

India's coal output up 10% to 156 MT during Apr-Nov

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 9

India's coal import rose 9.7 per cent to 156.08 million tonne (MT) in the April-November period of the ongoing fiscal, as against 142.25 MT in the corresponding months a year ago, according to mjunction services Ltd, a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL. Coal imports in November this year also increased 10.1 per cent to 19.47 MT, over 17.68 MT in the corresponding month of the last fiscal, mjunction data showed. "Imports during November 2018 stood at 19.47 MT (provisional)...Earlier, coal and coke imports in November 2017 stood at 17.68 MT," it said. Of the total imports last month, import of non-coking coal was at 14.24 MT, against 15.23 MT imported in October 2018. Commenting on the coal import trend, mjunction CEO Vinaya Varna said, "The significant correction in thermal coal prices in November

prompted buyers to take a wait and watch approach. There, however, was a stable trend in met coal market and this was reflected in the buying pattern. The import of coking coal was at 3.93 MT in November 2018, almost flat against 3.94 MT imported a month ago. "Metallurgical coke imports during the month were at 0.50 MT, while 0.53 MT was imported in the previous month," it said. India's coal and coke import during November 2018 through 31 major and non-major ports is estimated to have decreased by 5.32 percent over October 2018, according to a provisional compilation by mjunction, based on monitoring of vessels' positions and data received from shipping companies. Coal India accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal output. Coal India had earlier said there is a need to revisit the timeline of one billion tonnes of production target by state-owned CIL by FY 2019-20.

Rain, snow expected in Kashmir till Tuesday

Agency
Srinagar, Dec 9

The meteorological department has forecast light-to-moderate rainfall or snow at most places across the Kashmir valley from Sunday till Tuesday. "A western disturbance is approaching Jammu and Kashmir, under the influence of which light-to-moderate rain/snow will occur at many places and snow at few places over the Ladakh region from the evening of Sunday to Tuesday, especially on Monday," a Met department official said. He said the higher reaches of the state were most likely to receive moderate-to-heavy rainfall or snow during this period. "This may lead to disruption of surface

transportation mainly on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway, Zojila pass on the Srinagar-Leh highway and Mughal Road," the official said. The official said the night temperature in Srinagar, settled at a low of minus 0.4 degrees Celsius on Saturday night, up from the minus 1.2 degrees Celsius the previous night. The Pahalgam health resort, which serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath yatra, registered a low of minus 3 degrees Celsius. The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg was the coldest with minimum temperature of minus 6.3 degrees Celsius, he said. Leh in Ladakh region recorded a minimum temperature of minus 5.5 degrees Celsius.

Cong threatening probe agencies: BJP

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New Delhi, Dec 9

The BJP Sunday accused the Congress of "threatening" investigation agencies following raids against people linked to Robert Vadra, brother-in-law of Congress president Rahul Gandhi, and asserted that they will continue to act against those involved in corruption irrespective of their family background. BJP spokesperson Shahnawaz Hussain told reporters that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is fighting strongly against corruption and has fulfilled the promises he had made to people in this regard. He slammed the Congress for the reported remarks

made by its leaders at a press conference that political season changes as they attacked the government over these raids. "The Congress and its leaders are heaping abuses on investigation agencies and threatening them. These agencies are acting against corruption. Congress leaders say season is changing but they should know that the country is changing. Action would be taken against those involved in corruption," Hussain said. He claimed that the Congress will never return to power and added that the BJP will form government again in three states, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, where it is in power.

3 militants killed in encounter near Srinagar

Agency
Srinagar, Dec 9

Three militants were killed and an Army jawan was injured in an 18-hour gunfight on the outskirts of Srinagar, police said Sunday. Acting on inputs, a search operation was launched by the police and security forces at Mujung area on Bandipora road on Saturday. The operation turned into an encounter after the militants fired on the search party, a police spokesperson said. An Army jawan sustained injuries and was shifted to hospital for treatment. Three militants were killed and the bodies have been retrieved from the site of

the encounter that ended on Sunday morning, the spokesperson said. The identities and affiliation of the militants were yet to be known, he said, adding that arms and ammunition had been recovered from the site. "People are requested to cooperate with police till the area is completely sanitised and cleared of all the explosives materials if any," the spokesperson added. Meanwhile, clashes between groups of youth and security forces have erupted in the area. Authorities have suspended mobile Internet services in the city as a precautionary measure, a police official said.

Soldier accused in Bulandshahr violence brought to UP by army, arrested

Agency
Bulandshahr, Dec 9

An army soldier who is accused of killing a police inspector in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr was arrested past midnight after his unit handed him over to the UP police for investigation. "We've arrested Army jawan Jeetendra Malik, he was handed over by Army at 12:50 am today (Sunday). Preliminary interrogation has been done," senior superintendent of police, Special Task Force, Abhishek Singh said, reported ANI news agency. Jeetendra Malik alias Jeetu Fauji was brought to Meerut by his unit based in Kashmir's Sopore and handed over to the STF after completion of necessary formalities with local army officials. He was taken to Bulandshahr subsequently and handed over to the special investigation team investigating the killing of inspector Subodh Kumar Singh in the violence that broke out in Bulandshahr on Monday over alleged illegal cow slaughter. A local youth named Sumit Kumar was also killed. "He (Malik) accepted he was there when the crowd started gathering. Prima facie, it has been found true. It's not yet ascertained if he is the one who shot the inspector or Sumit. He said he went there with villagers, but denied pelting stones on police. Forensic (examination) of his mobile will be done," Singh added, as per ANI. After scanning video recordings, the state police began searching for the soldier, who is reportedly seen firing during the Bulandshahr violence that led to the death of the police inspector and the youth. A senior police officer privy to the investigations confirmed that one of the videos shows the army man, a resident of Bulandshahr, firing, but his involvement in the killings is yet to be

ascertained. The UP police team investigating the case had contacted the army and sought custody of the soldier who had left his home soon after the violence. Sources said that after getting nod from top officials of the army, it was decided to hand over Malik to the police. On Friday, an army spokesman had said that police had contacted the Army's northern command and fullest cooperation was being extended to them. Malik's wife Priyanka, who had spoken to her husband on Friday, had told media that an army team will bring her husband to Meerut on Saturday. She, however, claimed that he is being falsely implicated in the case as they were in the Syana market when the violence erupted. His brother Dharmendra Malik, who is also in the army, has alleged that his brother had become victim of a conspiracy and demanded help from UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath for a fair probe. Malik's mother has said that she would kill him herself if it was proved that he had shot dead police inspector Subodh Kumar during the violence in Bulandshahr, as was claimed through some videos of the incident.

2 Arrested, TV Actress Detained After Diamond Trader Found Dead In Forest

Agency
Mumbai, Dec. 9

A former aide of a Maharashtra minister and a policeman were among those arrested in connection with the murder of a diamond trader, who was found dead in a forest in Maharashtra's Raigad district two days ago, the police said. A popular television actress and model has also been detained in the case. Rajeshwar Udani, a diamond merchant based in Mumbai's Ghatkopar, had gone missing on November 28. The 57-year-old's body was found in a forest in Panvel in Raigad district on Friday, 10 days after he went missing, the police said. The police have identified

the accused as Sachin Pawar — a former personal assistant of Maharashtra minister Prakash Mehta — while another accused, Dinesh Pawar, is a suspended police constable who was arrested earlier in a rape case. Television actress Devoleena Bhattacharjee, known for her role as Gopi Bahu in the popular Hindi serial "Saath Nibhana Sathiya", was detained after several hours of questioning, the police said. The police have not revealed her role in the case but hinted that some more women from the entertainment industry may be called for questioning. Police investigations and call data records have

revealed that Mr Udani was a regular at some bars and in touch with several women, including those from the entertainment industry, through Sachin Pawar, who has worked with Maharashtra Housing, Labor and Mining Minister Prakash Mehta. The minister admitted that Sachin Pawar worked with him from 2004 to 2009. He, however, said he had severed all links with him after he was sacked from the BJP for contesting a civic body election in Mumbai as an independent. Nearly a week after he went missing, Rajeshwar Udani's family registered a kidnapping case. His driver told the police that on the day he went missing, Mr Udani wanted to be dropped near a

market. The driver saw him getting into another vehicle. Mr Udani's body, without any apparent injuries, was found late on December 5. Investigators suspect Rajeshwar Udani's kidnappers may have killed him at some other location before dumping the body in the Panvel forests. The police have questioned two dozen people and are on the lookout for the vehicle that picked him up the day he went missing. For the latest News & Live Updates on Election Results from each assembly constituency in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter for updates.

Kannur Airport inaugurated, Kerala gets its fourth international airport

Agency
Kannur, Dec. 9

Kerala's fourth international airport, the Kannur International Airport, was inaugurated on Sunday morning amidst much fanfare. The inauguration was marked by a ceremonial lamp being lit by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Union Civil Aviation Minister Suresh Prabhu in the presence of various ministers, including Sports and Industries Minister EP Jayarajan, and Social Justice and Health Minister KK Shylla. Its inaugural commercial flight, a Boeing 737 to Abu Dhabi, was flagged off by CM Pinarayi Vijayan and Union Civil Aviation Minister Suresh Prabhu, and it took off from the 3050 metre long runway at 9.55 AM on Sunday. Later on Sunday, its inaugural day, Air India Express and GoAir flights are scheduled to operate out of the airport with flights to Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru and Delhi. The Chief Minister, speaking at the event, mentioned that the new airport at Kannur was a source of particular pride and happiness to Kerala. He also said that the airport at Kannur would be useful to people from

other states, not just Kerala, such as those travelling to and from Mangaluru, Coorg and Mysore. He also mentioned that the government is conducting studies to uncover logistics around the construction of a new airport at Erumely near Sabarimala to ease access of pilgrims to Sabarimala. Intriguingly, the airport and its maiden flights have a unique father-son link. When the airport saw its first landing in 2016, of a 228-Dornier Indian Air Force aircraft, one of those present in its cockpit was Kannur native Raghunath Nambiar. His son, Ashwin Nambiar, will be the first officer of the first domestic non-revenue flight landing in Kannur airport, which will be a GoAir flight from New Delhi to Kannur. A few hours after this flight lands, he will be the first Officer of the first domestic flight taking off from Kannur airport, from Kannur to Bengaluru. The festivities around the inauguration of the Kannur International Airport began at around 6 AM on Sunday morning. The event was attended by over 2000 members of the public, and included performances by various

music and dance groups, including a percussion set headed by renowned percussionist Mattanoor Sankaranakutty. The fourth international airport in Kerala, and the second to be built under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, the new airport's terminal building is said to be the largest in India. *Omanorama* reports that the runway, too, will be expanded from its current 3050 meters to 4000 meters, making it, upon expansion, one of the four largest airports in India. The new Kannur airport currently boasts numerous self-check in machines, 24 regular check-in counters, 32 immigration counters and bays to park 20 planes at a given point of time. The new airport is expected to be of particular service to Keralites working in the Middle East, and ease access to tourist destinations like Coorg, Mysore, Kasargod and Wayanad. Kerala Ports Minister Ramachandran Kadamappa inaugurated the airport's VIP lounge, while the ATM counter was inaugurated by transport minister AK Saseendran, who cut a ribbon tied around the ATM and withdrew a few Rs 2000

notes in the presence of the media. The foreign exchange counter was inaugurated by health minister KK Shylla, and the food and beverage service at the airport was inaugurated by revenue minister E Chandrasekharan with a ribbon cutting. The inaugural event was boycotted by BJP and UDF MLAs, who have boycotted various government events, including the swearing in of new minister K Krishnakutty, and disrupted the progress of the Kerala Legislative Assembly in protest against the imposition of curfew under sec 144 at Sabarimala. UDF MLAs in particular have boycotted the airport's inaugural to protest the fact that two former Kerala Chief Ministers, VS Achuthanandan and Oommen Chandy, both of whom played key roles in the construction of this airport, had not been invited to the inauguration. A few individuals could also be seen at Kannur International Airport holding placards that registered their discontent that former CMs VS Achuthanandan and Oommen Chandy had not been invited to the inauguration.

Vijay Mallya's extradition case edges towards ruling

Agency
London, Dec. 9

Embattled liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya is scheduled to return to Westminster Magistrates' Court in London on Monday when his extradition trial is listed for a judgment hand-down. The 62-year-old former Kingfisher Airlines boss, wanted in India on alleged fraud and money laundering charges amounting to an estimated Rs 9,000 crores, has been on bail since his arrest on an extradition warrant in April last year. He has contested his

extradition on the grounds that the case against him is "politically motivated" and the loans he has been accused of defrauding on were sought to keep his now-defunct airline afloat. "I did not borrow a single rupee. The borrower was Kingfisher Airlines. Money was lost due to a genuine and sad business failure. Being held as guarantor is not fraud," he said in his recent Twitter post on the issue. "I have offered to repay 100 per cent of the principal amount to them. Please take it," he tweeted earlier. While dismissing

that his intervention has anything to do with the extradition case, it came just days before Judge Emma Arbuthnot is expected to present her ruling in the case. The trial, which opened at the Magistrates' Court on December 4 last year, has gone through a series of hearings beyond the initial seven days earmarked for it. It opened with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) team, led by Mark Summers, laying out the Indian government's prima facie case of fraud and money laundering against Mallya.

Summers sought to establish a "blueprint of dishonesty" against the businessman and that there are no bars to his extradition on human rights grounds. Mallya's defence team, led by Clare Montgomery, deposed a series of experts in an attempt to prove that the erstwhile Kingfisher Airlines' alleged default of bank loans was the result of business failure rather than "dishonest" and "fraudulent" activity by its owner. The court was also told that a consortium of Indian banks, led by State Bank

of India (SBI), had rejected an offer by the liquor baron in early 2016 to pay back nearly 80 per cent of the principle loan amount owed to them. While the CPS argued that Mallya never intended to repay the loans he sought in the first place because his airline's demise was inevitable, the defence tried to establish that Kingfisher Airlines was suffering from consequences of a wider global financial crisis around 2009-2010 and that its failure was a result of factors beyond the company's control.