to possibly being able to fulfill its pledge to supply other developing countries.

The announcement by a unit

of state-owned Sinopharm gave the first official data from a Chinese vaccine's late-stage trial. Its reported effectiveness rate is behind Pfizer's vaccine at 95% and Moderna's at 94%. Scientists have cautioned coronavirus vaccines may only be about as effective as flu vaccines, which generally are 50% effective.

Sinopharm is one of at least five Chinese developers that are in a global race to create vaccines for the disease that has killed more than 1.7 million people.

More than 1 million health care workers and others in China have received vaccines being developed by Sinopharm and another supplier, Sinovac, under emergency approval while testing was underway.

The two-sentence statement by the Sinopharm unit that developed the vaccine, the Beijing Biological Products Institute Ltd., gave no additional details. Final proof of its effectiveness will depend on publication of more data. **AP**

China clamps down in hidden hunt for virus origins

DAKE KANG, MARIA CHENG & SAM MCNEIL

MOJIANG, DECEMBER 30

DEEP IN the lush mountain valleys of southern China lies the entrance to a mine shaft that once harboured bats with the closest known relative of the Covid-19 virus.

The area is of intense scientific interest because it may hold clues to the origins of the coronavirus that has killed more than 1.7 million people worldwide. Yet for scientists and journalists, it has become a black hole of no information because of political



A group blocks the roads leading to a mineshaft near Danaoshan in China's Yunnan province. *AP*

sensitivity and secrecy.

A bat research team visiting recently managed to take samples but had them confiscated,

two people familiar with the matter said. Specialists in coronaviruses have been ordered not to speak to the press. And a team of AP journalists was tailed by plainclothes police in multiple cars who blocked access to roads and sites in late November.

An AP investigation shows the Chinese government is strictly controlling all research into Covid-19's origins, clamping down on some while actively promoting fringe theories that it could have come from outside China.

The government is handing out hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants to scientists researching the virus' origins in southern

California nurse tests positive week after getting first dose of vaccine

REUTERS

DECEMBER 30

A 45-YEAR-OLD nurse in California tested positive for Covid-19 more than a week after receiving Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine, an ABC News affiliate reported on Tuesday.

Matthew W, a nurse at two different local hospitals, said in a Facebook post on December 18 that he had received the Pfizer vaccine, telling the ABC News affiliate that his arm was sore for a day but that he had suffered no other side-effects.

Six days later on Christmas Eve, he became sick after working a shift in the Covid-19 unit, the report added. He tested positive for Covid-19 the day after Christmas, the report said.

Christian Ramers, an infectious disease specialist with Family Health Centers of San Diego, told the ABC News affiliate that this was not unexpected. "We know from the vaccine clinical trials that it's going to take about 10 to 14 days for you to start to develop protection from the vaccine," Ramers said.

"That first dose we think gives you somewhere around 50%, and you need that second dose to get up to 95%," Ramers added.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel show the signed EU-UK trade deal in Brussels on Wednesday. *AP*

British lawmakers approve Brexit trade deal with EU

JILL LAWLESS & SAMUEL PETREQUIN

LONDON, DECEMBER 30

BRITAIN'S HOUSE of Commons voted resoundingly on Wednesday to approve a trade deal with the European Union, paving the way for an orderly break with the bloc that will finally complete the UK's years-long Brexit journey.

With just a day to spare, lawmakers voted 521-73 in favour of the agreement sealed between the UK government and the EU last week.

It will become British law once it passes through the unelected House of Lords later in the day and gets formal royal assent from Queen Elizabeth II.

The UK left the EU almost a year ago, but remained within the bloc's economic embrace during a transition period that ends at midnight Brussels time — 11 pm in London — on Thursday.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel signed the agreement during a brief ceremony in Brussels Wednesday morning. The documents were then flown to London for Johnson to add his signature. "The agreement that we signed today is the result of months of intense negotiations in which the European Union has displayed an unprecedented level of unity," Michel said. "It is a fair and balanced agreement that fully protects the fundamental interests



Boris Johnson after signing the Brexit trade deal. *Reuters*

EXPLAINED **'Better than nothing'**

UK'S WITHDRAWAL agreement with the EU had failed to pass in Parliament multiple times with the Labour Party having been joined by several ruling party MPs to thwart what they said were bad deals. But the trade agreement had a smooth passage in the House of Commons on Wednesday despite several Opposition politicians expressing strong reservations that the deal was not in the UK's favour, especially with regard to fishing. This is because Labour had already decided to vote for the deal despite its alleged flaws, saying any deal was better than no deal, and with a Dec 31 deadline, there would be no time to draw up a new one.

of the European Union and creates stability and predictability for citizens and companies." **AP**

US says won't let Daniel Pearl killer evade justice, ready to try Omar Sheikh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 30

THE US has said it is ready to take custody of British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, accused of kidnapping and murdering American journalist Daniel Pearl, asserting that Washington will not allow him to evade justice.

Acting US Attorney General Jeffrey A Rosen's remarks come days after a Pakistani court ordered the release of Sheikh and his three aides, convicted and later acquitted in the kidnapping and murder case of Pearl.

"We cannot allow him to evade justice for his role in Daniel Pearl's abduction and murder," Rosen said on Tuesday.

Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for *The Wall Street Journal*, was abducted and beheaded while he was in Pakistan investigating a story in 2002 on the links between the country's spy agency ISI and al-Qaeda.

"We understand that Pakistani authorities are taking steps to ensure that Omar Sheikh



American journalist Daniel Pearl was kidnapped and murdered while investigating a story in Pakistan in 2002

remains in custody while the Supreme Court appeal seeking to reinstate his conviction continues," Rosen said in a statement.

"The separate judicial rulings reversing his conviction and ordering his release are an affront to terrorism victims everywhere," he said.

"We remain grateful for the Pakistani government's actions to appeal such rulings to ensure that he and his co-defendants are held accountable. If, however, those efforts do not succeed, the United States stands ready to take custody of Omar Sheikh to stand trial here," he said.

Hindu temple vandalised in northwest Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PESHAWAR, DECEMBER 30

A HINDU temple was vandalised by a mob in northwest Pakistan on Wednesday, police said.

The incident took place in Terri village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak district, District Police Officer Irfan Marwat told reporters.

According to Marwat, the mob was protesting the expansion work of the temple and demolished the newly constructed parts alongside the old structure.

No case has been registered so far in the incident.

Pakistan's federal Parliamentary Secretary for Human Rights, Lal Chand Malhi, strongly condemned the vandalism carried out by "some anti-social elements". Malhi said the government would not tolerate such incidents. He said he has asked the district administration to file an FIR in the case and take legal action against the culprits.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan termed the attack on the temple as "an unfortunate incident".

MAJOR WIN FOR LATIN AMERICA'S FEMINIST MOVEMENT; RIPPLE EFFECTS LIKELY TO BE WIDESPREAD

Argentina legalises abortion, a milestone in a conservative region

DANIEL POLITI & ERNESTO LONDOÑO

BUENOS AIRES, DECEMBER 30

ARGENTINA ON Wednesday became the largest nation in Latin America to legalise abortion, a landmark vote in a conservative region and a victory for a grass-roots movement that turned years of rallies into political power.

The high-stakes vote in the Senate gripped the nation into the early morning, and the measure's approval — by a wider-than-expected tally of 38-29, with one abstention — came after 12 hours of often dramatic debate, exposing the tensions between the long-dominant

Roman Catholic Church, whose influence is waning, and a growing feminist movement.

"I didn't change my way of thinking about abortion," said Lucila Crexell, a senator from the southern Neuquén province who had kept her vote under wraps and abstained from a vote on the matter in 2018. "I changed my focus on how I think the issue should be approached. It isn't about feminism or religion. Clandestine abortion is a silent figure that kills, harms and writes very sad stories."

As it unfolded, the Senate debate was closely followed by masses of both opponents and supporters of abortion rights, who camped out in the plaza around the neo-Classical Palace



People celebrate in Buenos Aires on Wednesday. *NYT*

of Congress, chanting, cheering and praying as they tried to sway a handful of undecided senators to their respective camps.

Argentina President Alberto

Fernández has promised to sign the Bill into law, making it legal for women to end pregnancies for any reason up to 14 weeks. After that, there will be excep-

tions allowed for rape and the woman's health.

The effects of the legalisation vote are likely to ripple across Latin America, galvanising reproductive-rights advocates elsewhere in the region and leaving them hopeful that other socially conservative nations could follow suit.

Uruguay, Cuba and Guyana are the only other countries in Latin America to allow abortion on request. Argentina, like a number of other countries in the region, had previously permitted abortion in cases of rape or if the pregnancy posed a risk to a woman's health; other Latin American countries have stricter limits or total prohibitions.

"Legalising abortion in

Argentina is a gigantic victory that protects fundamental rights and will inspire change in Latin America," said Tamara Taraciac Broner, the Americas deputy director for Human Rights Watch. "It's predictable, however, that this will also mobilise pro-life groups."

Supporters of the legislation cheered and hugged as soon as the vote total was announced, confirming that what they had been fighting for had become reality.

"It's one of those things that you anticipate for so long that when it finally happens you can't believe it and don't know what to do with yourself," said María Blanco, 27. "I couldn't stop crying." **NYT**

lowing the airport attack.

Yemeni Communication Minister Naguib al-Awg, who was also on the plane, said he heard two explosions, suggesting they were drone attacks. Yemeni Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed and the others were quickly whisked from the airport to



Dust rises after explosions hit Aden airport on Wednesday. *Reuters*

Mashiq Palace in the city.

Military and security forces sealed off the area around the palace.

"It would have been a disaster if the plane was bombed," al-Awg said, insisting the plane was the target of the attack as it was supposed to land earlier. **AP**

PLI SCHEMES FOR MOBILE HANDSET, ELECTRONIC COMPONENT MANUFACTURING

IT Min plans meet to push deadline by a year as most cos say will miss target

Firms cite lack of skilled labour, paucity of time due to delayed approvals as hindrances

AASHISHARYAN
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) plans to start consultative meetings with members of the empowered finance committee (EFC) to consider the option of pushing the deadline for production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes for mobile handset and certain other specified electronic component manufacturing by a year, sources in know of the development told *The Indian Express*.

The EFC, headed by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NITI Aayog Amitabh Kant, also has the secretaries of the Departments of Economic Affairs, Expenditure, Revenue,

MEETING IN JANUARY

■ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) plans to start consultative meetings with members of the empowered finance committee (EFC) on the matter.

■ The committee is likely to start meeting in January on the issue and send its recommendations to the Finance Ministry, the IT Ministry as well as other relevant departments, the sources said.

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, MeitY as well as the Directorate General of Foreign Trade on the panel. The committee is likely to start meeting in January on the issue and send its recommendations to the Finance Ministry, the IT Ministry as well as other relevant departments,

the sources said.

The demands to push the deadline for PLI in mobile handset and certain other specified electronic component have come from several leading global and domestic component manufacturers, which have, over the past month, made representations to the IT

Ministry on the issue.

These companies, sources said, cited the lack of skilled labour and other resources as hindrances in meeting the targets for the first year. These companies also pointed out the paucity of time due to delayed approvals in of requisite land clearances for expanding and setting up new units, according to the sources.

The PLI scheme for making mobile phones and certain other specified electronic components envisages incentives of 4-6 per cent to electronics companies, which manufacture mobile phones and other electronic components such as transistors, diodes, thyristors, resistors, capacitors and nano-electronic components such as micro electromechanical systems.

The PLI scheme will be active for five years with financial year (FY) 2019-20 considered as the base year for calculation of incentives. This means that all investments and incremental sales registered after FY20 shall be taken into account while computing the incentive to be given to each company.

For the first year, the total incentive to be given has been capped at Rs 5,334 crore, while for the second and third year it has been kept at Rs 8,064 and Rs 8,425 crore, respectively. In the fourth year, the incentive will be hiked substantially to Rs 11,488 crore, while in the fifth and final year, the incentive to be distributed has been capped at Rs 7,640 crore. The total incentives over five years has, thus, been kept at Rs 40,951 crore.

PHILIP BLENKINSOP
BRUSSELS, DECEMBER 30

THE EUROPEAN Union and China agreed on Wednesday to an investment deal that will give European companies greater access to Chinese markets and help redress what Europe sees as unbalanced economic ties.

The agreement was negotiated for nearly seven years and is likely to take at least another year to enter into force. It forms part of a new relationship with China, which the EU views as both a partner and a systemic rival. European firms will gain permission to operate in China in electric cars, telecom cloud services and certain activities linked to air and maritime transport, such as ground handling.

Joint venture requirements will fall away for the automotive sector, many financial services, private hospitals, advertising, real-estate and environmental services, such as sewage. Companies that could benefit include Daimler, BMW, Peugeot, Allianz and Siemens, all with a large presence in China.

China will pass laws to ban forced transfer of technology from foreign companies, and has pledged to be more transparent on subsidies and bar state-owned enterprises from discriminating against foreign investors.

In Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron said relations between the EU and China had strengthened in recent years and would continue to do so. Macron offered to visit China in the coming months along with German Chancellor Angela Merkel to discuss other areas of cooperation.



French President Emmanuel Macron attends a meeting, along with Chinese President Xi Jinping, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and President of the European Council Charles Michel. *Reuters*

The deal brings Europe a degree of parity with the United States, which has struck a "Phase I" trade deal with China, and will undoubtedly be a key issue in future transatlantic talks.

The EU has been keen to portray the agreement as a step towards forging multilateral rules. "The Biden-Harris administration looks forward to consulting with the EU on a coordinated approach to China's unfair economic practices and other important challenges," an official from US President-elect Joe Biden's transition team said.

The deal includes commitments on climate change and labour rights, including forced labour, a first for China. Commitments are reciprocal, but the EU market is already far more open. Brussels has given some ground in energy, but says its offer to China consists chiefly of guaranteeing the existing openness.

The agreement comes just a day after the EU criticised China for jailing a citizen journalist who reported on the early outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and follows previous calls respect minorities and step back from a crackdown in Hong Kong. These issues could make it a hard sell to EU lawmakers, who will need to approve the agreement. The deal was struck after an online meeting between the heads of EU institutions and Chinese President Xi Jinping. The agreement, he said, showed China's determination and confidence to open up. It would stimulate the global economy as it recovers from the coronavirus pandemic and increase mutual trust, he added. A Chinese government official said China and the EU would push for an early signing of the pact. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called the agreement an important landmark in the EU's relationship with China. **REUTERS**

BRIEFLY

Power demand at all-time high

New Delhi: All-India power demand touched a record high of 182.89 gigawatts (GW) Wednesday morning, Power Secretary S N Sahai said. As per Power Ministry data, peak power demand met (the highest supply in a day) during last December stood at 170.49 GW.

PM chairs 34th Pragati meet

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed worth nearly Rs one lakh crore in 10 states and union territories as he chaired the 34th 'Pragati' meeting on Wednesday.

Odisha gets nod to borrow funds

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry on Wednesday said it has permitted Odisha to borrow an additional Rs 1,429 crore after the state successfully undertook ease of doing business reforms.

Online exit option for NPS

New Delhi: The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) said subscribers can use the online mode to exit the National Pension System (NPS). At present, subscribers have to physically go to Points of Presence to complete their withdrawal request. **PTI**

Bitcoin at record \$28,600

London: Bitcoin jumped to a record \$28,599.99 Wednesday, after the digital currency almost quadrupled in value this year amid heightened interest from bigger investors. The cryptocurrency was last up 2.3 per cent at \$28,012. **REUTERS**

'Ahmedabad most affordable housing market, Mumbai least'

Ahmedabad has become the most affordable housing market, while Mumbai remains the costliest, property consultant Knight Frank India said



Why is it important: Though city-wide average affordability statistics cannot highlight disparities in housing costs within sub-markets or across the income spectrum, affordability ratio across top eight cities has improved tremendously over this decade

Top three most affordable cities for housing:

- Ahmedabad
- Pune
- Chennai

Affordability index:

The affordability index tracks the EMI (equated monthly instalment) to income ratio for an average household. A ratio of over 50% makes it difficult to secure home loans from banks and housing finance companies, making it unaffordable to purchase a house

Factors that helped improve housing affordability in 2020:

- Decline in housing prices
- Multi-decade low home loan interest rates

Highest prices in Mumbai:

Mumbai is the most expensive

IMPROVEMENT IN AFFORDABILITY RATIO OF TOP EIGHT CITIES (2020 FROM 2010)

Ahmedabad	24% from 46%
Pune	26% from 39%
Chennai	26% from 51%
Bengaluru	28% from 48%
Kolkata	30% from 45%
Hyderabad	31% from 47%
NCR	38% from 53%
Mumbai	61% from 93%

housing market in the nation, while cities like Ahmedabad, Chennai and Pune are relatively more affordable

Key constituents considered for housing market affordability index:

- Property prices
- Home loan interest rate
- Household income of buyer

Source: Knight Frank India/PTI

Four employment surveys to be completed by Oct '21: Gangwar

New enterprise-based quarterly survey to be launched soon

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE GOVERNMENT plans to launch four employment surveys on migrant workers, domestic workers, professionals and the transport sector in March and complete them by October next year, Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar said on Wednesday.

A new enterprise-based quarterly employment survey will also be launched soon, replacing the earlier Quarterly Employment Survey, which was discontinued two years ago with the Centre releasing other datasets of EPFO payroll data and Periodic Labour Force Survey.

"The Bureau has recently been entrusted with four all-India surveys on migrant workers, domestic workers, employment generated by professionals and transport sector which will be launched by early March 2021 and the results

EXPLAINED
E Authentic data to be included

THE FOUR employment surveys were launched keeping in view the difficulty in mapping workers after the Covid-19 pandemic. The government is of the view that the surveys will include 'authentic data' on the organised and unorganised sector enterprises, which is vital for evidence-based policy making for the workers.

of these will be available by October 2021," Gangwar said at an event to mark the centenary year of the Labour Bureau.

To address the data needs linked to employment in both organised and unorganised sectors, Gangwar said the Bureau will

soon launch the 'All India Quarterly Survey on Employment of Enterprises'.

The minister said that for any evidence-based policy making for these workers, 'authentic data' on employment in organised and unorganised sector enterprises is highly called for.

Labour Secretary Apurva Chandra said that given the Bureau's rich experience in collection of statistics under the labour laws, it is proposed to designate Labour Bureau as the nodal agency for collection of statistical returns under all the four labour codes.

The *Indian Express* had reported on December 16 about the Labour Ministry intending to wrap up these new employment surveys by October next year.

Earlier this October, the ministry had announced three surveys on migration, domestic workers and professional bodies for assessing their employment situation, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rupee at over 2-month high

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

RISING FOR the fifth straight session, the rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 11 paise to close at more than two-month high of 73.31 against the US dollar on foreign fund inflows and a weak greenback in the global markets.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 73.35 against the US dollar and wittered an intra-day high of 73.26 and a low of 73.36.

The local unit finally settled at 73.31, registering a rise of 11 paise over its previous close. The rupee had last closed at this level on October 13.

Meanwhile, the Sensex and the Nifty raced to fresh record highs on Wednesday as gains in financials, auto and cement counties helped benchmarks extend their winning run for the sixth straight session. The Sensex closed up by 133.14 points or 0.28 per cent at a record high of 47,746.22. The barometer scaled its all-time intra-day high of 47,807.85.

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

CITING CHALLENGES faced by taxpayers in meeting tax-related compliance deadlines due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government on Wednesday extended the due dates for various tax filings, including for making declaration under the direct tax dispute resolution scheme Vivad Se Vishwas.

On the indirect tax compliance, the government has extended the date for filing annual return under GST for financial year 2019-20 to February 28 from the previous deadline of December 31.

For salaried employees, the deadline for filing income-tax return for the current assessment year (AY 2020-21) has been pushed by 10 days to January 10. This had been extended twice previously from the original deadline

CABINET DECISION

Additional interest subsidy to raise ethanol output capacity gets nod

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE CABINET Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday cleared additional interest subsidy of Rs 4,573 crore for establishing ethanol units that will use cereals, instead of the usual practice of using just cane, to produce the bio-fuel. The decision to offer additional interest subsidy to set up ethanol distilleries comes at a time when the government is planning to boost the blending of the bio-fuel with petrol to cut a glut in sugar and trim oil imports.

"Previously, Rs 4,687 crore interest subvention scheme was approved and now Rs 4,573 crore has been sanctioned," said Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. "This decision will fuel investment of about Rs 40,120 crore in the ethanol value chain, boost local industries, generate jobs, give fillip to the

JAN 10 FOR ITR

■ For salaried employees, the deadline for filing I-T return for assessment year 2020-21 has been pushed by 10 days to January 10.

of July 31. Similarly, for direct tax assesses who are required to get their personal and company's account audited, the deadline has now been extended to February 15 from January 31 earlier. The same has been done for assesses who are required to furnish reports in respect of international/specified domestic transactions, the government said.

Additionally, the due date for making declaration under Vivad Se Vishwas scheme has been ex-

tended by a month to January 31.

Further, in order to provide relief for the third time to small and middle class taxpayers in the matter of payment of self-assessment tax, the due date extended, the government said.

It added the due date for payment of self-assessment tax for taxpayers whose tax liability is up to Rs 1 lakh has been extended to February 15 and for others it would now be January 10.

Shailesh Kumar, partner at Nangia & Co LLP said, "Taxpayers should note that the interest clock continues and taxpayers waiting to file as per further extended timeline will need to pay additional 1 month interest (except small taxpayers having self-assessment tax liability up to Rs 1 lakh). Thus, if everything is final, taxpayers should go ahead with filing, instead of availing the extended period."

President calls for more inclusive 'digital revolution'

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

THE GOVERNMENT'S Digital India initiative should continue to strive to reduce the digital divide in the country and this access could be done through effective innovation, President Ram Nath Kovind said on Wednesday.

"A large segment of our population is still not able derive the benefits of digital devices and services. The number of such people needs to be minimised. This will make our digital revolution more inclusive," he said, speaking at the Digital India Awards for 2020.

Laying emphasis on the sharing of information and data, he said the National Data Sharing and Accessibility policy too envisages a similar participatory model, under which non-strategic information could be accessed by anyone for research and innovation.

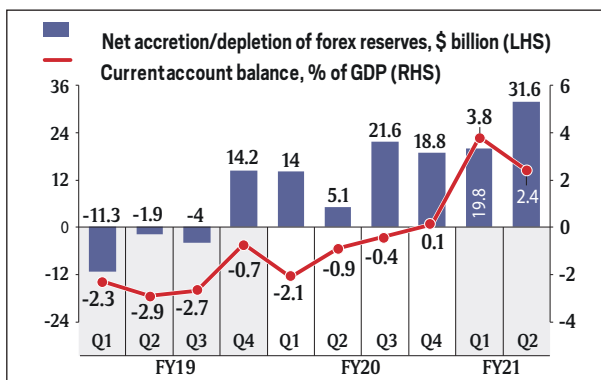
Q2: Current account surplus moderates to \$15.5 bn

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 30

THE CURRENT account surplus moderated to \$15.5 billion (2.4 per cent of GDP) in the quarter ended September of 2020-21 from \$19.2 billion (3.8 per cent of GDP) in the first quarter this fiscal. According to the RBI, a deficit of \$7.6 billion (1.1 per cent of GDP) was recorded a year ago — Q2 of 2019-20.

The narrowing of the current account surplus in Q2 of FY21 was on account of a rise in the merchandise trade deficit to \$14.8 billion from \$10.8 billion in the preceding quarter, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

It said the net services receipts increased both sequentially and on a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis,



Govt liabilities up to ₹107 lakh cr

New Delhi: Total liabilities of the government increased to Rs 107,04 lakh crore at end-September 2020 from Rs 101,3 lakh crore at end-June 2020, official data on public debt showed on Wednesday. This represented a quarter-on-quarter increase of 5.6 per cent in Q2 FY21. **PTI**

In the financial account, net foreign direct investment (FDI) recorded robust inflow of \$24.6 billion as against \$7.3 billion in the second quarter of 2019-20.

Net foreign portfolio investment (FPI) was \$7 billion as com-

pared with \$2.5 billion in Q2 FY21.

The central bank further said net outflow from the primary income account, primarily reflecting net overseas investment income payments, increased to \$9.3 billion from \$8.8 billion a year ago.

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, hitherto Known as FATIMA SHABEEH, D/o SHAMSHAD HUSSAIN RIZVI, Residing at, B-17, Front-side, First-Floor, Gali, No.9, Sewak-Park, Uttam-Nagar, Delhi-110059, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SHABEEH FATIMA.

0040559086-6

I, Veenu Sidana W/O, Jatni Khandelwal R/O H No-3054, Gali No.37, Beadon Pura, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005 have changed my name to Veenu Khandelwal for all purposes.

0040559040-1

I, Taneet Kaur Rekhi W/O Amarpreet Singh Marwah R/o-38, Near Shalimar Cinema, Hari-Nagar Ashram, New Delhi-110014, have changed my name to Taneet Kaur Marwah.

0040559086-4

I, SHEETAL MAHAJAN W/O DINESH MAHAJAN R/O GALI NO.28, INDIRA COLONY, PATHANKOT-145001, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SHEETAL FOR FUTURE PURPOSES.

0040559086-9

I, Rishi Kumar, S/O Naresh Kumar, Address : B-2/77, SF, Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi-110025.. Changed my name to Rishi Kumaar.

0040559086-1

I, RAMYA RAMACHANDREN D/O RAMACHANDREN, R/o B-228, Sector-46, Noida Sector-37, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201303, I have changed the name of my minor Daughter AATHIRA CHANDHA MATHI MATHIALAGAN aged about 9 Years and She shall hereafter be known as AATHIRA CHANDHA RAMACHANDREN.

0070725586-1

I, RAM MOHAN, S/O BRIJ MOHAN SHARMA, R/o R-WZ-2224 STREET-NO-8 LAJWANTI GARDEN, NEW DELHI-110046 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RAM MOHAN SHARMA, FOR ALL PURPOSE.

0040559088-9

I, Om Kavar s/o Nihal Singh, R/o 162, Issapur, Delhi-110073, have changed my name to Om Parkash, for all future purposes.

0040559096-3

I, No -9118714, Rank RFN, Asif Bashir Shah, 22 RR-BN (Punjab) P9 JAKLI, C/O- 56 APO, R/O- Razlook Kund, Tehsil-Devsar, District-Kulgam, affirm that in my army service and in 958 record related to my army service, my brother's name has been wrongly written as Hadiyat Bashir Shah. But actual name is Hidayat Bashir for all purposes mentioned in affidavit No-E-Stamp.in JK008018181920433.

0020415740-1

I, NUSRAT JHAN, W/O MOHD ASIF, HOUSE-NO-3557, 2ND-FLOOR KUCHA TARA CHAND, DARYAGANJ, DELHI-110002, have changed my name to NUSRAT JAHAN.

0040559096-7

I, Mohan Lal, S/O Narayan Mandal, R/o F-18/B, Phase-1, New Palam-Vihar Gurgaon, (Haryana)-122017, have changed my Minor Son's name from Utkarsh Kumar to Utkarsh.

0040559096-2

I, Mohammad Amir, S/o-Irfan Baig and Waseema Begum, R/o-15, Batla-House, Jamia-Nagar, ND-25, declare that Mohammad Amir is the same person.

0040559096-8

I, Manish S/O- Bhup Singh R/O- H.No-984, Luhari, Jhajjar, Haryana-124108 have changed my name to Manish Kumar.

0040559086-2

I, Manish Rastogi, S/o Krishna Murari Rastogi R/o B-1/321, 2nd-Floor, Yamuna Vihar Delhi-110053, have changed the name of my minor daughter Epsa Rastogi (Aged-11years) and she shall hereafter be known as Mahima Rastogi

0040559088-8

I, Aashish Mittal S/O Vinod Mittal, R/O DP-25, Maurya Enclave Pitampura, Delhi-110034, changed my name to Ashish Mittal.

0040559086-10

I, MUSTAQIM UDDIN ANSARI, S/O LATE-NIZAMUDDIN, R/O-A-2/150, II-FLOOR, PARTEEK-APARTMENT, PASCHIM-VIHAR, DELHI-110063, DECLARES THAT MU ANSARI IS THE SHORT-FORM OF MUSTAQIM UDDIN ANSARI AND BOTH-THE NAMES ARE ONE AND OF THE-SAME PERSON.

0040559086-3

I, MANMOHAN CHOZZER, S/O KISHAN LAL CHOZZER, R/o-79, GALI, NO.5, EAST AZAD-NAGAR, DELHI-110051, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MAN MOHAN CHOZZER, FOR ALL PURPOSES.

0040559088-7

I, Kuldeep Singh, R/O-F-119, Supertech Ecovillage-3, Oxford Square, Noida Extension, Sector-16B, Uttar Pradesh-201305, have changed the name of my son's from Goshvami to Vansh Singh Goshvami for all future purposes.

0040559099-3

I, Javed Mehdi Zaidi, S/o Late.Zafar Mehdi Zaidio, R/o D-43, Sector-49, Noida, U.P. Have changed My Name from Javed Mehdi Zaidi to Javed Mehdi Zaidi, for all future purposes.

0040559099-2

I, Gourav Kumar Soam S/O Ram Kumar Soam, R/o 223, Near Blue Bird Public School, Sant Vihar, Kanker Khera, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250001, Declare that Name of Mine and My Father has been wrongly written as Gaurav Kumar Soam and Ram Kumar in my 10th certificate No-1162792. The actual name of Mine and My Father are Gourav Kumar Soam and Ram Kumar Soam respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

0070725582-1

I, DISHITA D/O ANIL GROVER R/O WZ-A/223, SHANI BAZAR ROAD, UTTAM NAGAR, DELHI-110059, CHANGED MY NAME TO DISHITA GROVER.

0040559086-8

I, Ashok Kumar S/O-Raghubir Singh R/O- B-1, Block-C-D, Himgiri Enclave, Nilothi Extn Nangloi Delhi 110041 have changed my name to Ashok Kumar Shokeen.

0040559086-1

I, ARUNODAYA KUMAR, S/O DINESH SAH, R/O S-19A, UG-FLOOR, SUNDER-BLOCK, SHAKARPUR, DELHI-110092, have changed my minor daughter name from ANANYA KUMARI to ANANYA VERMA.

0040559096-5

I, VIKRAM S/O-SHIV CHARAN, R/O-249 BLOCK-RZB NIHAL VIHAR NANGLOI DELHI-110041 CHANGED MY NAME TO VIKRAM BAGHEL FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES.

0070725572-1

I, Salman Khan S/O Mustafa, D-103/L1, Inder Enclave Phase-2, Near Fakkira Chowk, Kirari Suleman Nagar, North West Delhi, 110086 have Changed my Name from Salman Khan to Mohd Nasir Hussain for all Future Purpose.

0040559090-1

I, SHASHI KANDWAL, W/O Lalit Prasad, R/o B-433, N F E CO-OP, H.B Society Ltd., YAMUNA ENCLAVE, Panipat, Haryana-132103, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as SHASHI KALA.

0070725585-1

I, SHADAB, S/O MOHD AYUB, HOMES-121, E-1404, SECTOR-121, NOIDA, NEAR C N G PUMP, GAUTAMBUHD-NAGAR, U.P.-201301, changed my name to MOHAMMAD SHADAB.

0040559099-1

I, Rishi kant singh, nirala aspire D1-1004 Gh-03, sec-16b, near supertech ecovillage3, roza yakubpur, gautam buddha nagar, uttar pradesh -201009 have changed my name to Rishi Kant for all purposes.

0070725571-1

I, Monika Rani w/o-Rajiv Kumar R/O 1330/8, Govindpur, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019, have changed my name to Monika permanently.

0040559096-4

I, RAMYA RAMACHANDREN, D/O RAMACHANDREN, R/o B-226, Sector-46, Noida, Noida Sector-37, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh -201303, have changed the name of my minor Daughter ASHRAYA GIRVANI MATHI aged about 13 Years and She shall hereafter be known as ASHRAYA GIRVANI RAMACHANDREN.

0070725587-1

I, Pardeep S/O Sh. Anand Singh Tushir, R/O Flat No 280, Adash Apartment, Sector 3, Pocket 16, Dwarka, New Delhi-110078, have changed my name to Pardeep Tushir.

0070725569-1

I, PUNEET JUNEJA S/O SHYAM MURARI JUNEJA, R/O A-3/228, Janak Puri, Janakpuri B-1 S/O, West Delhi, Delhi-110058, Declare that Name of My Father and My Mother has been wrongly written as SHYAM MURARI and BINA in my BIRTH CERTIFICATE NO-697. The actual name of My Father and My Mother are SHYAM MURARI JUNEJA AND VEENA JUNEJA

0070725584-1

I, No-9101063X, Hav Farooq Ahmed R/O-Kalaban, Tehsil-Mendhar, District- Poonch. In my service records (D o B) of my wife & name of my Daughter has been wrongly mentioned as (D O B) wife 08-02-1980 instead 15-04-1985 and name of daughter Rozya Akhter instead of Rozia Akhter. It needs correction. Objections be filed to concerned authorities within seven days.

0020415739-1

I, No-9097685Y, Hav Nazir Ahmad Mir S/O-A-Abbar Mir R/O-Trehgam, Tehsil / District- Kupwara. In my service records the name of my one son & (D o B) of second son has been wrongly mentioned as Umer Ahmad Mir instead Umar Nazir and second son Farhan Nazir (D o B -10.09.2007) instead of 28.08.2006 as in civil education certificates. It needs correction. Objections be filed to 13th JAKLI within seven days

0020415742-1

I, Narendar Kumar Rathore, S/o Hira Singh Rathore, R/O-141/B, 1st-Floor, BLK-E, Shastri-Nagar, Delhi-110052, have changed my name, from Narendar Kumar to Narendar Kumar Rathore for, all purposes.

0040559096-10

I, Musarrat W/o Sarfaraz Ahmad R/O J-37/C, Gali-4, Abul Fazal Enclave Part-1, Jamia Nagar, Okhla Delhi-25 have changed my name to Musarrat Fatima for all purposes.

0040559044-1

I, Mr Mehtab Ahmed R/o B-71, Block B, Vikas Vihar East Vikas Nagar, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 have changed my minor son's name from Shadab Ahmed to Shadab

0040559042-1

I, Mohan Lal, S/O Narayan Mandal, R/O F-18/B, Phase-1, New Palam-Vihar Gurgaon, Haryana-122017, have changed my Minor Daughter's name, from Urvi to Urvi Priya.

0040559096-1

I, Millan Rath W/O-Arjun Singh R/o-WZ-343A, 1st-Floor, Gali, No.20, Sant-Garh, MBS Nagar, Tilak-Nagar, Delhi-110018, have changed my name to Millan Kaur.

0040559088-4

I, Kailash Lakhera S/o Tara Dutt Lakhera R/O C-4, Plot no-176 Gyan Khand-1, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad 201014, state that both the name Kailash Chand Lakhera and Kailash Lakhera are the name of same person and I will be known as Kailash Lakhera for all future purposes.

0040558920-1

I, KULDIP SINGH S/O DARSHAN SINGH R/O F-177, 2ND FLOOR, VIKASPURI, NEW DELHI-110018 confirms that my names mentioned in some documents are written as KULDIPSINGH JOLLY / KULDEEP SINGH JOLLY / KJ JOLLY / KULDIP SINGH and KULDEEP SINGH and all these names pertain to the one and same person i.e KULDIP SINGH.

0070725576-1

I, KAILASH CHAND OJHA S/O HARISH CHANDRA OJHA R/O HNO-D-1872, JAHANGIRPURI, DELHI-110033, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO KAILASH CHANDRA OJHA.

0040559088-2

I, GURVINDER KAUR W/O KULDIP SINGH, R/O F-177, 2ND FLOOR, VIKASPURI, NEW DELHI-110018 confirms that my name mentioned in some documents written as GURVINDER KAUR / GURVINDER KAJ JOLLY and both these names pertain to the one and same person i.e GURVINDER KAUR.

0070725579-1

I, Devendra Nath Tripathi, R/O H-401, Antriksh Golf View-1, Sect-78, Noida-201301, UP have changed my son's name from Agastya Tripathi to Agastya Nath Tripathi vide Affidavit Dtd: 29-12-2020 before Public Notary Noida, UP.

0050173580-1

I, Deesha Biharilal Gorasia, W/o Devendra Nath Tripathi, R/O H-401, Antriksh Golf View-1, Sect-78, NOIDA-201301, UP have changed my name to Deesha Tripathi vide Affidavit Dtd: 29-12-2020 before Public Notary Noida, UP.

0050173582-1

I, Charnjit Rawal S/O Surender Rawal, R/O 16/4 F/Ashok Nagar Tilak-Nagar New Delhi-110018, have changed my name to Charanjeet Rawal.

0040559099-7

I, CHINKY KATHURIA, W/O NAVEEN KATHURIA H.NO. 2D-101, N-2 NIT-FARIDABAD HARYANA -121001, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHUVIKA KATHURIA.

0040559086-5

I, ANNU SINGH S/O Gaje singh, R/O BASAI BHOPAL SINGH, ALWAR, RAJASTHAN-301703, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as ARUN SINGH.

0070725581-1

I, Vinita W/O, Laxmi Kant Mishra R/O House No.2255, First Floor, Sector-71, Mohali have changed my name to Vinita Mishra for all purposes.

0040559041-1

I, Vikram Thapa S/O-Sh. Sh. Ram Bahadur Thapa R/O-401, Block-18, Heritage-City, Chhattarpur (74), DLF QF, Farrukh Nagar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122002, have changed my name to Bir Bahadur for, all future purposes.

0040559082-1

I, Sreekanth A P S/O, Late Sh. T P Padmanabha Pillai R/O 709/22, Dda Flats, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019 have changed my name to Srikanth Alencheri Pillai for all purposes.

0040559079-1

I, Putul Sarkaar D/o-Tapan Dhar R/o-B-267, Bhoomihean Camp, Kalkaji South Delhi-110019 have changed my name to Putul Rani Dhar for all future purposes.

0040559065-1

I, Davinder Kaur W/O, Mohinder Bir Singh Sodhi R/O SI-3, Block L, S/F Floor, Andar Vihar, Jail Road, Delhi 110064 have changed my name to Davinder Kaur Sodhi for all purposes.

0040559038-1

I, Baljit Singh S/O, Mohinder Bir Singh Sodhi R/o B-205, Ground Floor, Jail Road, Fateh Nagar, Tilak Nagar, West Delhi 110018 have changed my name to Baljit Singh Sodhi for all purposes.

0040559036-1

I, Amar Singh S/O, Makhan Lal R/O C-303, Winter Hills Society, Sewak Park, New Delhi, West Delhi, Delhi-110059, India have changed my name to Amar Singh Yadav for all purposes.

0040559035-1

I, VED PARKASH S/O BHAGWAN DAS R/O B-7/160-161, FIRST-FLOOR, SECTOR-4, ROHINI, DELHI-110085, CHANGED MY NAME TO VED PRAKASH GARG.

0040559088-3

I, MOHD ASAD ANSARI S/O MU ANSARI R/O A-2/150, II-FLOOR, PARTEEK-APARTMENT, PASCHIM-VIHAR, DELHI-110063, DECLARES THAT MOHD ASAD ANSARI AND MO ADAS ANSARI IS-ONE AND THE-SAME PERSON.

0040559088-5

I, Durga Dutt, S/O Ram Datt Baijwal, R/O-B-17-A, Gali, No.17, Baijeet-Vihar, Nithari, New-Delhi-110086, have changed my name to Durga Datt Baijwal

0040559096-9

I, Aakash Deep S/o- Vidya Sagar R/O- F-12/51, Sec-15 Rohini Delhi-110089 have changed my name to Aakash Bhatija.

0040559086-3

I, SURAJ PAL SINGH NARULA S/O SURENDER SINGH R/O 102, SAINIK VIHAR, SHAKUR-BASTI, DELHI-110034. CHANGED MY NAME TO SURAJ PAL SINGH.

0040559086-7

I, Uma Shanker S/o-Rishi Kumar Sharma, H/O-670, Ground-Floor, Chirag Delhi, Delhi-110017, have changed my name to Uma Shankar Sharma, permanently.

0040559096-6

LOST & FOUND

It is notified for the information that my Original Qualifying Examination Certificate of Main of Senior Secondary Examination of Year 2011 and Roll No. 7630005 issued by CBSE has been actually lost. Name of the candidate-Amit Kumar Patel S/o Nirmal Prasad kumri. School- ST JOSEPH'S PUB SCHOOL MSV NAGAR SAMASTIPUR B/R Address- 121, 7th cross 29th Main, Near Sakhi hospital, BTL layout Dollars Colony, Bangalore South, Bengaluru, Karnataka, 560076

0040559025-1

I, Ayush Dinesh, S/O Dinesh Kumar, R/O H-313, New Police Lines, Kingsway Camp, Delhi-110009 have lost my original qualifying examination certificate of main secondary and senior secondary of year 2016 & 2018 and roll No 8174411 & 9137250 respectively issued by CBSE. Finder call 9667629969

0040559047-1

I, SHILPA SONI, D/O RAM PUKAR SONI, R/o-A-434, Suraj Park Badli, Delhi-42, have lost my original-certificate/marksheet Class-10th, Year-2012 Rollno-8685495 CBSE-DELHI.

0040559088-10

I, Devendra Nath Tripathi, R/O H-401, Antriksh Golf View-1, Sect-78, Noida-201301, UP have changed my son's name from Agastya Tripathi to Agastya Nath Tripathi vide Affidavit Dtd: 29-12-2020 before Public Notary Noida, UP.

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I, CHINKY KATHURIA, W/O NAVEEN KATHURIA H.NO. 2D-101, N-2 NIT-FARIDABAD HARYANA -121001, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHUVIKA KATHURIA.

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0040559036-1

I, Amar Singh S/O, Makhan Lal R/O C-303, Winter Hills Society, Sewak Park, New Delhi, West Delhi, Delhi-110059, India have changed my name to Amar Singh Yadav for all purposes.

0040559035-1

PUBLIC NOTICE
Public at large are hereby informed that my client Sh. Umraya Sen S/o, Brajraj Sen R/o, Farsi Wai Gali, Near Gandhi Park Hariपुरा, Dabra, Gwalior, Madya Pradesh-475101, have disowned/debarred his son (Narendar Kumar Sen) and daughter-in-law (Rakhi Sen) both residing at RZ-238/2, Gali No. 19, Nasipur Colony Palam, Delhi -110045 them from their all movable and immovable properties and severed their relationship between they and out of control of client.

ABHILASH UJJAINWAL (ADVOCATE)
Ch.No. 424, Lawyers Chamber Block, Dwarka Court, Sec-16, Dwarka, N.D.-75

0040559096-9

I, Durga Dutt, S/O Ram Datt Baijwal, R/O-B-17-A, Gali, No.17, Baijeet-Vihar, Nithari, New-Delhi-110086, have changed my name to Durga Datt Baijwal

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0040559086-3

I, SURAJ PAL SINGH NARULA S/O SURENDER SINGH R/O 102, SAINIK VIHAR, SHAKUR-BASTI, DELHI-110034. CHANGED MY NAME TO SURAJ PAL SINGH.

16 CALENDAR



ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 20)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

Always look to the period when Venus has the strongest relationship with your sign for your most promising romantic prospects. This year Venus will be most influential in July, so you should plan your most important arrangements for then. Yet life could be tempestuous unless you get your priorities right. You will be unsure whether to accept outrageous invitations or stick to the straight and narrow. It could be August before you can assess the wisdom of your actions. By October you will be able to sit back while loved ones make the running.

WORK AND MONEY

You will have to sort out your financial affairs in February, taking decisions about where you're keeping your savings and what you can afford. Vivacious Venus will be stirring up passions, giving you fresh ideas about how you should use your time; the more spontaneity you introduce into your life this year, the happier you'll be. The New Moon in May looks excellent as far as your professional prospects are concerned; you are bound to make a fresh start. Career-wise, October and November are powerful months, although the rewards may be a long time coming. Caution is counselled, although some change does look inevitable.

HOME AND FAMILY

Family and domestic preoccupations continue to be a major consideration throughout February, while in March you may be presented with all the opportunity you need to make a fresh start. This is the last time to take any risks — or take a partner for granted, perhaps because finances could be a major cause of disagreement. If you're calling in the builders or decorators in July or August, then you should be careful to check all instructions — and leave nothing to chance. If you are determined to push through major improvements, then early October may give you the best chance.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

More comfort, more luxury, more space. That's what you need.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

It could be you, not other people, who will be responsible for any emotional upsets this year. That's good news for it follows that you'll be able to do something about them and restore good feeling. You'll have fun, but other people will be saddened by your sudden changes of mood and highly perplexed by your strange and contradictory statements. May might be your most exciting month, but October could be the most rewarding, just as long as you remember that other people have their own feelings and desires. If you expect everyone to behave as you wish, then you could be heading for big trouble. So what can you do? Trusting other people might be a good start.

WORK AND MONEY

You are driven by deep passions, although your emotions don't always coincide with the jobs that are on offer. Your need for privacy and your commitment to group activities will intensify in February, when you will be questioning your long-term plans; it could be that you will be forced to give up a responsibility. June and July may be your most expensive months and you may hit an extravagant devil-may-care mood. Career-wise, don't become too bogged down in details. It's your longer term hopes and wishes which matter now, so broaden your horizons. And, when September and October come round, keep your options open and always have a fall-back position at the ready.

HOME AND FAMILY

Be patient, take your time and you'll win the day while learning from partners' mistakes. There'll be many occasions when you will be called upon to put things right for someone close to you who has suffered a major setback. At times like these a bit of emotional letting-go is necessary, which is not easy for you. Don't let work demands tempt you to neglect your family commitments later in the year, even if you may be eager to press ahead with setting up a new professional collaboration. As December opens, you may feel that partners and family members are trying to undermine you. Talk to them and you may find that the opposite is the truth.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

The world is your oyster.

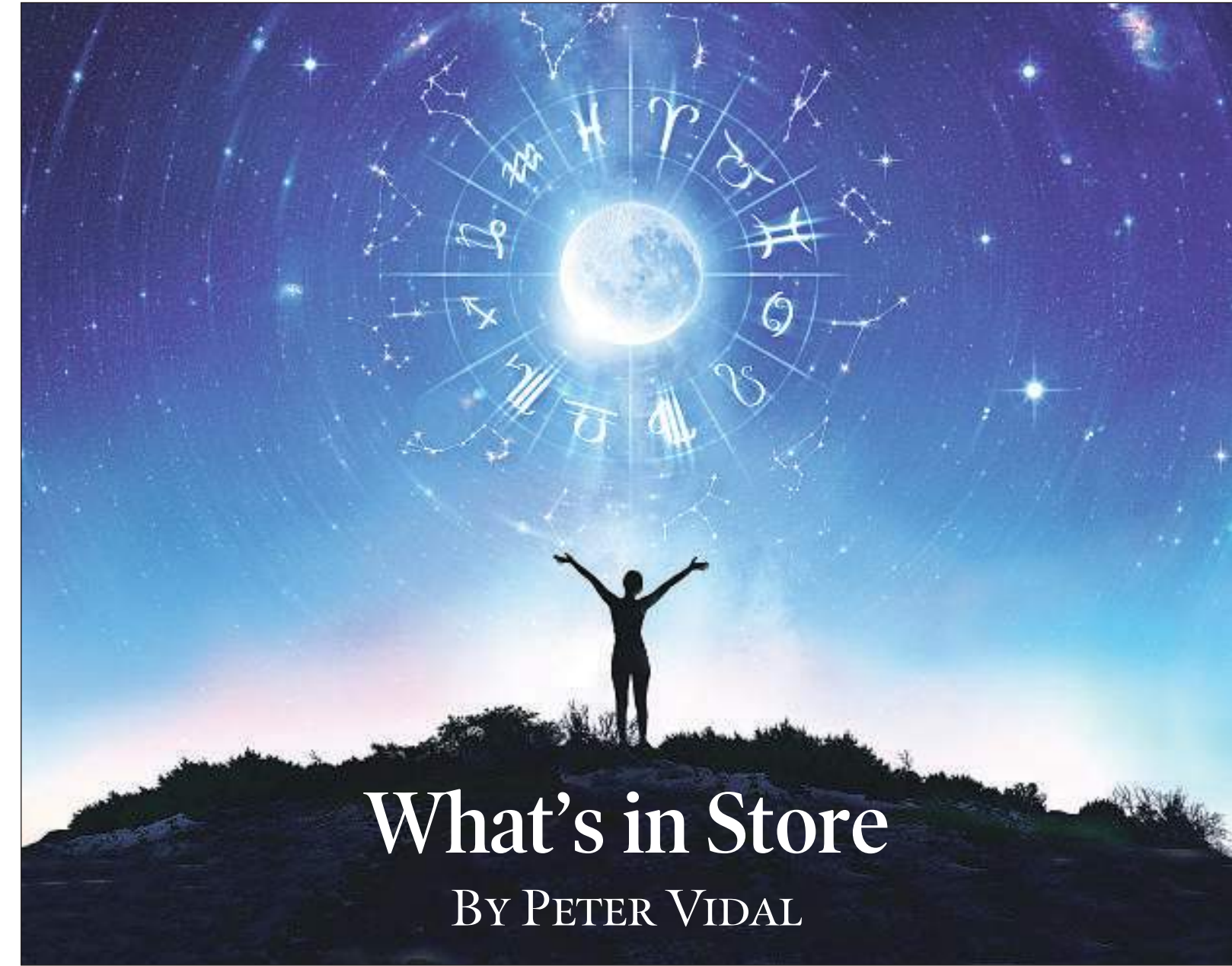
GEMINI (May 22 - Jun 21)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

By a happy coincidence Venus, goddess of love, occupies friendly positions in April, July and November, an indication that at these times your relationships should be running smoothly, during a year when many people close to you will be under extra strain. August initiates a level of passion which may take you by surprise, but by late September you'll be back on an even keel. Whatever takes place at the beginning of October will colour events in November, encouraging you to be more emotionally creative — but also more businesslike. Once you know what you really need, you can go out and get it.

WORK AND MONEY

Once again, your horoscope is devoted to work. Not just work but your broader professional ambitions, your desire to fulfil your destiny to be the first and foremost in all human activities. It looks very much as if you will repeatedly place family commitments and romantic hopes in second place, although the New Moon in June will oblige you to deal with urgent demands at home. Mars' exciting movements in September will bring you some of that famous crusading spirit for which you are so well known.



gettyimages

What's in Store By Peter Vidal

HOME AND FAMILY

Pressure at home comes and goes, mainly because generous Jupiter alternately encourages you to feel good about life — and then dumps responsibilities in your lap. You can expect a number of changes in January, February and March, some of them to your liking, others not so welcome. The trouble is that you won't quite know what direction to move in. The reality is that from June to August the planets are deliberately complicating matters in order to give you the greatest possible experience, which will come in useful in the future. Keep an eye on younger relations in November, and get in touch with family members who are far away: it's time to build bridges and mend fences.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Think big.

CANCER (Jun 22 – Jul 23)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

Partnership is vital to you, yet this year you'll be struggling to stand on your own two feet, liberated from the dependence on the past. February brings a shake-out, probably because you'll decide that enough is enough. Your best time romantically speaking should coincide with Venus' aspect to your House of Marriage in June, and you'll be revealing deep emotional secrets. Press ahead with whatever actions are necessary to guarantee your future success. The New Moon in October raises the chance of a major invitation — but are you ready? Perhaps not.

WORK AND MONEY

Upward and onward — that's your motto. Yet when you get into a professional tangle after April your best approach may be to act only out of the highest of motives. If you have other people's interests at heart as much as your own, you will be above criticism. Those of you who have planned a brief holiday early in the year are also in tune with your planetary influences, for it is good to broaden your horizons. All of you will discover that overseas contacts are more important than you once thought. Plus, you are specifically due to gain if you are involved in any legal questions or are pursuing educational ambitions.

HOME AND FAMILY

When powerful planets stimulate travel regions of your chart early in the year they indicate that you will either be going abroad for family reasons or that a long-lost relation will come knocking at your door — or, at least, one you haven't see for far too long. Domestic concerns make it difficult for you to have a leisurely holiday later in the year, so keep well on top of all your routine commitments and you'll make it more possible to get away at a time of your choosing. You'll have plans of your own at the end of the year but a fear of rejection left over from the past may have been holding you back; if so, now is the time to get to grips with it.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Life is not a rehearsal — so give it your all.

LEO (July 24 – Aug 23)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

Venus will be passing through practical zones in January and February, suggesting that these will be both prosperous — and happy and sociable, not to mention the increasing chance of a major move. A fresh acquaintance in April could form the basis of a powerful new friendship in July. You'll be working in close harmony with your stars if you keep a watchful eye open for ways of making extra money at home. Push through profitable transactions and make use of your exceptional charm to persuade people that your ideas are best.

WORK AND MONEY

No less than eight planets are firmly on your side in the early part of the year, with helpful consequences not just for your money, but all joint finances. Your business situation is bound to improve by July, just as long as you can make the most of the opportunities which come your way. You may be spending wildly in August, but should adopt a sensible saving policy in September, working for the future and seeing to it that you have cash set aside for those all-important social costs. At work, there's one key rule: take colleagues seriously, and don't imagine they're joking.

HOME AND FAMILY

Family members can be so argumentative: sometimes you'll tear your hair out at their inability to see sense. So, look at the problem practically: you'll have to do some difficult negotiating early in the year but, if you get the right words out at the right moment, the most obstinate individuals will melt. If you take a property gamble it will be a lesson to you, and remember that there's something to be said for learning from your mistakes and getting it right next time round. December could be a month of domestic and family transformation, so be certain you're in the driving seat and can ensure that everyone's hopes are fulfilled.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Dream away.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

It's a positive period. Pressures are lifting and this is a year in which to re-evaluate your needs and desires in relationships, and look anew at what it is exactly that you want from people who attract you. February, May and November are the months in which you can expect the most significant developments. All your relationships will be changing fast in February, May highlights romantic feelings and November heralds the need to bring all your relationships into line with your real requirements.

WORK AND MONEY

Jupiter's continuing passage through your chart holds out the promise of quite exquisite financial rewards. However, this planet's motion is highly cautious, and at the moment it is still refusing to commit all its power to your cause. You may therefore have to be patient for a little longer. One key period is February-March when affectionate Venus enters the scene, bringing the prospect of close and profitable business relationships. This is a sensitive period when you may have one last chance to finalise a particular arrangement or involve a special person in your plans.

HOME AND FAMILY

You'll be asking yourself if there's anything you've left undone at home in the past and, if there's anything you can now do to make amends, you'll do so without delay. Family members will be making demands on your time and asking you what you're up to in the middle of the year — so have your story ready. The trouble is that you're in a secretive mood at the moment and inclined to keeping your ideas to yourself after June. But you'll also be inspired to crusade for your dreams and fight for what you believe is right.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Think not what the world can do for you — but what you can do for the world.

LIBRA (Sep 24 – Oct 23)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

You may discover the true cost of a romantic commitment in March,

aware of just how much you might gain as well as how much you may give. Seven planets will be boosting your social prospects during March, and you might be moving into an entirely new circle of friends. One or two events may be rather fraught but, on the whole, this will be a rewarding period. Mars and Venus will be in compatible regions in July, so this looks like your best month socially and romantically. You'll be combining confidence with sensitivity in just the right balance. October brings one last, pleasant burst of passion.

WORK AND MONEY

Work and social life also seem to intermingle and you will be looking up old friends with a view to pursuing joint activities, sometimes to do with work or making money, but not always strictly so. The bigger picture is the rise on your creative powers and the necessity to make your professional affairs a direct outcome of your need to satisfy your deeper potential. There'll also be a number of travel openings although it's equally likely that you'll be on the end of an internet connection creating international contacts. A project that seemed a good idea earlier in the year may have to be cancelled by November — but that might be a huge relief.

HOME AND FAMILY

Family affairs could be exciting. You might be engaging in, and enjoying, discreet personal relationships which could also involve you in foreign travel. You may well wonder exactly where you're heading, but events after March and April will help clear up your doubts and hesitation, and make you realise more truthfully what your motives are. October could be your best domestic time. Sure, it may be a little pricey but it's excellent for socialising. Eventually your attention will be turning to your long-term security and you will be batten down the hatches in preparation for a safe and happy future.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Enjoy your ambitions — and work hard at your pleasures.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 – Nov 22)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

This is a time of mystery and dreams, a period when you're asking, who am I and where am I going and, more importantly, who with? And, when nothing is clear, be prepared to sit back and enjoy the ride. Venus, planet of love, changes signs repeatedly, bringing indications of a discreet romance which, in July, it ushers into the open. Although your celestial patterns in the last half of the year are pleasant, it won't be all plain sailing; the most remarkable astrological configurations are never the easiest, and at the time it may appear that nothing very much is happening; it is only when you look back at times like these that you realise how extraordinary they are.

WORK AND MONEY

Saturn, the celestial taskmaster, will be creating order in your professional affairs. There's also a great deal to be said for getting on with professional ambitions in a discreet and co-operative manner, avoiding the pitfalls that arise when you fail to consult other people. You'd also be strongly advised to pay more attention than usual to your social commitments, not least because in March and April a friend may open a new door in business. There's bound to be some sort of crisis at work in August-September, and you'll emerge very much stronger and more in control; if you've discussed your intentions with other people, taken practical advice and covered all your options, you'll be in an excellent position.

HOME AND FAMILY

You will be affected by a series of intense planetary aspects acting in a suitably harmonious fashion. Those four great planets, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto will be prodding you in a firm but friendly fashion into discovering your sense of purpose. From August onwards various planets will be picking up speed, encouraging mysterious developments and quietly creating conditions you require for domestic success. Now is the time to leave insecurity, uncertainty and lack of self-confidence behind, replacing these negative aspects of your nature with belief in your own destiny.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Opt for long-term friendships and deep commitments.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 – Dec 22)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

You may expect a small romantic upheaval early in the year — hopefully a thoroughly pleasant one. Partners may be hard to understand this year, which may not surprise you. It's just that there'll be moments when their motivation seems complicated and their demands contradictory. You'll have your work cut out dealing with difficult individuals. But everything changes when other people try to woo you and you'll be more than a little uncertain what the best course of action may be. At times you'll feel like confronting partners, at others you'll be tempted to seduce them with your charm. Maybe you'll do both.

WORK AND MONEY

You could be on the verge of a professional breakthrough, but it is absolutely essential that you prepare for the consequences in your home and family life. If anything, you'll be a little too happy-go-lucky in June when a group of planets will meet in a creative and adventurous region of your chart. Although this is an excellent time to increase your income on the basis of hard work, you should be exceedingly wary of any speculative schemes. Mercury, Mars and Venus will form a powerful alliance later in the year, encouraging you to go for broke.

HOME AND FAMILY

What you really need is security - and a strong emotional anchor. This applies as much to those of you who are on the move as to those who are stuck in a rut. But as soon as you feel safe and secure, then you'll be looking for other involvements, and it might be charitable activities that attract you, or it may be that a favourite leisure activity suddenly propels you into a new social scene. In October and November, you may have to retake decisions that you thought had been firmly reached last year, perhaps in the light of fresh information.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Put one hundred and ten percent effort into achieving your goals.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 – Jan 20)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

You can count on friendly planets improving your social position, but it's up to you to accept them, or refuse. Your future happiness depends on that simple ability to choose. Ultimately your romantic contentment relies on whether you want to concentrate on your career or on private passions. Your need for emotional security grows stronger and, as the months pass, you will be prepared to do whatever it takes to make relationships work. That's very praiseworthy and bodes well for your future success.

WORK AND MONEY

You may be unable to concentrate on anything except financial matters early in the year. If

someone is in debt to you or owes you a major favour this may take quite a bit of unravelling and you may have to decide whether to pursue it to the end or give up and cut your losses. By the end of mid-year your concern over money will have shifted and you may be thinking that a change of tack at work is the obvious answer to your problems. May is a fine month for a fresh start and there should be powerful indications that you may be in line for a minor promotion at work. You may need to face certain, perhaps unwelcome, facts, concerning colleagues, but be fair and impartial, get to the truth and everyone will be happier.

HOME AND FAMILY

Pressures at home will ease during January and February and the demands of domestic chores will be diminishing. However, don't become too complacent, as if you slip into a comfortable rut early in the year, you'll be rudely awakened before too long. The New Moon in June crystallises your emotional hopes. This means that there's definite scope to take the initiative and embark on one or two remarkable escapades. In September the only drawback will be a sense of the serious side of life which will emerge just as you're about to have some fun.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Be generous and expect nothing in return.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 – Feb 20)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

Although your romantic stars are bright in March and April, and again in July, personal relationships may take second place to your worldly ambitions. Venus and Mercury will both be on your side in April, a happy and poetic combination which will boost your spirits and enhance your outlook on life in general and your intimate romantic prospects in particular. Yet no one would pretend that this will be an easy time. Instead, you'll be kept under pressure, the planets continually driving you to try for new achievements. You'll be in no mood to accept second-best. Happily, Venus' passage through adventurous parts of your chart, closes the year on a contented note.

WORK AND MONEY

Your professional mood is dominated by wise and witty Mercury, which is due to take up residence in friendly and supportive sectors of your chart. This is all to the good and should help maintain a sense of equilibrium and a feeling that life is basically on the right track. However, in May and June, it may be a matter of one step forward, two steps back and all affairs, both personal and professional, are likely to meet delays. Please accept it as normal if colleagues seem to change their minds, employers cancel arrangements or financial ventures appear to run into the ground. It will all work out just fine in the end.

HOME AND FAMILY

All family members must have their say if you're planning changes in your living conditions. After all, decisions which you take now could affect them for a long time. As the month progresses, you'll have more time for relaxing and there's a joyful celebration in the pipeline. However, people around you seem determined to create disturbances, and your financial situation could be under threat. News which arrives during November may not be welcome to start off with, but if you sit down and think carefully about what a friend is really trying to say, a different picture could emerge. If a short trip seems necessary then don't delay.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Go for broke in November

PISCES (Feb 21 – Mar 20)

LOVE AND ROMANCE

Everything should be going your way as the year begins. You will be in control of your emotions and you must therefore be fair to partners. Loved ones will take the initiative in April and May, so you will have to fall in with their plans. With the Sun in the friendly sign of Virgo, September is generally a favourable month, but you need to listen hard to what other people are telling you. If you pursue your own ideas now, you will make life more straightforward for yourself in the future. August and October should be excellent months socially, whether you are entertaining in the house or getting out and about.

WORK AND MONEY

It's all a matter of attitude. We can forecast pretty firmly that you will enjoy yourself, meet new people and feel much more energetic thanks to optimistic Jupiter's expansive location. However, complacency could be your downfall. Therefore, you need one very big word of advice: please double-check all instructions before leaving home. And when you've checked them once, do it again. You're so impatient that you're likely to overlook vital details. Financially, things are looking up in May and June. Venus is in a sign which shares your general attitudes so you can rely on the world being a friendly place.

HOME AND FAMILY

The New Moon in February gets you going at home. Although you'll have your say, you can stand back and accept that other people should take the lead. You can go out of your way to please partners and cooperate with relations. Similar trends extend into July, an indication that partners will still be making the running. Relationships with older family members might require attention if you are to salvage a tricky situation in September. It will be unwise to count on agreement unless you've earned it by your past actions, but by December you'll be able to put your foot down.

TIP FOR THE YEAR

Refresh your energy in October.

Of trials, tribulations and triumphs

Rahane and Ashwin have often been at the receiving end of trigger-happy selection. Melbourne was vindication for their qualities, as they took a depleted side to one of India’s greatest away Test wins, TUSHAR BHADURI writes

Rahane’s rollercoaster

Finding inner strength

WITH VIRAT Kohli firmly in charge of the Indian team, the second-in-command never hogged the spotlight. But Ajinkya Rahane was thrust at the helm with the team missing some of its stalwarts after one of India’s most embarrassing outings, in Adelaide, at a time his own career seemed at a crossroads.

Phase of setbacks

Once touted as an all-format player and India’s best overseas batsman, it has hardly been smooth sailing for Rahane since the 2015 World Cup, as he was often considered ill-suited to the white-ball formats. He has not played a T20 for India since August 2016 and last appeared in an ODI in February 2018. It’s easy to say that one shouldn’t mix formats up, but the setbacks clearly affected Rahane’s Test game as well. The Melbourne hundred was only his second since he last appeared in coloured clothing for India.

What was said

Soon after the 2015 World Cup, after an ODI defeat to Bangladesh, then white-ball skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni put a question mark on Rahane’s suitability to the shorter formats.

“He needs pace. We have seen that he plays a lot better when there is pace on a wicket. Whenever he has played at No. 4 or No. 5, if the wicket is slow, then he struggles to rotate the strike freely. Especially when he is just starting his innings, he has a bit of trouble. It is not easy,” Dhoni had said. It started a period when Rahane shuttled in and out of the side on a regular basis. When Kohli took over the reins, he seemed more amenable to the qualities Rahane brought to the table.

“Jinx (Rahane) is a top-class player. I had said earlier that Ajinkya will be looked at as a third opener, but that situation can change because he has batted at No. 4 in a World Cup before,” Kohli said during the 2018 tour of South Africa. But someone forgot to convey the captain’s opinion to the selectors, as that was the last time Rahane was seen in an ODI or T20. And when India were impeding in the 2019 World Cup semi-final against New Zealand, many thought he was the man needed to steady the ship.

What did Rahane say?

“I was actually thinking I will be there in the World Cup batting at No. 4. My goal, my aim, is



The Melbourne hundred was only Ajinkya Rahane’s second since he last appeared in coloured clothing for India. AP

to come back into the ODI team, do well in white-ball cricket which I am really confident about. Especially when I was playing county cricket when World Cup was happening... as a player everyone wants to be a part of the World Cup team, especially when you know you have worked really hard, your record in the past was really good,” he said long after the snub. “At that time, I felt that I should be there at No. 4.” “If you see my record before getting dropped in ODIs, it was good actually. People obviously talk about strike rates, people talk about averages; in the two years before getting dropped, my record was really good in 50-overs cricket,” he added.

After Melbourne

Rahane may have had an iffy period with the bat in international cricket, but his ton left head coach Ravi Shastri impressed.

“The discipline, you know, on such a big stage... When he (Rahane) went out to bat, we were 2 down for 60, and then to bat six hours, on probably the toughest day to bat, because it was overcast all day and he batted for six hours, unbelievable concentration,” I thought his innings was the turning point,” Shastri said.

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin credited Rahane for shepherding the team through a situation when few gave them a chance. “Jinks’ calmness in the dressing room really provided us that stability to go out there and express ourselves in this game,” he said.

Praise came from across the aisle as well. “Very well deserved, that’s a sensational Test match hundred under a lot of pressure as captain after what happened in Adelaide,” former Aussie captain Ricky Ponting, Rahane’s head coach at IPL franchise Delhi Capitals, told 7Cric.net.

Ashwin finds turn, turnaround

Silencing doubters

“WHEN YOUR backs are up against the wall, lean back and enjoy the support of the wall!” Ashwin tweeted after the victory. It could refer to the Indian team bouncing back from 36/9 in Adelaide as well as himself making critics eat humble pie. Ashwin was considered by some as a bowler who flourished only on helpful pitches at home, but Adelaide and Melbourne should bury that theory forever.

The setbacks

Ashwin hasn’t played white-ball cricket for India since July 2017, probably a reaction to India going down to Pakistan in that year’s Champions Trophy final. With only Tests to look forward to, Ashwin has often been a victim of perception, and seemingly never far from the axe, as perceived by Sunil Gavaskar.

“For far too long Ashwin has suffered not for his bowling ability of which only the churlish will have doubts, but for his forthrightness and speaking his mind at meetings where most others just nod even if they don’t agree,” Gavaskar wrote in *Sportstar* after the Adelaide Test. “Any other country would welcome a bowler who has more than 350 Test wickets and not to forget four Test match centuries, too. However, if Ashwin doesn’t take heaps of wickets in one game, he is invariably sidelined for the next one.”

What was said

Ashwin started splendidly in 2018, both in England and Australia, before his body betrayed him. Injury meant he was half the bowler for the rest of the series in England, while he didn’t play Down Under after the Adelaide Test. Another off-spinner, Harbhajan Singh was scathing in his criticism after the Southampton Test, where Moeen Ali bowled England to victory on a helpful surface while Ashwin struggled. “India lost the match where Moeen Ali bowled better than R Ashwin. Him (Ashwin) not being able to take wickets is the reason why we are 1-3 behind in the series,” Harbhajan was quoted as saying by *India Today*.

Ashwin’s groin injury didn’t elicit much sympathy either. “I really don’t know how serious Ashwin’s injury was. If it was serious, then the team management should have known it. And if he was really fit, then he failed to bowl like it was expected of him,” Harbhajan said.

And a few months later, head coach Shastri had appointed chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav as India’s No. 1 overseas spinner, after he excelled in a Test in Australia, in Ashwin’s



R Ashwin hasn’t played white-ball cricket for India since July 2017. AP

absence. “He (Yadav) plays overseas Test cricket and he gets five wickets, so he becomes our primary overseas spinner. Going ahead, if we have to play one spinner, he is the one we will pick,” Shastri told *Cricbuzz*. Referring to Ashwin’s dodgy fitness record in 2018, he said: “There is a time for everyone. But now Kuldeep is our frontline number one overseas spinner. Even in Test cricket, it is going to be the age of wrist spin, especially in overseas Test cricket.”

Nobody was more frustrated with these setbacks than Ashwin himself. “If I could, I would have pulled my soul out and killed this body,” he told *Cricbuzz* about that phase.

The comeback

Ashwin prepared meticulously for the current Australia tour, factoring in both the conditions and the batsmen in the opposition. The way he has had Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne on toast is incredible.

Even the No. 1 Test batsman acknowledged that Ashwin has had the wood over him this series. “I probably haven’t played Ashwin as well as I would’ve liked. I probably would’ve liked to have put him under a bit more pressure,” Smith told *SEN Radio*. “I’ve sort of let him dictate terms and that’s something I’ve probably never let any spinner do in my career.”

Being relaxed definitely helped Ashwin in performing to his best, with confirmation coming from within the family. “I have seen/spoken to Ashwin after every Test he has played and after a lot of wins. But I have never seen him this happy, satisfied and light (can I say?) with a smile in his eyes in almost 10 years,” his wife Prithi tweeted.



UJVNL LTD.
H.O.: “UJJWAL”, Maharani Bagh, C.M.S. Road Dahrudin-248006
Telephones: 0195-2763808, Fax: 0195-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2019SGC025866 Website: www.ujvnll.com

Ro.No.-862

Corrigendum (Time Extension)

Dated- 30.12.2020

Due to unavoidable reasons NIT No: 03/EE-Test/DKN/2020-21, Internet Leased Line for Power Houses, under HGC Dhakrani, is being extended as given below:-

Last date for downloading of tender : 08.01.2021 up to 14:00 Hrs

Last dated for submission of tender : 08.01.2021 up to 15:00 Hrs

Date of opening of tender : 11.01.2021 to 12:30 Hrs

Other Terms & condition will remain same. For Fuller & further details, kindly visit our website www.ujvnll.com.

EE (Test), Dhakrani

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice

Sr. DEE-TRS-GZB acting for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender against Tender No. **230-TRS-GZB-2019-20-24**. The details are as under:

Name of the Work Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for two years of EOT Cranes with stand by spare installed in Electric Loco Shed, Ghaziabad.

Approx. cost of work	₹23.23,466.54
Earnest Money to be Deposit	₹46,500.00
Cost of tender document	₹3,540.00
Last Date & Time of Submission of tender bid by tender	24.01.2021 (11:00 Hrs.)
Date & Time of opening of tender document	24.01.2021 (11:30 Hrs.)
Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in

Note: (i) The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement System (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. (ii) For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. (iii) No manual offers are acceptable. (iv) Cost of Tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.

No. 230-TRS-GZB-2019-20-24 Dated : 30.12.2020 2897/2020

Serving Customers With A Smile



1x660MW PANKI EXTENSION PROJECT, PANKI, KANPUR
UTTAR PRADESH RAJYA VIDYUT UTPADAN NIGAM LTD.

E-Tender Notice

Bids are hereby invited for all mentioned E-Tenders. Details of Tender Notice as well as Total quantity of work, Tender Specifications, Other terms & conditions available on our Web Site: www.uprvunl.org/ e-tender portal www.etender.up.nic.in. Tendering authority reserves the right to cancel any and all e-bids without assigning any reason. Corrigendum, Addendum, Extension if any, shall be uploaded on the E-Tender website. Bidders are advised to visit the website regularly for updated information from time to time.

1. E-Tender – ET-08/PTEP/E&MCC-III/EMCD-VIII/2020-2021
Work of rate contract for maintenance of tube wells and different pumps of colonies of PTEP, Panki, **Estimated Cost: 4,52,600.00, Tender Fee: 590.00, Earnest Money: 9,100/- , OPENING DATE OF E-TENDER: 19.01.2021**

2. E-Tender – ET-31/PTEP/SE(CIVIL)/CCD-III/2020-2021
Cleaning of jungle of vacant house in officers colony at PTEP, Panki, Kanpur. **Estimated Cost: 2,58,775.00, Tender Fee: 236.00, Earnest Money: 5000/- , OPENING DATE OF E-TENDER: 11.01.2021**

3. E-Tender – ET-32/PTEP/SE(CIVIL)/CCD-III/2020-2021
Maintenance of park and plantation in officer colony at PTEP, Panki, Kanpur. **Estimated Cost: 17,43,442.00, Tender Fee: 2124.00, Earnest Money: 35000/- , OPENING DATE OF E-TENDER: 20.01.2021**

4. E-Tender – PTEP/SE(HQ)/CPD/HOSPITAL/ET-01/2020
Supply of emergency medicine for the year 2020-2021 for project hospital, 1x660MW, PTEP, Panki, Kanpur. **Estimated Cost: 2,48,500.00, Tender Fee: 354.00, Earnest Money: 5000/- , OPENING DATE OF E-TENDER: 19.01.2021**

website: www.uprvunl.org EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
पत्रांक : 15/1x660MW पंकी विस्तार / मृगुआमि / सीपीसीडी / विभाग दिनांक 30.12.2020

"SAVE ELECTRICITY FOR THE NATION"

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice

Tender No. : SE/PHC/MPM/77 to 80/2020-21-JJM - MALAPPURAM District - Providing FHTC and allied works to Edappal, Kaladi, Thavanur, Vatankulam panchayaths. EMD : Rs. 200000 to 500000, Tender fee : Rs. 11800 to 17700, Last Date for submitting Tender : 21-01-2021 03:00pm, Phone : 0483 2734871. Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in.

Superintending Engineer
PH Circle, Malappuram

KWA-JB-GL-6-729-2020-21



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
NIT No. 13/2020-2021/BC/MC/MW/CHENNAI Dated: 29.12.2020
FORM OF CONTRACT: LUMPSUM

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Buildings (Construction and Maintenance) Circle, Medical Works, Chepauk, Chennai-5 invites tender for the following work at his Office upto 3.00 P.M. on 29.01.2021 in two sealed covers containing, Cover (1) Pre-Qualification details and EMD in a separate inner cover and Cover (2) Price Tender Schedule in another sealed cover and put into one common sealed cover from the experienced and Registered Contractors / Firms in Public Works Department as detailed below. The Pre-Qualification will alone be opened at 3.30 P.M. on the same day.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approximate value of work	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit & Period of Completion	Eligible Contractors	Cost of tender documents with GST (in Rupees)	Cost of Tender Document & EMD should be remitted in favour of
1.	Construction of Out Patient block in Government Hospital at Perampur in Vellore District	Rs.887.00 Lakhs	Rs.3,55,000/- 12 (Twelve) Months	Class- I in PWD with Monetary limit of above Rs.75 Lakhs	Rs.15,000/- + Rs.1800/- (GST)	The Executive Engineer, PWD, Building Construction & Maintenance Division, Medical Works, Vellore.

NOTES:- 1.Tender schedule can be downloaded free of cost from the websites "<http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in/>" or "<http://www.tenders.gov.in/>" upto 29.01.2021 Tender schedule can also be obtained from the Building Construction & Maintenance Circle Office, Medical Works, Chepauk, Chennai - 600 005 during office hours upto 06.45 PM by remitting cost of schedule as furnished as above column 6 and 7 by remitting through Cheque in State Bank of India, Chennai-1. 2.Details in this regard are also available in the following website. www.tenders.tn.gov.in (or) www.tenders.gov.in

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PWD, Building Construction & Maintenance Circle, Medical Works, Chepauk, Chennai - 600 005

DIPRC / 5050 / TENDER / 2020



SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one person **Namely: Bhurey, S/o: Anokhey, R/o: H.No. 81, Pandit Chowk, near Durga Mandir, Mandawali, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped since **04.12.2020** at 08:00 am from the area of P.S. Mandawali, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **DD No. 62A, dated 08.12.2020** has been registered at P.S. Mandawali, Delhi. The description of the missing/ kidnapped male person is as under:

Age: 35 years, **Height:** 6', **Face:** Oval, **Built:** Thin, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Identification:** Mentally weak, **Wearing:** White colour jacket with black colour pant and bare feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing person kindly inform to the following

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641 **SHO**
Fax No. 011-24368639 **P.S. Mandawali, Delhi**
DP/306/ED/2020 **Tel.No. 011-22720808, 8750870628**

NOTICE INVITING LIMITED e-TENDER

NO.F.2/CPC/Homeo/Med/DHS/2020-21 Dated, Agartala.24/12/2020

TENDER FOR EOI FOR HOMOEOPATH MEDICINE FOR THE YEAR 2020-21 UNDER THE HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, GOVERNMENT OF TRIPURA.

A Tender (EOI) is hereby invited on behalf of the Director of Health Services, Government of Tripura from resourceful, experienced and bona fide, renowned licensed Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSUs) or State Public Sector Undertaking (SPSUs) or Pharmacies manufacturing under the State Government and Co-operative who have their own arrangement for manufacturing Homeopathic medicine for procurement of "Homeopathic medicine" for the year 2020-2021.

The details of tender, list of items with indicative quantity and limited tender Documents are made available on website (<http://tripuratenders.gov.in>). The last date/time of submission of the tender documents by online is 16/01/2021 up to 4:00 pm. All future modification/corrigendum shall be made available in the e procurement portal, So bidders are requested to get the update themselves from the e procurement web portal only.

Sd/-
Director of Health Services
Govt. of Tripura, Agartala

ICA-C-2604-20


J&K PROJECTS CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LTD.
OFFICE OF DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER, MECHANICAL UNIT, JAMMU
Extension No. 1 to Tender Notice

On the request of perspective bidders, the last date for uploading of E-NIT No. MECH/NT/J/41 of 2020-21 dated 09.12.2020 for Design, Manufacture, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of One No. 20 Passenger Room Less (MRL) bed elevator for IPD Block of Distt Hospital Reasi is hereby extended and can be seen/downloaded and uploaded from/on the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in up to Dt: 11.01.2021 up to 1400 Hrs with date of opening of tender on 12.01.2021 at 1200 Hrs.

However all other terms and conditions of the NIT shall remain the same.

Sd/-
(**Er. K.K. Padotra**)
Deputy General Manager,
JKPCC Ltd., Mechanical Unit, Jammu

No. JKPC/Mech/J/1790-98 date: 24/12/2020
DIPJ-3415



कार्यालय महाप्रबन्धक (अभियंत्रण)
उपराज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण,
ए-1/4 लखनपुर, कानपुर
ई-निविदा सूचना

एतद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के विभिन्न जनपदों में स्थित औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में विद्युत विकास कार्य और अनुसंधान एवं रच-रखाव कार्य हेतु सरकारी विभागों/सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों/निगमों/प्राधिकरणों/पब्लिक/प्रायव्हेट निकायों में अहं ए श्रेणी में विद्युत लाईनेसी फर्मों/डीएल/अनुमोदित निर्माण/लाइसेन्सी देकवायों से ई-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। जो दिनांक 01.01.2021 को पूर्वाह्न 11:00 बजे से दिनांक 18.01.2021 को अपराह्न 5:00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है। जिन्हें दिनांक 19.01.2021 को पूर्वाह्न 11:00 बजे खोला जायेगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा केवल राष्मय पत्रों की मूल प्रतियाँ दिनांक 22.01.2021 को सारे 5:00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है:-

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत रु० (लाख में)
1	Providing Street Light Fittings in Housing Sector-12A at Saraswati Hi-Tech City Naini, Prayagraj	143.54
2	Construction of 1x5 MVA, 33/11 KV Sub- Station at Mega Food Park Baheri, Bareilly.	241.28

नोट:- 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर एवं जी०एस०टी० सहित दरे अंकित करें। जलरा से कोई कर देय नहीं होगा।

2. विद्युत कार्य हेतु निविदादाताओं को निविदा अपलोड करते समय ‘‘विद्युत सूचना विभाग’’ उ०रा० शासन, लखनऊ में श्रेणी ‘क’ अनुमोदित लाइसेन्स अपलोड करना अनिवार्य होगा, अन्यथा निविदा को Consider नहीं किया जायेगा।

निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी निगम की website: www.upsida.co पर स्थित ई-लिंक एवं यूपीएलसी की website: <http://etender.up.nic.in> पर देखी जा सकती है।

वरिष्ठ प्रबन्धक (नृ०) विद्युत
उपराज्य औद्योगिक प्रा०, कानपुर

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER PHED REGION -I, JODHPUR

Phone No. 0291-2651750 Email : rj_acejo@nic.in
No. ACE-I/PHED/JU/Distt Cr/2020-21/ 8132- 8145 date: 24/12/2020

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR WORKS

Online tenders are hereby invited in two envelope system, on behalf of the Hon'ble Governor of Rajasthan for the following works from eligible enlisted contractor / firm as per rules. Details of this tender notification and pre qualification criteria can also be seen in NIT exhibited on web site www.dipr.rajabasthan.gov.in <http://sppr.rajabasthan.gov.in> in electronic format on website <http://eproc.rajabasthan.gov.in>

The cost of tender document, RISI fee & earnest money as specified in detailed NIT, must be deposited online through single challan on web portal "<http://epras.raj.nic.in>" in budget head of account as specified in detailed NIT.

NIT No	Work Description	Estimated Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Unique bid no (UBN No)
20/2020-21	Execution of works required for providing functional house hold tap connection with Pipe Line work in village Jud as per JUM guide line with one year defect liability period and hand over the system to VVHSC of village	Rs. 310.00 Lacs	PHE2021WSOB08156
21/2020-21	"Execution of works required for providing functional house hold tap connection including Construction of RCC CWR, Pump Room, Providing & Installation of pump machinery & Pipe Line work in village Dhanari Kallan as per JUM guide line with Three year O & M after one year defect liability period and hand over the system to VVHSC of village"	Rs. 373.00 Lacs	PHE2021WSOB08157

SAVE WATER-SAVE LIFE

Sd/-
Additional Chief Engineer
PHED Region - I, Jodhpur
DIPRC/10053/2020



Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli

On behalf of the President of India, Dy. GM (G), Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli is inviting online open tender through GeM portal for following work. Detailed terms & condition are available at GeM website. Bid may be submitted through online on GeM portal upto 11:00hrs. unsubmitted bids Manual offer will not be considered. Contract period - 11 months 30 days.

Sr. No. 1 Gem Bid No. and Name of work GEM/2020/B/40558 Dt. 26.12.2020
Manpower Outsourcing - Services - Minimum Wage of Staff canteen, Cooking, Serving/Vending of meals and snacks at staff canteen inside the workshop, vending of tea, snack at different vending point in the factory, housekeeping of canteen premises at Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli for 01year (300 working Days). Bid opening date and time 15.01.2021 & 11:00 hrs. Bid closing date and time 15.01.2021 & 11:30 hrs. Approx Value (Rs) 53,10,569.75 EMD (Rs.) 1,05,211.00

Sr. No. 2 Gem Bid No. and Name of work GEM/2020/B/922557 Dt. 16.12.2020
Manpower Outsourcing - Services - Minimum Wage of P ME office near Langda Fatek, Tarkotara Road Lucknow for a period of 01 Year (360 Days) as per scope of work. Bid opening date and time 11.01.2021 & 11:00 hrs. Bid closing date and time 11.01.2021 & 11:30 hrs. Approx Value (Rs) 33,42,375.65 EMD (Rs.) 68,545.00

Sr. No. 3 Gem Bid No. and Name of work GEM/2020/B/923781 Dt. 17.12.2020
Labour cost for Manpower Outsourcing Services -Minimum Wage of Worker's Guest House. Bid opening date and time 13.01.2021 & 11:00 hrs. Bid closing date and time 13.01.2021 & 11:30 hrs. Approx Value (Rs) 25,03,909.38 EMD (Rs.) 55,177.00

ADGM

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Office of the Chairman, NEET UG Medical & Dental Admission/Counseling Board-2020 and Principal, Government Dental College (RUHS College of Dental Sciences),

Subhash Nagar Behind T.B. Hospital, Jaipur | Phone: 0141-2280090
Websites: www.education.rajabasthan.gov.in/medicaleducation
"www.rajujmedical2020.com

No. State UG Counseling Board/2020/ Dated: 26.12.2020
CORRIGENDUM TO NOTIFICATION DATED 24.12.2020 (Mop-up round, Off-line) NEET UG (MEDICAL / DENTAL COUNSELLING 2020 (MBBS, BDS) STATE OF RAJASTHAN)

All concerned candidates are required to refer the Revised Notification dated 25.12.2020 for mop-up round (and not the notification dated 24.12.2020 published in news papers on 26.12.2020).

For updates, all concerned candidates are required to visit the website www.rajujmedical2020.com and are required to be present at the venue GDC, Jaipur for seat allotments, as per the revised schedule i.e. 02.01.2021 and 03.01.2021 as given under Revised Notification (mop-up round, residual seats allotments) 25.12.2020 at the website.

Chairman
NEET UG Medical & Dental Admission/Counseling Board-2020
DIPRC/10077/2020



SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT
Commissioner of Social Welfare

5th Floor, M.S. Buildings, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru-01, Phone No. 080-22253783 / 22250963

NO:SWD/PETC/S-6/CR-14/2020-21 Dated:29.12.2020

NOTIFICATION OF SHORT TERM TENDER [Through e-tendering only]

Tender is invited through E-Procurement Portal, to provide Residential short term Training for various paramedical and non paramedical certificate courses to SC/ ST candidates with 75% employment guarantee through 500 bedded NABH and NSDC accredited hospitals for the year 2020-21.

Tender Notification number is given below.

NO:SWD/PETC/S-6/CR-14/2020-21

For more details please visit website : <http://eproce.karnataka.gov.in>
The last date for receipt of tender is : 14.01.2021 at 5.30 PM.

Sd/-
Commissioner
Social Welfare Dept. Bengaluru.

DIPR/DDU/SSC/2225/2020-21

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



Wear Mask

6 Feet
Follow Physical Distancing

Maintain Hand Hygiene

2020 THE LOST YEAR

Away from the bio-bubbles put in place by those with deep pockets, sport had its lockdown tales of angst, uncertainty and apprehension. THE INDIAN EXPRESS talks to those who missed out on their break-out year or had to delay their retirement.

World not at their feet

Teenage dreams of playing in a youth World Cup in front of home crowds lie in tatters for 27 youngsters after cancellation of the FIFA U-17 Women's tournament

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 30

EARLIER THIS year before the pandemic, when the Indian women's probables for the FIFA U-17 World Cup travelled to Turkey for friendlies against Romania, Naorem Priyangka Devi returned home with a dress for her mother Pombi Devi. With her team set to play in the (now-cancelled) World Cup this November, she had hoped her mother could wear the dress to one of India's matches cheering for her. Pombi works as a tailor supporting a family of six, and this was to be the moment she could be in the stands and soak in the warm glowing spotlight that comes with being a proud parent of an India player.

With FIFA deciding to cancel the U-17 World Cup, Devi is one of 27 out of 35 probables, who will now miss out on being from a select group of nations at a football World Cup, albeit by being hosts. For one, this batch will not make the 2022 edition with age-ineligibility (ruling out those born in 2003 and 2004). At any rate, India hardly has the pedigree or system currently to qualify for another junior World Cup unless they host one.

"The love for football kept me going all these years. My father does not work and my mother stitches clothes in the village earning Rs 250-350 daily. To see them watching me play in the Indian jersey in the World Cup would have been the reward for my mother. And that has been the biggest disappointment for me individually apart from missing the chance to play in the World Cup in front of home crowds," shares Priyangka.

Her fate is similar to eight players from Haryana and seven from Manipur and Jharkhand.

Haryana youngster Anshika was one of six goal-keepers in the final probables, also India's keeper when they won silver at U16 Asian Cup in 2016. Hailing from Bhambhewa village in Jind district, the first-choice custodian in friendlies against Romania, was ini-



FIFA's decision to cancel the U-17 World Cup dashed the dreams of several India probables. Watching Naorem Priyangka Devi (centre) play in the national jersey would have been the reward for her mother who stitches clothes. Express

tially keen on wrestling but chose football as she preferred a team game. The lanky keeper had been training under Nigerian coach Precious Dede, a 4-tie Cupper and thrice Olympian, who was sharpening her one on one situations, air-ball collection and side-ways air dives. "As a goal-keeper, it would've been a special feeling to play in a world cup. We saw the incredible atmosphere during the men's U-17 World Cup so a similar setting would've been very nice," shared Anshika, who idolises Indian men's goal-keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

Coach Anil Kumar, who has been training Anshika since her childhood, could sense the disappointment in his trainee and it took 2-3 days for the youngster to forget about the disappointment. "I told her it wasn't happening only to her but to the whole team and it's nobody's fault. I also told her that there have been players who have done well at the junior level but not so well at seniors. Our target is the senior team and to become one of the

best goalkeepers," shares Kumar.

One of the stars of India's U-17 team against Romania was B Mariyammal from Sankari near Salem in Tamil Nadu, who started playing football on the insistence of her brother.

"I was interested in athletics but my brother played for the village school and asked me to join so we could get some extra footballs for training. Apart from managing our small farm, my parents work in a garment factory in Salem. When I first went to Bhutan for the SAFF Cup, my parents didn't even know about a passport. But they told me whatever I do, they will always pray for me," shared Mariyammal.

"Bohot disappointing tha. I remember when I played for the Indian team earlier, my father would save the clippings from newspaper and even though they have no idea about football, they proudly showed them to whoever visited us. My parents have not watched me play ever. They would have come to see us play in the World Cup at one

of the venues and that would've been the biggest memory for them. I have promised them that every one of us will give our best in the Asia qualifiers next year and get to 2022 U-20 World Cup in Costa Rica so they can watch us on television. This thought keeps me motivated," shared Mariyammal.

Once-in-a-lifetime experience

Daughter of a small sweet and snacks shop owner in Varanasi, Jyoti Kumari, whose three sisters too play football, shifted base to Cuttack where she was selected in the SAL trials. The defender has been attending on-line sessions by coach Thomas Dennerby, who guided Sweden women's team to a third-place finish in FIFA World Cup in 2011. Dennerby believed that improving everyday could keep away the disappointment of missing the direct chance to play in a world cup. "We were working on developing passing-heavy style of play in defense instead of clearing the ball straightaway. It helped us understand that we need to keep improving every day," says Jyoti.

But the probables were most stung by the disappointment of not being able to play in front of home crowds. "While playing against any international team at any stadium is motivating, playing in front of home crowd and big stadiums in a World Cup cannot be matched by any other experience," said Priyangka, who idolises Bem Bem Devi and had guided India to a 1-0 win with her goal in the second friendly against Romania.

It was the men's U-17 World Cup of 2017 that saw Amarjit Singh Kiyam (Jamshedpur FC), Aniket Jadhav (Jamshedpur FC), Dheeraj Singh (ATK Mohun Bagan), Suresh Wangiam (Bangalore FC) and the first Indian to score a FIFA World Cup goal Jeakson Singh (Kerala Blasters), make regular ISL appearances before their 20th birthday. For the women, who have no big league to turn to, the one chance of a brush with top-tier fame, also vamoosed away.

Kiwis clinch thriller, skippers laud Wagner for defying broken toes

REUTERS
WELLINGTON, DECEMBER 30

NEW ZEALAND'S bowlers produced a late final session surge to guide their side to a tense 101-run victory over Pakistan in the first Test in Mount Maunganui on Wednesday and keep alive their hopes of reaching next year's World Test Championship final.

Pakistan were dismissed for 271, chasing a victory target of 372, with 4.3 overs remaining in the test at Bay Oval.

"It was a brilliant game," New Zealand captain Kane Williamson said. "Both teams put their best foot forward and Pakistan were incredibly resilient in that second innings, but the boys kept coming. A huge effort by the bowlers to get us across the line."

New Zealand had been hot favourites to win the game as the final day started with the tourists 71-3 but a 165-run partnership between Fawad Alam and Mohammad Rizwan gave the tourists a chance of a draw, if not an unlikely victory.

Williamson, Rizwan praise Wagner

Rival captains Williamson and Rizwan paid rich tribute to Wagner who bowled with two broken toes. Wagner played the last three days of the match with the broken toes after being hit by a Shaheen Afridi yorker in New Zealand's first innings at the Bay Oval.

The left-arm quick played through pain and went on to claim two second innings wickets, including of centurion Fawad Alam.

"I just told Kane Williamson he's mad," Rizwan told reporters. "I know New Zealand are very proud of him, he bowled so well with that attitude and aggression."

Home captain Williamson also praised the "special effort from" team man Wagner. "He was going off and having injections and numbing his foot and we were trying to use him when the injection was taking effect - it was kind of unique for all of us," Williamson said. "His appetite and motivation to be out there and try and make a difference for the team is huge and we haven't seen it any bigger than the effort he's put in across this test match."

BRIEF SCORES: NZ 431 and 180 for 5 dec (Blundell 64, Latham 53; Naseem 3-55) beat Pak 239 and 271 (Alam 102, Rizwan 60; Southee 2-33, Jamieson 2-35, Santner 2-52, Wagner 2-55, Boult 2-72) by 101 runs



Kiwi pacer Neil Wagner played the last three days with two broken toes. AP

EXPLAINED

How NZ win impacts India's WTC chances

New Zealand's win in the first Test against Pakistan have made them serious contenders to qualify for the World Test Championship (WTC) final, to be played in June 2021 at Lord's. With a percentage point (PCT) of 0.667, the Kiwis are now snapping at the heels of Australia and India.

New Zealand are now placed third with 360 absolute points and 0.667 percentage points (66.7%). India still have the highest absolute points, 390, followed by New Zealand, 360, and Australia, 322. And yet, India are placed second because their PCT, 0.722 (72.2%), is lower than that of Australia's, 0.766 (76.6%).

India will play six more Tests in this WTC cycle - two in Australia and four at home against England. Four wins, or three wins and three draws will secure their qualification for the final.

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY

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