

IN BRIEF
DMK ropes in Prashant Kishor
CHENNAI
The DMK has roped in well-known political strategist Prashant Kishor to evolve a strategy for the next Assembly election. Mr. Kishor is expected to meet DMK leader M.K. Stalin on Monday or Tuesday.

No distance education in hotel management: UGC
NEW DELHI
The University Grants Commission (UGC) has prohibited distance education programmes in Hotel Management and Real Estate. "Programmes in Hotel Management, Culinary Studies and Real Estate, will not be recognised from 2019-20," an order said.

T.N. may get widespread rain for next 48 hours
CHENNAI
Tamil Nadu is likely to get widespread rain in the next 48 hours. Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Tiruvallur and Tirunelveli districts are expected to get heavy rain on Monday. In Chennai, most places are likely to get moderate rain.

Girl rescued from child marriage in Odisha
BERHAMPUR
A 13-year-old girl was rescued from a child marriage in Odisha's Ganjam due to the efforts of her teacher through social media. After getting a request online from the teacher, District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange initiated police action to rescue the child.

Official faces action over fake caste certificate
AGARTALA
The Tripura University, has initiated proceedings against its Finance Officer Uttam Kumar Das who allegedly secured the job by producing a fake caste certificate. The SDM of Agartala recently cancelled his SC certificate after receiving the report of the probe committee.

WEATHER WATCH
RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY
Forecast for Monday: Heavy rainfall at a few places with very heavy falls at isolated places very likely over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal and heavy rainfall at isolated places over Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep.

Pollutants in the air you are breathing
CITIES
Ahmedabad..... 118 109 34 .....74 .....84
Bengaluru..... 09 14 44 .....93
Chennai..... 12 10 16 .....32 .....57
Delhi..... 06 24 36 .....324 .....198
Hyderabad..... 16 57 55 .....151 .....106
Kolkata..... 08 89 28 .....252 .....187
Lucknow..... 07 36 47 .....266 .....104
Mumbai..... 07 41 30 .....250 .....146
Pune..... 73 21 48 .....168 .....120
Visakhapatnam..... 10 38 36 .....110 .....98

Operation 'Clean Art' to crack down on illegal trade in mongoose hair

In first pan-India operation, raids carried out in U.P, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Kerala, 49 arrests made and 27 cases registered

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA
On October 24, 2019, about 200 officials, including policemen, gathered at Sherkot in Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor district. It was a planned raid, not to apprehend criminals, but to check on organised factories that were making paint brushes with mongoose hair. By the end of the day, ten manufacturing units in Sherkot were raided and approximately 26,000 brushes and over 100 kg of raw mongoose hair was seized. About 26 people were arrested in connection with illegal trade in mongoose hair. Raids were carried out not only in Uttar Pradesh, but also at Jaipur in Rajasthan, Mumbai and Pune in Maharashtra, and in Kerala,

on the same day. "Operation Clean Art was the first pan India operation to crack down on the smuggling of mongoose hair in the country. There are six species of mongoose found in India and we have mostly recovered [in the raids] grey mongoose [hair]," H. V. Girisha, Regional Deputy Director, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), New Delhi, told The Hindu. 'Organised crime' Mr. Girisha said that an adult mongoose yields over 30-40 gm of long hair, from which only 20-25 gm of "brush-making hair" is recovered. Operation Clean Art was conceived by WCCB with the singular aim of ensuring that the mongoose hair brush trade be closed down across the country.

Not a pretty picture
A look at the seizure of paint brushes made of mongoose hair in recent years
Cases No. of brushes seized Arrests
2017 15 62,924 23
2018 16 79,021 19
2019 27 54,352 49

Describing the making of brushes with mongoose hair an "organised crime", the official said most of these animals were poached by "hunting communities" across the country. Jose Louies, Deputy Director and Chief-Wildlife Crime Control Division, Wildlife Trust of India, also in-

volved in Operation Clean Art, said the entire operation across the country yielded 54,352 brushes and 113 kg of raw hair. About 49 arrests were made and 27 cases were registered under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972). "Art is supposed to be something unique and evoke

the best among people. Why should there be cruelty and criminality involved in the process of creation of art? Art should be clean and artists should take a pledge that they will not use brushes made of mongoose hair," Mr. Louise said. The mongoose is listed in Schedule II Part 2 of the Wil-

dlife Protection Act and any smuggling or possession of its body part is a non-bailable offence. Persons using brushes made of mongoose hair should be aware of it, he added. For about 150 kg of mongoose hair, at least 6,000 animals would have been killed, Mr. Louise said. There have been instances in which mongoose hair has been transported using courier companies. Postal authorities are also trying to involve the Postal Department to spread awareness and identify illegal trade in wildlife. There is also a campaign on social media where concerned organisations are urging artists to take a

pledge to refrain from using brushes made of mongoose hair. 'Alternatives needed' Well-known sculptor and painter Bimal Kundu said the reason painters prefer brushes made of mongoose hair is because they are superior and hold colour better. "I completely endorse the idea that painters should shun brushes made of mongoose hair because animals are being mercilessly killed in the process of making such tools," Mr. Kundu said. "But, the alternatives available in the market are not of good quality. More research should be done to make paint brushes that fit the requirements of an artist," the Kolkata-based artist said.

GST revenue crosses ₹1 lakh crore mark again

Average collections in 2019-20 stand at ₹1,00,646 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue in November came in at ₹1,03,492 crore, crossing the ₹1 lakh crore mark once again, having dipped below it for three successive months. Average collections in the financial year 2019-20 so far stand at ₹1,00,646 crore. The collections in November 2019 are the third highest since the GST was introduced, next only to April, 2019 and March, 2019.

"The gross GST revenue collected in November, 2019 is ₹1,03,492 crore, of which the CGST is ₹19,592 crore, the SGST is ₹27,144 crore, the IGST is ₹49,028 crore and the cess is ₹7,727 crore," the government said in a re-

Up and down
A look at the trends in GST collection
This is the eighth time since the inception of GST in July 2017 that monthly collection has crossed the mark of ₹1 lakh crore
Months Collection (in ₹ crore)
November 1,03,492
October 95,380
September 91,916
August 98,202
July 1,02,083
June 99,939
May 1,00,289
April 1,13,865

lease. "After two months of negative growth, GST revenues witnessed an impressive recovery, with a positive growth of 6% in November, 2019 over the November, 2018 collections," the release added. According to the govern-

ment, the GST from domestic transactions saw a growth of 12%, the highest during the year. The GST collections from imports continued to contract, by 13%, compared with a contraction of 20% in the previous month.

Privatise six more airports: AAI to Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has recommended the Centre to privatise airports at Amritsar, Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Raipur and Trichy, a government official said. The recommendation came as the Centre has already privatised airports at Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Mangaluru, Thiruvananthapuram and Guwahati for operation, management and development through the public-private partnership (PPP) model in February. The AAI, which works under the Ministry of Civil Aviation, owns and manages more than 100 airports across the country. In first round of airport privatisation, the Adani Group bagged contract for all six airports.

Revenue from Taj Mahal rises

Pollution impacting the 17th century monument, says govt.

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI
The revenue earned from the Taj Mahal in Agra went up around four times over five years ending in 2018-2019, according to data given by the Union Ministry of Culture to the Lok Sabha in the ongoing session of Parliament. To a question by Assam MP Badruddin Ajmal, Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel informed the House on November 18 that the revenue generated from the UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018-2019 was ₹86,48,93,100 from 70,90,207 visitors. The previous year, the revenue was ₹58,76,04,981 from 65,65,627 visitors, up from ₹55,09,29,860 from 61,77,196 visitors in 2016-2017. In 2015-2016, the Taj Mahal generated ₹17,92,27,050 from 50,70,573 visitors and in



Historic upkeep: A view of the Taj Mahal in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

2014-2015, was lower than ₹21,23,55,330 in 2014-2015 when 60,89,901 visitors were recorded. The expenditure on the maintenance of the 17th century tomb increased to ₹5,48,34,582 in 2018-2019 from ₹3,38,42,927 in 2017-2018, according to the reply. The Ministry, under which the Archaeological Survey of India functions, had spent ₹4,50,45,819 in 2016-2017

and ₹3,28,37,534 in 2015-2016. Effects of pollution Asked by Mr. Ajmal whether pollution was discolouring the white marble structure, the Minister replied: "The effect of pollution is there, but the monument is cleaned periodically." Recently, there have been concerns about the discolouration of the facade.

'Passenger trains to run up to 160 kmph in a few years'

Increasing the speed will take five to 10 years, depending on infrastructure development, says Railway Board Chairman

V. GEETANATH
HYDERABAD
The Indian Railways is poised for a major structural and operational transformation in the next few years, with passenger trains slated to be run at 160 kmph in the Mumbai-Delhi-Kolkata sector and freight trains to be run at 100 kmph. Towards the South, in the Delhi-Chennai, Kharagpur-Vijayawada sectors, the plan is to run passenger trains up to 130 kmph. Increasing the

speed up to 160 kmph will take five to 10 years, depending on infrastructure development, said Railway Board Chairman Vinod Kumar Yadav. 'Run on demand' "Our vision is to see that trains, passenger and freight, are run on demand in the Mumbai-Delhi-Kolkata sector by upgrading our capacities. We have divided major works into super critical and critical categories, to com-



Vinod Kumar Yadav

plete them in the next two to five years," he said during his recent visit to the city to inaugurate the Financial Man-

agement Institute. Instructions were issued to increase the speed of all passenger trains to 110 kmph and move this to 130 kmph within the next two to three years in the South, where average speeds reach between 45 kmph and 110 kmph. 'Super critical' About 76% of the 'super critical' works were complete and the remaining 24%, requiring about ₹7,500 crore, was expected to be complet-

ed within a year or so. There were works where 91% was yet to be done in the 'critical' category, costing up to ₹85,000. This includes doubling and tripling lines, and traffic facilities at various locations across the country. This is scheduled to be done in three years and funds were being sourced. "This will give us tremendous mobility. We have identified the works based on the need for efficient operations and also economic consider-

ations like freight movement," he said. Freight corridor The most important development would be completion of the freight corridor of about 3,000 km, between Mumbai-Delhi-Kolkata, by December 2021. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the initiative to call up the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh to remove certain bottlenecks," he said.

Barefoot jogger does Bengaluru to Varanasi in 38 days

Six years after a near-fatal heart attack, Giridhar Kamath covered 1,850 km to promote fitness

BISHWANATH GHOSH
KOLKATA
Like many people, Giridhar Kamath decided in his early forties that it was time to get fit. In 2011, when he was 42, he began running - short distances at first and then challenging himself to the 10-km target. Then, in 2013, he had a heart attack at the finishing line of a race.

But unlike many people, who might have given up running after this potentially-fatal episode, he merely changed his approach to running. "I



Long run: Giridhar Kamath averaged about 50 km a day, carrying just 1.4 kg in luggage.

moved to barefoot running from then on. It is one of the most natural modes of human movement," says the Bengaluru-based Mr. Kamath.

And recently, barely weeks after his 50th birthday, he ran all the way from Bengaluru to Varanasi - a neat distance of 1,850 km - in one set of

clothes, with a pouch and a hammock tied to his waist. "I have covered several ultra runs between cities and done races spanning 100 km to 800 km. But this is my longest run till date," says Mr. Kamath, who set off from Bengaluru on October 2 and reached Varanasi on November 10.

Travelling light The idea of travelling light came from a mendicant he had encountered during an intercity run from Puducherry to Chennai in 2018. "He was walking solo

with no support or luggage, and he made me realise how easy it is to be light. I reached Varanasi in one T-shirt and shorts and just 1.4 kg of luggage, which also included my mobile phone and charger," he says. Mr. Kamath averaged about 50 km a day, and reached Varanasi in 38 days. The most challenging stretch was the forests of Madhya Pradesh. "This segment took me three days to cover and I was compelled to have a crew car follow me for reasons of safety," he said.

Liquor worth ₹5 lakh seized in Gujarat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD
Liquor worth over ₹5 lakh has been seized from an institution founded by Mahatma Gandhi in Gujarat's Rajkot district, police said on Sunday. Acting on a tip-off, the police on Friday raided a room in the quarters of the Rashtriya Shala, an institution set up in 1921 to impart education in Gandhian concepts, and seized more than 700 bottles of liquor worth over ₹5 lakh, Inspector N.K. Jadeja said.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT / WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
CORRIGENDUM
The following Corrigendum is issued by this office: Tender Notice No.06/2019-2020/ID/DO-1F/275/2019/ID: 27.11.2019

Veteran journalist Bhaskar Menon dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI
Journalist Bhaskar Menon died here on Sunday following a cardiac arrest, his family said. Mr. Menon, who retired as the Regional Manager (South) of the Press Trust of India here, is survived by wife and son. He was 87. The veteran journalist

had joined the news agency as a sub-editor and rose through the ranks, before retiring as the head of its regional bureau. Mr. Menon was known for his command over the English language and his sharp editing skills. He was known for insisting on speed and accuracy. Mr. Menon had handled

several important news developments, including the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumbudur near here, in 1991. Editor-in-Chief of PTI Vijay Joshi said, "Bhaskar's passing marks the end of an era of gentlemen journalists. He mentored countless journalists here in PTI."

INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY
Invites Prospective Vendors for a SPECIAL VENDOR MEET On 11-12-2019 at 09.30 Hrs. For Increasing Vendor base & Enhancing the Product Range of Forging & Casting and other items.

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