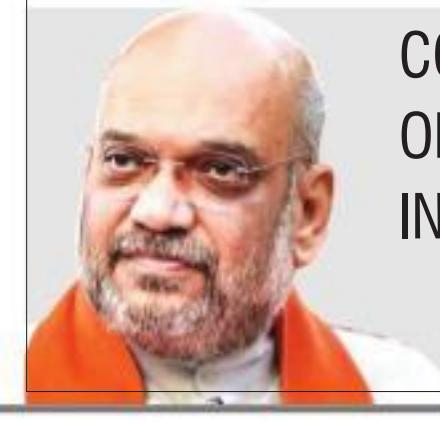




SASIKALA MOST
SOUGHT AFTER IN
TAMIL NADU POLITICS



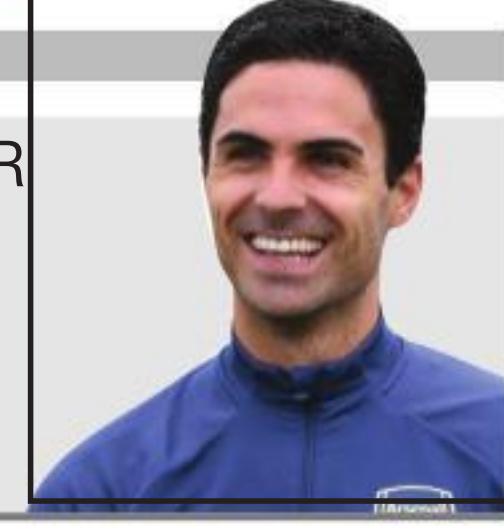
CONG-AIUDF WOULD
OPEN ALL GATES TO
INFILTRATORS: SHAH

P5



THE IMPORTANCE
OF BEING
BILL CLINTON

P7



FA CUP HOLDER
ARSENAL
ELIMINATED

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Very dense fog in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 17 and 06 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 84%
TEMPERATURE
Max: 15.0°C (-6) Min: 08.8°C (+1)
SUN RISES SUN SETS
07:12 hrs 17:55 hrs
MOON RISES MOON SETS
14:44 hrs 05:07 hrs

THUMBNAILS



An Army scout car participates in a full dress rehearsal for the Republic Day parade at Red Road in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ SNS

Oli 'expelled' from Nepal ruling party: Nepal's Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli was expelled from the membership of the Nepal Communist Party by the splinter faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Sunday for alleged anti-party activities, further intensifying the infighting within the ruling party. The decision was taken at the standing committee meeting of the faction led by former PMs Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal after Oli failed to give explanation regarding his recent moves, a party leader said. ■ P9

Kumbh precautions: Devotees will have to produce a Covid-19 negative report to participate in the Kumbh Mela at Haridwar this year. The Union ministry of health and family welfare has issued Standard Operating Procedures for Kumbh and under it visitors with a negative Covid-19 report, done within 72 hours prior to the date of visit, shall only be allowed to enter the Kumbh Mela area. The Kumbh Mela will start in February and conclude in April. ■ P4

Border stand-off: India, China hold 9th round of Corps commander level talks

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

India and China today held the ninth round of senior commanders' talks in a fresh bid to resolve the military stand-off at eastern Ladakh.

India is believed to have insisted on setting in motion at the earliest the process of disengagement and de-escalation of troops by the two countries.

sources said.

The last round of talks between the military commanders was held in November last year while senior diplomats of the two countries met on 18 December under the framework of the Working Mechanism for Coordination and Consultation (WMCC) in border areas.

The two sides then were said to be seriously considering

the possibility of a phased mutual withdrawal of troops and equipment ranged against each other at eastern Ladakh for the last eight months. But there has been no progress on the proposal since then.

So far the two sides have agreed to ensure they do not move more troops to the frontline and that they would "refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground."

Chief of the Army Staff, Gen MM Naravane had recently stated that the Indian Army was prepared to hold its positions for as long as it took to achieve "national objectives". He had also indicated some redeployment of troops and strike elements from present positions to the northern border.

Tensions between the two countries began in April-May last year when New Delhi detected incursions by Chinese troops in Ladakh along with a massive deployment of Chinese military personnel. India too quickly moved in its troops to counter further incursions. Previous rounds of military talks have failed to yield any consensus on the pull back of troops, with both sides having some 50,000 personnel each along the LAC.

Relations between the two countries plummeted to a new low following a violent clash between their troops at the Galwan valley on 15 June, resulting in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of casualties on the Chinese side.

The two, belonging to Kralpora in Kupwara of north Kashmir, have been identified as Majid Gulzar Mir and Shabir Ahmad Mir.

Reports said that they died while waiting for stranded vehicular traffic to clear on the highway.

Another report said they

might have died due to suffocation caused by the heater of the vehicle which they had turned on to escape the extreme cold.

The highway continued to remain shut for traffic today due to accumulation of snow on both sides of Jawahar Tunnel and stones falling from the hills at Magarkote. Only the stranded vehicles will be allowed to proceed to their destination if the road reopened on Monday, said traffic police.

11 trapped miners rescued from Chinese gold mine after two-week ordeal

BEIJING, 24 JANUARY

Eleven workers trapped for two weeks inside a Chinese gold mine were brought safely to the surface on Sunday, a landmark achievement for an industry long-blighted by disasters and high death tolls.

State broadcaster CCTV showed workers being hauled up one-by-one in baskets on Sunday afternoon, their eyes shielded to protect them after so many days in darkness.

Some brought their hands together in gratitude and many appeared almost too weak to stand. They were swiftly covered in coats amid freezing temperatures and loaded into ambulances. One worker was reported to have died from a head wound following the explosion that deposited massive amounts of rubble in the shaft on Jan. 10 while the mine was still under construction.

The fate of 10 others who were underground at the time is unknown. Authorities have detained mine managers for delaying reporting the accident.

The cause of the accident is under investigation but the explosion was large enough to release 70 tons of debris that blocked the shaft, disabling elevators and trapping workers underground.

Rescuers drilled parallel shafts to send down food and nutrients and eventually bring up the survivors, 10 of whom had been in a lower chamber and one in a separate area slightly closer to the surface.

The China Daily newspaper said on its website that seven of the workers were able to walk to ambulances on their own. AP

DETAILS ON PAGE 9

Ageing dams in India, other nations pose growing risk: UN report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW YORK, 24 JANUARY

Over a thousand large dams in India will be roughly 50 years old in 2025 and such ageing structures across the world pose a growing threat, according to a UN report which notes that by 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of dams built in the 20th century.

The report, 'Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk' compiled by United Nations University's Canadian-based Institute for Water, Environment and Health, says most of the 58,700 large dams worldwide were constructed between 1930 and 1970 with a design life of 50 to 100 years. It said at 50 years, a large concrete dam "would most



probably begin to express signs of ageing."

Ageing signs include increasing cases of dam failures, progressively increasing costs of dam repair and maintenance, increasing reservoir sedimentation, and loss of a dam's functionality and effectiveness, "strongly interconnected" manifestations, the report said.

Zambia and Zimbabwe. According to the report, the world is unlikely to witness another large dam-building revolution as in the mid-20th century, but dams constructed then will inevitably be showing their age.

The report said that 32,716 large dams (55 per cent of the world's total) are found in just four Asian countries: China, India, Japan and South Korea - most of which will reach the 50-year threshold soon. The same is true of many large dams in Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe, it said.

In India,

years old in 2050, it said. The report said that approximately 3.5 million people are at risk if India's Mullaperiyar dam in Kerala, built over 100 years ago, "were to fail".

"The dam, in a seismically active area, shows significant structural flaws and its management is a contentious issue between Kerala and Tamil Nadu states."

The report added that dams that are well designed, constructed and maintained can "easily" reach 100 years of service but predicts an increase in "decommissioning" - a phenomenon gaining pace in the USA and Europe - as economic and practical limitations prevent ageing dams from being upgraded or if their original use is now obsolete.

In the US, the average age of 90,580 dams is 56 years. More than 85 per cent of US dams in 2020 were operating at or beyond their life expectancy and 75 per cent of US dam failures occurred after 50 years of age. The estimated cost to refurbish US dams is about USD 64 billion. Nearly 1,275 dams were removed in 21 US states in the last 30 years; 80 removed in 2017 alone, it said.

Worldwide, the huge volume of water stored behind large dams is estimated at 7,000 to 8,300 cubic kilometres - enough to cover about 80 per cent of Canada's landmass under a meter of water. The report's co-author Vladimir Smakhtin, director of UNU-INWEH, said the report aims to attract global

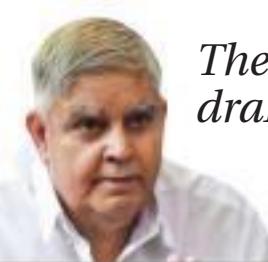
attention to the creeping issue of ageing water storage infrastructure and stimulate international efforts to deal with this emerging, rising water risk. "Underlined is the fact that the rising frequency and severity of flooding and other extreme environmental events can overwhelm a dam's design limits and accelerate a dam's ageing process. Decisions about decommissioning, therefore, need to be taken in the context of a changing climate," Smakhtin said.

Lead author and UNU-INWEH senior researcher Duminda Perera said the problem of ageing large dams today confronts a relatively small number of countries - 93 per cent of all the world's large dams are located in just 25 nations.

"By 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of large dams built in the 20th century, many of them already operating at or beyond their design life," according to the UN University analysis.

In India,

there are over 1,115 large dams that will be roughly 50 years old in 2025, more than 4,250 large dams in the country will be over 50 years old in 2050 and 64 large dams will be more than 150



There cannot be any room for creating noise on legacy #NetajiSubhasChandraBose. Such attempt will only belittle the maker & be irrelevant...

WEST BENGAL GOVERNOR JAGDEEP DHANKHAR

185 fresh corona cases, 9 fatalities in Capital

Delhi's Covid recovery rate crosses 98 per cent while its active cases tally drops to 1741

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

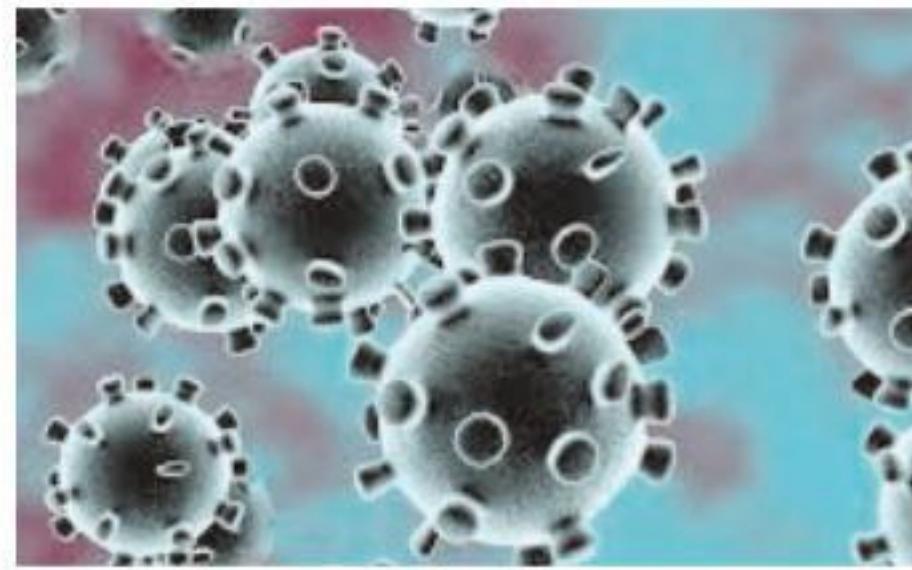
Delhi today logged 185 new coronavirus infections (Covid-19) and 9 Covid-linked fatalities, even as its coronavirus recovery rate rose to 98.02 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The fresh Covid cases were detected out of 62,307 tests which included 36,965 RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests and 25,324 rapid antigen tests. The city's Covid caseload increased to 6,33,924, the health bulletin said.

The national capital's coronavirus positivity rate was now 0.30 per cent against yesterday's 0.26 per cent.

The cumulative number of Covid-linked deaths in Delhi mounted to 10,808, the bulletin stated.

The coronavirus-infected



patients who recovered during the past 24 hours numbered 315, which raised the national capital's cumulative Covid recoveries to 6,21,375 so far, the bulletin stated. The recovery rate climbed to 98.02 per cent. The number of active Covid cases in Delhi now stood at 1,741, including 748 patients who were getting treatment under home isolation.

The city now had 1,665 containment zones, the bulletin added.

Only 787 of the 9,054 hospital beds meant for Covid-19 patients in the city remained occupied. Delhi had yesterday recorded 197 fresh Covid cases and 10 deaths, even as its positivity rate had dropped to 0.26 per cent. These cases were detected out of 76,868 tests including 47,467 RT-PCR

tests and 29,401 rapid antigen tests. The city's active Covid cases tally had then dipped to 1,880 while its recovery rate had climbed to 97.99 per cent.

Delhi had on 22 January reported 266 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 7 coronavirus-linked deaths. These cases came to light following 71,850 tests. The positivity rate was 0.37 per cent.

The city had on 21 January recorded 227 Covid cases and 8 deaths, even as its positivity rate had plunged to 0.28 per cent. Its tally of active coronavirus cases was then 2,120.

On 20 January, the national capital had recorded 228 coronavirus infections and 10 deaths, even as the total number of Covid tests conducted in the city had till then crossed the one-crore mark. These cases were detected out of 63,161 tests with the positivity rate standing at 0.36 per cent. Delhi had on 19 January

recorded 231 Covid cases and 10 deaths. These cases were detected out of 72,441 tests. The positivity rate was 0.32 per cent. The recovery rate was then 97.93 per cent.

The city had on 18 January reported 161 coronavirus cases - the lowest in nearly nine months - with a positivity rate of 0.32 per cent. It had recorded 293 cases on 26 April, according to official data.

As many as 585 Covid cases were reported in Delhi on January 1 and 494 on January 2, 424 on January 3, 384 on January 4, and 442 on January 5, 654 on January 6, 486 on January 7 and 444 on January 8, 519 on January 9 and 399 on January 10, 306 on January 11 and 386 on January 12, and 357 on January 13 and 340 on January 14.

The national capital's Covid count was 295, 299, 246 and 231 cases from 15 to 18 January, respectively.

Air quality 'very poor' in Ghaziabad, Noida, 'poor' in Faridabad, Gurgaon

PTI

NOIDA (UP), 24 JANUARY

Air quality was recorded in the 'very poor' category in Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida and Faridabad on Sunday, while it was 'poor' in Gurgaon, data issued by a government agency showed.

Pollutants PM 2.5 and PM 10 remained prominent in the air of the five immediate neighbours of Delhi, according to the air quality index (AQI) maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

According to the index, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.



cause respiratory illness on prolonged exposure, while that in the 'poor' zone causes breathing discomfort to most people on prolonged exposure.

The AQI for each city is based on the average value of all monitoring stations there. Ghaziabad, Gurgaon and Noida have four such stations while Greater Noida and Faridabad have two stations each, according to the app.

The CPCB states that an AQI in the 'very poor' category may

Delhi court suggests awareness drives by DLSAs, banks on misuse of blank cheques

PTI

NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

Taking note of the judicial system being flooded with cases involving the misuse of cheques allegedly issued as 'security' by one person to another, a court here has suggested organising awareness programmes through the Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and banks.

The court gave the suggestions while dismissing a complaint seeking action against a government school teacher for allegedly misusing four blank cheques issued

to him by the complainant.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Arvind Bansal said it has been found that a blank cheque is signed and handed over like an inconsequential piece of paper without understanding the repercussions thereof.

It not only affects the statutory purpose of creation of negotiable instruments particularly a cheque but also burdens the court with unnecessary litigation clogging the system. It is, therefore, imperative that general public is made aware of law concerning negotiable instruments and cheque dishonour like other civil, criminal and social welfare laws, the court said in its order passed on January 23.

Court deems it necessary to take judicial notice of the factum of number of cases, involving use or misuse of cheques allegedly issued as 'security' by one person to another flooding the court. It has been found that a blank cheque is signed and handed over like an inconsequential piece of paper without understanding the repercussions thereof.

It added that it was also the need of the hour that as part of the awareness drive, it be made mandatory for the banks to imprint a statutory warning on each cheque that dishonour thereof may amount to an offence under sections of the Negotiable Instruments Act and entail penalty equivalent to double the cheque amount and imprisonment up to two years. Let a copy of this order be forwarded to learned Member Secretary, Delhi State Legal Services Authority with a humble request to consider feasibility of organizing such awareness programmes through DLSAs, it said.

According to the complaint, complainant Ram Kumar Sharma was allegedly a member of four chit funds/committees being run by Dhan Pal Singh without any registration.

Sharma alleged that in 2007, he had handed over four undated and blank cheques to Singh, who assured him that he shall return them after completion of all instalments of the chit fund in the presence of witnesses.

However, after full and final payment of committee/chit fund, Singh did not return the cheques and kept on lingering the issue on one pretext or another, the complaint alleged.

The plea further alleged that Singh had told Sharma that the cheques were lost from his house.

Sharma said Singh allegedly misused the cheques.

While dismissing the complaint, the court said no sufficient grounds were made out against Singh for the alleged offences.

It noted that despite knowing that Singh was allegedly running a private chit fund illegally, the complainant admittedly chose to join it and hence his act was like an accessory to the crime being committed by accused.

lost, the complainant did not approach his bank to 'stop payment' of those cheques, and as per record, the cheques got dishonoured for 'insufficient funds'.

It noted that the cheques had got dishonoured in 2007 and 2008 and the complainant filed the complaint with the police for alleged misuse of cheque in 2011, after a delay of 3-4 years. Delay of 3-4 years in filing a written complaint despite knowledge of dishonour of his two cheques allegedly issued as 'security' is beyond comprehension of a prudent mind, the judge said in his order.

NCLT admits Antrix Corporation's winding up plea for Devas Multimedia, appoints liquidator

PTI

NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has admitted the petition filed by Antrix Corporation, the commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation, for winding up Devas Multimedia and has appointed a provisional liquidator for the company.

A two-member NCLT bench directed the existing management of Devas Multimedia to extend full cooperation to the provisional liquidator appointed by it.

"We admit the company petition and the respondents are granted time to file their replies," said an NCLT bench comprising Member Judicial Rajeswara Rao Vittanam and Member Technical Ashutosh Chandra, in its order passed on January 19. The NCLT has posted the matter on February 8 for further hearing into the matter.

The government, through the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, also supported the Antrix Corporation plea before the NCLT and pointed out towards the various documents filed in the case for winding up of Devas Multimedia.

"Since the R1 Company (Devas) has suffered various adverse findings with cogent evidence at the hands of various statutory authorities... it would not be proper to permit R1 Company to continue its name on the rolls of Registrar of Companies, Bengaluru," it said.

Devas Multimedia was incorporated on December 17, 2004.

According to the petition, the then officials of Antrix Corporation including its then chair-

man had executed contract dated January 28, 2005.

This was finally terminated on February 25, 2011, as it was obtained fraudulently in connivance of the then officials. The investigating agencies - CBI and Enforcement Directorate - have unearthed fraud in executing of the agreement, Antrix said. CBI had later filed charge sheets and ED had initiated PMLA proceedings. Even the MCA had also initiated an investigation into the affairs of Devas Multimedia but a stay was granted by the Delhi High Court.

In its petition, Antrix Corporation submitted that it itself was a "victim of the fraud and corruption" to which its then chairman and other officials were a party, and on account thereof had suffered an arbitral award on September 14, 2015 running into more than half a billion dollars, which with interest, comes to more than a billion dollars today.

It has preferred an appeal before the High Court of Delhi, against the arbitral award.

Devas had applied for FIPB approvals for the investment of Rs 579 crore and the investment has resulted for activities for money laundering.

While Tushar Mehta submitted that project involved the use of a combination of technologies as satellite and terrestrial systems for providing SDMB Service.

Cold day in Delhi; maximum temp dips to 15 degC

NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

Delhi recorded a "cold day" on Sunday, as the maximum temperature dropped to 15 degrees Celsius, six notches below normal and the lowest this month, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

A "cold day" is when the minimum temperature is less than 10 degrees Celsius and the maximum is at least 4.5 degrees Celsius below the normal. The minimum temperature settled at 8.8 degrees Celsius. However, it is expected to drop by three to four degrees Celsius over the next three days, leading to "cold wave" conditions, the IMD said. "A cold wave is likely to grip the city on Tuesday. Dense to very dense fog is also predicted," Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre, said. In the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to 4 degrees Celsius. A severe cold wave is when the minimum is 2 degrees Celsius or less. Earlier in the day, "dense" fog reduced visibility to 200 metres at Safdarjung and 100 metres at Palam. According to the IMD, "very dense" fog when visibility is between 0 and 50 metres. In case of "dense" fog, visibility is between 51 and 200 metres, "moderate" 201 and 500 metres, and "shallow" 501 and 1,000 metres.

On Tuesday till the tableaux cross Tilak Marg, From 4 am on Tuesday, traffic on Tilak Marg, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and Subhash Marg will be allowed on both the carriageways, it said. The cross traffic will only be allowed depending on the movement of tableaux, the advisory stated.

The traffic advisory suggested alternative routes which motorists can follow as north-south corridor that includes Ring Road, Ashram Chowk, Sarai Kale Khan, IP Flyover and Rajghat. For going to Mandir Marg, commuters can take the route from Madarsa, Lodhi Road T-point via Aurobindo Marg, AIIMS Chowk, Ring Road-Dhauka Kaun Vande Matram Marg, Shankar Road and Sheikh Mujib Rahman road, the advisory said.

Flying of sub-conventional aerial platforms like para-gliders, para motors, hang gliders, UAVs, UASs, microlight aircrafts, remotely piloted aircrafts, hot air balloons, small-size powered aircrafts, quadcopters or para jumping from aircraft among others over the jurisdiction of Delhi is prohibited from January 20 up to February 15 (both are inclusive), it said.

REPUBLIC DAY 2021

Invitees to the Republic Day 2021 function at the Rajpath are requested not to bring the following prohibited items:

आमंत्रित अतिथियों से अनुरोध है कि राजपथ पर गणतंत्र दिवस 2021 के समारोह में निम्नलिखित प्रतिबंधित वस्तुएं साथ में न लाएँ:

Entry strictly through invitation card/ticket only.

प्रवेश सिर्फ आमंत्रण पत्र/टिकट के द्वारा ही होगा।

Prohibited Items

Photo/फोटो Particulars / विवरण

Eatables खाने-पीने की चीजें

Bag, Briefcase बैला, ब्रीफकेस

Radio, Transistor, Tape Recorder, CD, DVD, MP3 Players रेडियो, ट्रांजिस्टर, टेपरिकॉर्डर, सीडी, डिस्केट, एम्पीयूज प्लेयर

Camera, Binocular, Handycam कैमरा, दूरबीन, हैंडकैम

Thermos Flasks, Water Bottles, Cans थर्मस, पानी की बोतल, कैन

Inflammable Items, Match Boxes जलनशील पदार्थ, दियासलाई

Various Electronic Gadgets, Devices e. g. I-Pad, I-Pod, Palm Top/Laptop, Computer, Tablets, Power Bank etc. विभिन्न इलैक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों जैसे

आई-पैड, आई-पॉड, पाम टॉप/लैपटॉप, कम्प्यूटर,

टैबलेट, पावर बैटरी इत्यादि

Avoid keeping Mobile Phones, Remote Controlled Car Keys as it may delay your entry due to checking

मोबाइल फोन, रिमोट कंट्रोल कार के निकट स्टॉप करने से वक्ता व्यक्ति के द्वारा देरी हो सकती है।

वर्जित वस्तुएं

Photo/फोटो Particulars / विवरण

Cigarettes, Bidies, Lighter सिगरेट, बीड़ी, लाईटर

Alcohol, Perfumes, Spray शराब, इंस्प्रे, स्प्रे

Dagger, Sword, Cutting Material, Sharp/Pointed Edged Material, Screw Drivers नक्काला हथियार, चाकू, पेंचकस

Umbrella, Replica Fire Arms, Toy Gun or Toys छाता, आनेकास्त्र, खिलौना पिस्तौल और खिलौने

Knives, Scissors, Razors, Blades, Wire, Pluckers चाकू, कैंची, रेजर, ब्लेड, तार, प्लकर

Arms & Ammunition, Fireworks, Crackers Explosive etc. हथ

PANDEMIC FALLOUT



The owners of paying guest (PG) accommodation facilities in the National Capital Region (NCR), which includes Gurugram and Noida, are finding it difficult to stay afloat due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With no clarity on when academic sessions will begin in major universities, they do not expect students to return any time soon. The situation is so bad that many PG owners, who were entirely dependent on rental income, have taken up petty jobs or have switched to other professions to earn a livelihood. Every year during the students' admission time, freshers used to rush to find PG accommodations near the North Campus and the South Campus of the Delhi University. The PG owners usually did a brisk business. But due to the virus, even those students, who were occu-

pying PG accommodations, left for their respective native places last year. As a result, a large number of houses across the NCR region have been lying vacant for months now. The rents have also come down sharply, especially in Noida, with little prospects of any change in the situation. However, a colleague, who has been living in a PG accommodation in a posh locality of Noida, is quite happy that he has been paying just Rs 6000 per month for a spacious room which he would have had to share with others in normal circumstances. Other rooms in the house are also vacant. However, he does not expect this situation to last long. He believes the academic sessions in colleges and universities will start sooner than later and students will start returning to the PG accommodations. Positive thinking indeed!

DREAM JOB

All jobs come with some perks. But a youngster had his own idea about what a job must entail. One was a little amused to hear

Road safety drive

A Road Safety Month — not a Road Safety Week — awareness drive was rolled out on 18 January. The issue of road safety is considered so grave now that for the first time, a full month is being devoted to creating awareness about it across the country. Delhiites will agree that the launch of this campaign by the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has come not a day too soon. Every few weeks, there are such accidents where the loss of lives is mourned by the highest in the land. The cause of these accidents is not difficult to imagine. In Delhi-NCR, we see car drivers indulge in activities which may result in accidents. They often talk on mobiles while driving their vehicles. One can judge this by watching the way a car is driven on a road. It will not be steady, vacillate whether to stay right or to the left, or in the middle, and thus cause confusion. If a green light is visible from half a kilometre, one can see drivers speeding up to beat the red light. This can be dangerous and it creates a scare among other road users. Many drivers don't like to stop before the Stop Line; they often halt across it. This may appear to be a small mistake but it shows a lack of concern for rules. There is areckless way of driving in which cars make their way ahead by running zig-zag, continuously honking, making people wonder if a movie chase scene is being re-enacted. Two-wheeler drivers are often seen carrying passengers without helmets. This may turn out to be grave even if there is a minor accident. Mopeds often race with four-wheelers, leaving every-



body scared about what might happen. A fairly common sight is of two-wheeler carrying mountains of load. The buses create a scare when they try to overtake, although they are mandated to stay on the first lane from the left. The buses will appear on the right side of your vehicle to beat the red light, and then turn left. Such behaviour creates conditions for accidents. The significance of road safety is well understood

by residents of cities like Delhi where the number of flyovers is going up constantly. Drivers tend to speed up on the flyovers as they believe they have a clear way ahead. This often leads to crashes against the central verges, or against vehicles moving at normal speed. Delhi has seen some terrible accidents on flyovers where the vehicles virtually flew over them, or dangled over their walls precariously. There is a

category of accidents described as "hit-and-run" cases, which cause deaths and leave no evidence behind. The observance of a whole Road Safety Month is, therefore, not surprising. Road accidents have caused no fewer deaths than the Covid-19 pandemic. The deadly virus took a toll of over 1.52 lakh lives in the country in the last nine months, according to official figures. The number of deaths due to road

accidents in the country was 1,54,732 during 2019. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2020 Report on traffic accidents, the number of deaths due to road accidents in the country has been increasing every year from 1,48,707 (2015), to 1,51,801 (2016) and 1,50,093 (2017), to 1,52,780 (2018). As the number of vehicles goes up, the number of accidents is also rising, and all because of neglect.

of road safety norms. Sometimes roads are dark or have potholes, which destabilise the vehicles and cause accidents. There were about 4.37 lakh road accidents in the country in 2019. During 2019, Delhi reported 5601 cases of road accidents in which 4949 people were injured and 1508 died. Most of the road accidents were due to over-speeding, which accounted for 59.6 per cent of the total accidents in the country. The other causes of the accidents were dangerous and careless driving or overtaking, poor weather conditions, and driving under influence of drugs or alcohol. Out of the 53 mega cities, Faridabad (108 deaths) followed by Kolkata (93 deaths) reported maximum cases of road accidents at pedestrian crossings. The expressways in the NCR frequently report pile-up of vehicles due to fog or stationary trucks. The Road Safety Month is meant to create awareness among the public, especially amongst the youth to improve safety on roads. One can only wish the government adopts effective methods of communication. All stakeholders are invited to give suggestions on road safety. School and college students, drivers and all other road users will be involved. There will be a display of banners, walkathons, road signage and pamphlets related to road safety. Various stakeholders like transport, police, PWD, health and education departments, municipal bodies, vehicle manufacturers, transporters' associations, doctors and various NGOs are coming together during these awareness events.

the ten-year-old said he would like to be a delivery boy when he grows up. While one thought he was inspired by the home delivery service during the Covid lockdown when the boys made good

money, it transpired the tyke had some other idea about the job. Recalling a video that went viral last year of a well-known fast-food brand delivery boy, who ate small portions of food from the

packages that had been ordered, the youngster said: "Not only can I earn money but I can eat to my heart's content whatever food I want to, all of which my parents order rarely!"

TAILPIECE

"Remember all those times when you wished the weekend would last forever? Well, the wish has been granted. But are you really happy?" wondered

a friend while empathising with all those who have been working from homes since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Contributed by Deepak Razdan, Ashok Tuteja and Asha Ramachandran

TRAFFIC ADVISORY

Republic Day Celebrations on 26th January, 2021



Shanti • Sewa • Nyaya





Republic Day will be held on 26th January, 2021. The Parade will start at 9.50 AM from Vijay Chowk and proceed to National Stadium, whereas Tableaux will start from Vijay Chowk and proceed to Red Fort Ground. There will be wreath laying function at National War Memorial at 09.00 AM.

There would be elaborate traffic arrangements and restrictions in place for smooth conduct of the Parade and Tableaux along the respective routes.

ROUTE OF THE PARADE/TABLEAUX :-

- (A) Parade Route: Vijay Chowk - Rajpath - Amar Jawan Jyoti - India Gate - R/A Princess Palace-T/L Tilak Marg Radial Road - Turn right on "C" Hexagon - Turn left and enter National Stadium from Gate No. 1.
- (B) Tableaux Route: -- Vijay Chowk - Rajpath - Amar Jawan Jyoti - India Gate - R/A Princess Palace-T/L Tilak Marg - Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg - Netaji Subhash Marg - Red Fort.

TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS

In order to facilitate smooth passage of the Parade, movement of traffic on certain roads leading to the route of the Parade and Tableaux will be restricted as under:-

- (1) No traffic will be allowed on Vijay Chowk from 06.00 PM on 25.01.2021 till Parade is over. Rajpath is already out of bounds.
- (2) No cross traffic on Rajpath intersections from 11.00 PM on 25.01.2021 at Rafi Marg, Janpath, Man Singh Road till Parade is over.
- (3) 'C'-Hexagon-India Gate will be closed for traffic from 05.00 AM on 26.01.2021 till Tableaux crosses Tilak Marg.
- (4) From 04.00 AM on 26.01.2021 Traffic on Tilak Marg, BSZ Marg and Subhash Marg will not be allowed in both carriageways. Cross traffic will only be allowed depending upon the movement of the Tableaux.

Road users are requested to plan their journey in advance accordingly and avoid the route of Parade and Tableaux, from 0400 hours to 1230 hours, for their own convenience.

SUGGESTED ROUTES

If the journey is unavoidable, the road users are advised to take following routes:-

NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR

- Ring Road - Ashram Chowk - Sarai Kale Khan - I.P. Flyover - Rajghat - Ring Road
- From Madarsa - Lodhi Road 'T' point - Aurobindo Marg - AIIMS Chowk - Ring Road - Daula Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - Shankar Road - Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Road or Mandir Marg.

EAST-WEST CORRIDOR

- Ring Road - Bhairon Road - Mathura Road - Lodhi Road - Aurobindo Marg - AIIMS Flyover - Ring Road - Daula Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - OR
- Ring road - ISBT - Chandgi Ram Akhara - Mall Road - Azad Pur - Ring Road.

FOR NEW DELHI RAILWAY STATION

- From South Delhi:- Daula Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - Panchkuan Road - Outer Circle Connaught Place - Chelmsford Road for Paharganj side or Mint Road - Bhavbhati Marg for Ajmeri Gate side.
- From East Delhi:- Boulevard Road via ISBT Bridge - Rani Jhansi Flyover - R/A Jhandewal - D.B. Gupta Road - Sheela Cinema Road - Paharganj Bridge and reach New Delhi Rly Station.

FOR OLD DELHI RAILWAY STATION

- From South Delhi:- Ring Road - Ashram Chowk - Sarai Kale Khan - Ring Road - Raighat - Ring Road - Chowk Yamuna Bazar - S.P. Mukherjee Marg - Chhatta Kal - Kuria Bridge and reach Old Delhi Rly Station.
- Though there will be no restriction for people from North Delhi going towards New Delhi Railway Station or Old Delhi Railway Station, yet it is advised that they plan their journey in advance and take sufficient extra time to reach their destination to avoid possible delay.

BUS TERMINATING POINTS

Movement of the City Bus Services will be curtailed at the following points:-

1. Shivaji Stadium
2. ISBT Sarai Kale Khan
3. R/A Kamla Market.
4. Delhi Sachivalaya (IGI Stadium)
5. Pragati Maidan (Bhairon Road)
6. Hanuman Mandir (Yamuna Bazar)
7. Mori Gate
8. ISBT Kashmire Gate

INTER STATE BUSES:

- (I) Buses from Ghaziabad bound for Shivaji Stadium shall take NH-9 (NH-24), Ring Road and terminate at Bhairon Road.

Buses coming from NH-9 (NH-24) shall take right turn on Road No. 56 and terminate at ISBT Anand Vihar.

(II) Buses coming from Ghaziabad side will be diverted at Mohan Nagar towards Bhopra Chungi for Wazirabad Bridge.

(IV) All Inter State buses coming from Daula Kuan side shall terminate at Daula Kuan.

METRO SERVICES

Metro Rail Service shall remain available for commuters at all Metro Stations during the Republic Day Parade on 26th Jan., 2021. However, Boarding/De-boarding at the below mentioned station will not be permitted as per schedule given:-

Name of Metro Station	Boarding/De-boarding not allowed
Kendriya Sachivalaya	From 5.00 AM till 1200 Noon on 26.01.2021.
Udyog Bhawan	
Lok Kalyan Marg (Race Course)	From 8.45 AM to 1200 Noon on 26.01.2021
Patel Chowk	
ITO	

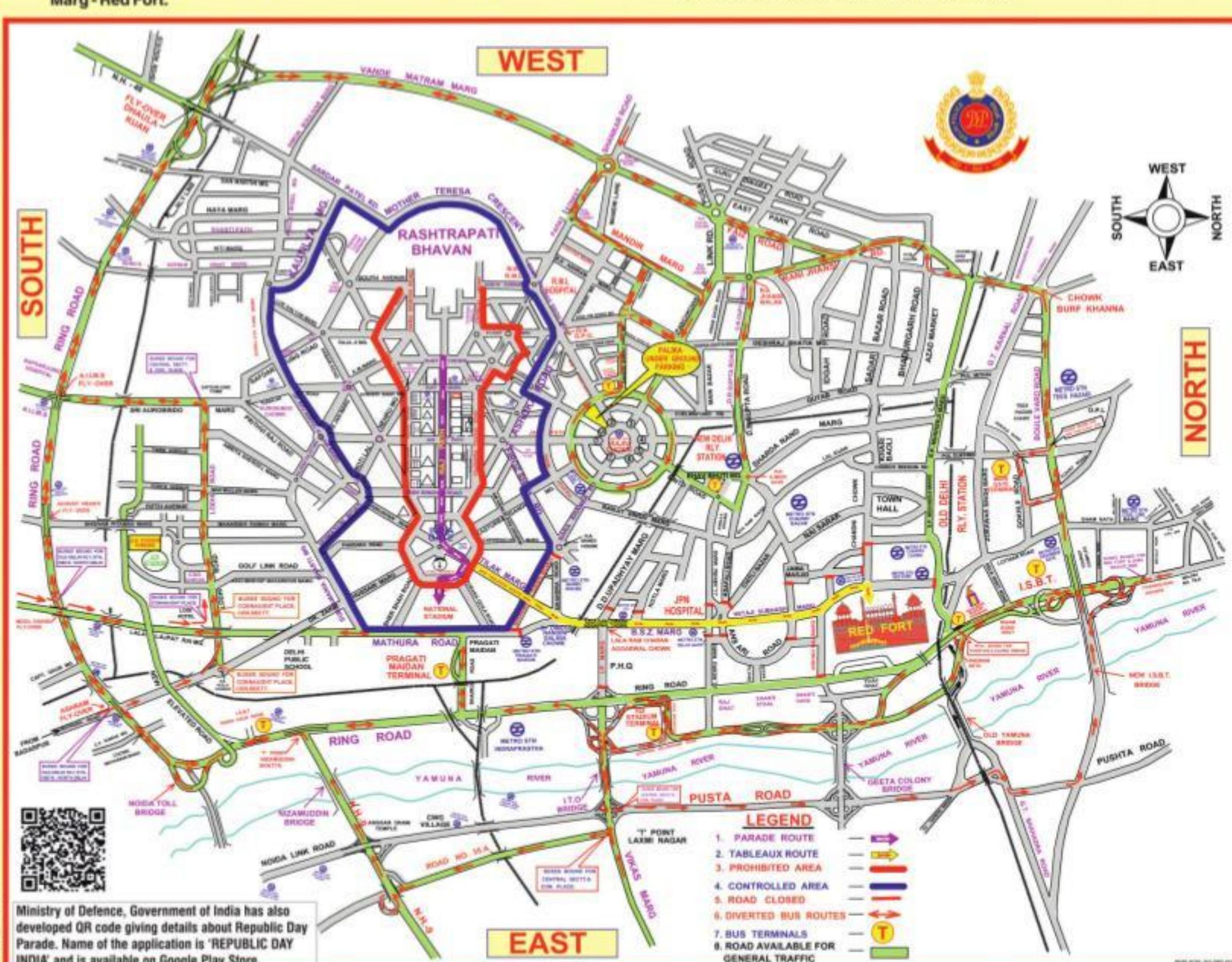
TSR/TAXIS

No TSR and Taxi will be allowed to enter or ply after 0700 hours on 26.01.2021 in the Area bound by:-

MOTHER TERESA CRESCENT - BABA KHARAK SINGH MARG - ASHOKA ROAD UPTO R/A PATEL CHOWK - SANSAD MARG UPTO TOLSTOY MARG UPTO KASTURBA GANDHI MARG UPTO FEROZESHABROAD - FEROZESHABROAD UPTO R/A MANDI HOUSE - BHAGWAN DASS ROAD - MATHURA ROAD - SUBRAMANIAM BHARTI MARG - HUMAYUN ROAD - A.P.J ABDUL KALAM MARG - KAMALATA TURK MARG - KAUTILYA MARG AND SARDAR PATEL ROAD (EXCLUDED).

INSTRUCTIONS TO GENERAL PUBLIC

- In case any unidentified object or suspicious person is seen, information must be conveyed to the nearest policeman on duty.
- Flying of sub conventional aerial platforms like paragliders, para motors, hang gliders, UAVs, UASs, microlight aircrafts, remotely piloted aircrafts, hot air balloons, small size powered aircrafts, quadcopters or para jumping from aircraft etc. are prohibited over the jurisdiction of National Capital Territory of Delhi from 20.01.2021 upto 15.02.2021 (both are inclusive).
- General public and motorists are advised to keep patience, observe traffic rules & road discipline and follow directions of traffic personnel deployed at all intersections and remain updated through Traffic Police Facebook page, Twitter handle and Traffic Police Helpline. People are requested to plan their journey in advance and keep sufficient time in hand to avoid inconvenience.





From sharing a selectively edited video of his statements to the release of a list of the final committee members, the AAP spokesperson had made yet another desperate attempt to sell his party's pack of lies to the people of Punjab.

CAPTAIN AMARINDER SINGH

PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

India

Amit Shah to skip HP's golden jubilee event in Shimla

The Union Home Minister will however participate in it virtually, even as BJP president Nadda will attend today's function marking the 50th anniversary of Himachal Pradesh's statehood, says CM Thakur

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 JANUARY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will skip the golden jubilee celebrations of Himachal Pradesh's statehood here tomorrow due to his busy schedule, HP Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said today.

The CM, however, said that the state government was still making efforts to get the Union Home Minister visit Shimla and attend the function on 25 January which will mark the 50th anniversary of Himachal Pradesh's

statehood. "Shah will participate in the HP's golden jubilee celebrations (function) virtually while BJP national chief J P Nadda will attend the function in Shimla and his schedule has been confirmed for the event," Jai Ram told media persons while inspecting the preparations for the function in Shimla.

The CM said the state government was making efforts to make HP's golden jubilee celebrations a "memorable one" and that 51 events will be held in the state on the occasion. The golden jubilee celebrations will be held round the year and



HP CM Jai Ram Thakur reviewing preparations for the state's golden jubilee celebrations function, in Shimla on Sunday. SNS

these events will be dedicated to the people of the state with whose cooperation and hard

work has completed its journey of 50 years, he said. Jai Ram

today visited the historic Ridge ground here to review the arrangements for the mega function to be held there tomorrow to celebrate the golden jubilee of HP's statehood. The CM gave necessary directions to the officials for making fool-proof and elaborate arrangements to make the event a "success and memorable one".

He asked them to ensure that minimum inconvenience is caused to the general public and tourists during the celebrations. Jai Ram also visited exhibition stalls and gave necessary directions to officials concerned to

make the exhibitions "interesting and catchy" so that people could get a glimpse of 50 years of "glorious journey of development the state has witnessed" so far. HP Urban Development Minister Suresh Bhardwaj, Shimla MP and state BJP chief Suresh Kashyap, Political Advisor to CM Trilok Jamwal, Chief Secretary Anil Khachi, Director General of Police Sanjay Kundu, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister J C Sharma, Secretary, GAD, Devesh Kumar, Director, Tourism, Yunes and other senior officials were also present on the occasion.

HP MLAs' meetings with CM deferred to 8-9 Feb

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 JANUARY

The Himachal Pradesh government on Sunday made changes to schedule for the meetings of MLAs with the Chief Minister for

A state government official said the meeting with MLAs of Chamba, Sirmour and Una districts would be held from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm while meeting with MLAs of Mandi, Kullu and Bilaspur districts from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm on 8 February.

spelling out their priorities for the annual budget and these meeting will now be held on 8 and 9 February, 2021 in the HP Secretariat in Shimla.

A state government official said the meeting with MLAs of Chamba, Sirmour and Una districts would

be held from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm while meeting with MLAs of Mandi, Kullu and Bilaspur districts from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm on 8 February.

The meeting with MLAs of Kangra and Hamirpur dis-

tricts would be held from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm where as with MLAs of Lahaul Spiti, Kinnaur, Solan and Shimla districts from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm on 9 February, he added.

These meetings were earlier scheduled to be held on 28 and 29 January.

PREPPING FOR R-DAY



The Army, ITBP, SSB, and Himachal Pradesh Police personnel march during the final full dress rehearsal for the Republic Day parade, in Shimla on Sunday. LALIT KUMAR

Negative Covid-19 report made mandatory for Kumbh devotees

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 24 JANUARY

Devotees will have to produce a Covid-19 negative test report to participate in the upcoming Kumbh Mela at Haridwar.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, has issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Kumbh and under it only visitors with a negative Covid-

19 test report, done 72 hours prior to the date of visit, will be allowed to enter the Kumbh Mela area. The Kumbh Mela will start from coming February and will conclude in April. It is expected that about 10 lakh people will attend the Mela on a regular day and about 50 lakh people will attend the Mela on auspicious days. The registration of devotees will be done and they will

have to produce a medical certificate, obtained from their native place's Community Health Centre, District Hospital and Medical College. Only the vaccinated healthcare and other frontline workers will be deputed for Kumbh Mela duties. The Ministry has also instructed the Uttarakhand government to keep away "Covid high risk" staff — older employees, pregnant

employees and employees who have underlying medical conditions — from frontline work demanding direct contact with the public.

With a big crowd expected in Kumbh, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has asked the Uttarakhand government to create a mega-size temporary hospital, with a bed capacity of 2,000. The state government has been asked to take the help of the

DRDO for setting up such facilities. While ensuring the use of masks, providing alcohol-based sanitizers for guests, maintaining social distancing, and setting up hand washing stations among other Covid safety protocols, this Kumbh will be hosted under the Covid guidelines and special norms. Even for events like exhibitions, fairs, prayer meetings, etc. within the Kumbh Mela site, there are strict guidelines. The likely dates for Kumbh are from 27 February to 30 April 2021. On six auspicious days — Magh Purnima (27 February), Mahashivratri (11 March), Somvati Amavasya (12 April), Bairakhi (14 April), Ram Navmi (21 April) and Chaitra Purnima (27 April) — big crowds are expected to visit the Har Ki Pauri Ghat at Haridwar for taking holy bath.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI
Case No. CUSAA No. 167/2019 & C.M. No. 19269/2019
(U/O V Rule 20 CPC for Substitution Service of Notice upon Respondent)
Appeal against the order dated 13-06-2017 in C/A/53894-53902/2017-CUDB Passed by The Learned Customs, Excise & Service Tax Appellate Tribunal, New Delhi in Appeal No. C/2017/2012.

Deputy Registrar (A) for Registrar General Seal of the Court

IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI
Case No. CUSAA No. 5/2019 & C.M. No. 334/2019 (U/O V Rule 20 CPC for Substitution Service of Notice upon Respondent)

Appeal against the order dated 04-07-2017 in C/A/54791-54829/2017-CUDB Passed by The Learned Customs, Excise & Service Tax Appellate Tribunal, New Delhi in Appeal No. C/2017/2013.

Commissioner of Customs ICD Tughlakabad (Import) — Appellants

Versus M/s Samtel Color Ltd. — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : M/s Samtel Color Ltd., Village Chhaprauli, Buland Shahr Road, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh — Appellants

Whereas the abovenamed appellants has presented an appeal under Section 130 of the Customs Act, 1962 which was listed before the Court on 26-04-2019 and on the other subsequent dates when the Court ordered issuance of notice to you.

And whereas it has been proved to the satisfaction of the Court that you cannot be served in the ordinary manner, notice by way of publication to you is hereby issued. If you wish to defend the above-mentioned appeal and application, you may cause an appearance to be entered on your behalf either in person or through an Advocate duly appointed by you for the purpose before the Court of the worthy Joint Registrar (Judicial) on 04-03-2021 (Actual).

If no appearance is made on your behalf by yourself, your pleader or someone by law authorized to act for you in the said appeal and application on the aforementioned date, no further notice of hearing of the said appeal and application will be given to you and the same will be heard and determined ex parte in your absence.

Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court, this 15th December, 2020.

Deputy Registrar (A) for Registrar General Seal of the Court

IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI
Case No. CUSAA No. 5/2019 & C.M. No. 2655-2666/2019 (U/O V Rule 20 CPC for Substitution Service of Notice upon Respondent)

Appeal against the order dated 14-06-2017 in C/A/53993-54009/2017-CUDB Passed by The Learned Customs, Excise & Service Tax Appellate Tribunal, New Delhi in Appeal No. C/2014/2012.

Commissioner of Customs ICD Tughlakabad (Import) — Appellants

Versus Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents : Sh. Rana Bharat Bhushan — Respondents

Notice to Respondents



Karan Johar Arrives at Varun Dhawan's Marriage Venue in Alibaug on Sunday.

PTI

Launch of e-version of voter card: Law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will on Monday launch the electronic version of the voter identity card which can be downloaded on a mobile phone or a personal computer. The e-elector photo identity card is non-editable digital version of the elector photo identity card and it can be saved in facilities such as digital locker and can be printed in the PDF format, Election Commission officials said.

PTI

Nitish wishes speedy recovery to Laloo: Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday wished speedy recovery to his arch rival Lalu Prasad, who has been rushed to New Delhi following marked deterioration in health and with whom he has shared a love-hate relationship for close to five decades.

PTI

Rajasthan bird flu: A total of 145 birds were found dead in various districts of Rajasthan on Sunday, taking the count of such avian deaths recorded in the state to 6,595. The 145 birds include, 112 crows, five peacocks, 11 pigeons and 17 other birds, an official report said.

PTI

Godown gutted in fire: A godown of construction material was gutted in a fire that broke out in the early hours on Sunday at Titwala in Thane district of Maharashtra, an official said. Nobody was injured in the incident. It took almost eight hours for them to put out the flames.

PTI

UP CM likens anti-Covid vaccine to 'Sanjeevani Booti'

LUCKNOW, 24 JANUARY

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday compared the Covid-19 vaccines given by India to Brazil to 'Sanjeevani Booti', a mythological life-saving herb figuring in the Hindu epic Ramayana.

Yogi made the comparison a day after Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro invoked Lord Hanuman while thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for providing two million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to fight the deadly coronavirus infection in his country, one of the worst-hit nations by the pandemic.

Referring to the Brazilian president's tweet of an image of Lord Hanuman flying from India to Brazil with a mountain of the life-saving herb, Yogi said Bolsonaro himself likened India's vaccine to Sanjeevani Booti'.

"While saving lives of the countrymen, the Covid-19 vaccines are also reaching other parts of the world, Adityanath said while addressing the UP Divas programme here."

Yesterday, the President of Brazil (Jair Bolsonaro) thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He compared India's vaccine with Sanjeevani Booti. The way Sanjeevani Booti saved the life of Lord Lakshman, India's vaccine too will similarly act for the citizens of Brazil," the chief minister said.

One of the world's biggest drugmakers, India on Friday began commercial exports of the serum and sent two million doses of domestically manufactured Covishield vaccine to Brazil.

PTI

Farmers reach Mumbai for 25 Jan rally

Police and SRPF personnel have stepped up security at rally venue Azad Maidan, drones will also be used to keep an eye on the event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 JANUARY

Thousands of farmers from across Maharashtra reached Mumbai on Sunday evening to participate in a rally at the state capital on Monday against the Centre's three new farm laws.

Police have stepped up security at Azad Maidan, the rally's venue in south Mumbai, and personnel of the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) have also been deployed there. Drones will also be used to keep an eye on the event, a police official said.

The All India Kisan Sabha's (AIKS) Maharashtra unit in a statement said around 15,000 farmers had set out for the state capital from Nashik on Saturday in several tempos and other vehicles.

AIKS chief Sharad Pawar and some other prominent leaders of the ruling Mahavikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state will address the rally on Monday, the release said. The state Congress unit, which is an ally of the MVA, has already extended its support to the protest.

Farmers from various places had gathered in Nashik and started their journey towards Mumbai on Saturday. Many peasants also joined on the way, the AIKS said.



Farmers' vehicle rally reaches Mumbai on Sunday. IANS

They halted at Ghatandevi near Igatpuri hill town for overnight stay.

On Sunday morning, a number of farmers marched down the Kasara Ghat to head for Mumbai, while many left in vehicles.

Several women farmers took part in the seven-km long march at Kasara Ghat, which started at 9 am and ended by around 11.30 am. Later, they continued their forward journey in vehicles.

The Kasara Ghat march and the vehicle convoy was led by AIKS national president Ashok Dhawale, state president Kisan Gujarat and its state general secretary Ajit Nawale.

On the way, hundreds of Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)-affiliated factory workers

from Igatpuri and Shahapur tehsils welcomed the farmers by showering flowers. At the Kalyan-Bhivandi cross-road, the farmers were welcomed and provided food packets. They entered Mumbai from Mulund check-naka, the entry point to the state capital from neighbouring Thane, and were welcomed at Kanannwar Nagar in Vikhroli by hundreds of workers of the Left parties.

The farmers then proceeded towards the Azad Maidan, where the joint sit-in protest by the Samyukta Shetkari Kamgar Morcha (SSKM) began this morning, and will continue till the Republic Day.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a pro-farmer body, has

given a nationwide call for a struggle from January 23 to 26, including rallies to Raj Bhavans (governor houses) in states. Accordingly, over 100 organisations came together and formed the Samyukta Shetkari Kamgar Morcha (SSKM), Maharashtra, in a meeting held in Mumbai on 12 January.

On 25 January, there will be a public meeting at 11 am, the release said.

Besides Pawar, state Congress president and revenue minister Balasaheb Thorat, and Shiv Sena leader and state tourism minister Aaditya Thackeray will also address the rally, the AIKS statement said.

Later, the protesters will march to the Raj Bhavan and submit a memorandum to Governor B S Koshyari.

The main demands of the protesters include repeal of the three 'anti-farmer' laws, and a central law guaranteeing remunerative MSP and procurement, the release said.

The protesters have also decided to hoist the national flag at the Azad Maidan on the occasion of the Republic day on 26 January, and take a pledge to make the struggle of peasants and workers successful, it added.

Meanwhile, security has been beefed up at the venue ahead of the rally, a police offi-

cial said. Apart from personnel of the Mumbai Police, nine platoons of the SRPF are being deployed at the Azad Maidan, he said, adding that drones will also be used.

Additional police force, including 100 officers and 500 constables, will also be deployed at the venue, he added.

Enacted in September last year, the three laws have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country.

A large number of farmers from Bijnor, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Amroha, Hapur, Meerut, Shamli, Baghpat, Bulandshahar etc have started their march for Delhi in their tractors for proposed parade of farmers on the Republic day. Highways here have been taken over by the tractors with farmers heading towards their common destination.

A non ending line of tractors is seen on the highways presently. Many had already left while some will leave on Monday, said Ch Diwakar Singh, national vice president of BKU (Bhanu) asserting that over 5 lakh tractors would reach Delhi for the parade.

Multiple rounds of talks between the government and farmer unions have failed to break the impasse so far, while the Supreme Court has appointed a panel for resolution of the issue.

January, averred Singh.

According to him the magnitude of the participation of farmers from the area has forced the UP government to take the decision of not stopping the farmers marching for tractor parade. On the contrary action against farmers were taken by the police when the agitation had started. In Sambhal district sub divisional magistrate had issued notices of Rs 50 lakh to farmers which they later withdrawn, added the farmer leader.

BKU's Youth Wing's state president Digamber Singh informed that he had made a call of 1 village, 1 tractor and 11 persons in Bijnor district. He said that the district has over 3000 villages and they have visited over 2500 villages in connection of parade and is hopeful that more than 1000 tractors might participate from Bijnor district.

IG Meerut Praveen Kumar also cleared that the farmers are not being stopped anywhere. Though the officials tried to convince the farmers to avoid going in view of the cold weather conditions but those who are on their way to Delhi are not being stopped.

Cong-AIUDF alliance will open 'all gates' for infiltrators in Assam: Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NALBARI (ASSAM), 24 JANUARY

and loss of lives of thousands of youths.

The Congress created a divide between the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis, the Assamese people and the hill people, the Bodos and the non-Bodos, Shah said, alleging that over 10,000 Assamese youths were killed under the party's reign. "Tell me loudly," he asked the crowd, "Can the Congress and Ajmal keep Assam free from infiltrators? If they come to power, they will open all gates to welcome them because they are their vote bank."

In his first political rally in the poll-bound state, Shah also took a swipe at the Congress for calling the BJP 'communal', and questioned the grand old party's alliance with the Muslim League in Kerala and the Badruddin Ajmal-led AIUDF in Assam, two regional parties that draw their support mostly from Muslims. At the 'Vijay Sankalp Samor', Shah asserted that an era of peace and development has ushered in Assam with the BJP in power in the state and also at the Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Shah projected his party as the only alternative capable of safeguarding and promoting regional culture.

He took a dig at the Assam Jatiya Parishad, a party floated by former AASU leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi which is tipped to ally with Akhil Gogoi-led Rajo Dal, without naming them, saying they are in the poll arena to help the Congress by trying to cut into votes of the BJP. Assam's interests are not in their hearts, he said.

These two parties are strenuously opposed to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and have alleged the CAA is a 'threat' to Assam's culture and identity. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), which has led mass agitations over the issue of regional identity in the past, has backed Assam Jatiya Parishad. Hitting out at the Congress, the home minister said the party had adopted the British Empire's policy of 'divide and rule' by pitting different groups of people against one another, leading to bloodshed.

PTI

Arnab chats: Republic Media Network hits back at Cong

NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

The Republic Media Network on Sunday hit out at the Congress over its allegations that the purported WhatsApp chats of Arnab Goswami point to breach of national security and violations of the Official Secrets Act, and claimed that the party was peddling falsehoods.

In a statement, the Republic media group also accused rival TV channel Times Now of manipulating TRPs, suppressing facts and misleading the public on the alleged TRP scam.

The statement comes after Times Network, under which Times Now operates, said it is contemplating all possible legal actions against Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) for its unacceptable and unpardonable failure to act on complaints of large-scale manipulation of TRPs to favour Republic TV. Also, the Congress had on Friday demanded a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the purported WhatsApp chats of Goswami for breach of national security and violations of the Official Secrets Act and booking those involved.

In the statement, the Republic Media Network said there has been collusion of corporate and political interests to target its Editor-in-Chief Goswami. The validity, veracity and genuineness of the purported WhatsApp chats are still to be tested in the courts of law, but even keeping that aside for a moment, there is not one line, suggestion or shred of evidence in the chats which contain any wrongdoing or TRP manipulation by the Republic Media Network, the statement said.

PTI

VK Sasikala emerges most sought after in TN politics

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 24 JANUARY

VK Sasikala, closest aid of late chief minister and AIADMK stalwart J Jayalalithaa, has been suddenly elevated to a position of most sought after person in Tamil Nadu politics.

The ousted AIADMK leader is expected to be released on 27 January from Bangalore Parappan Agrahara prison after having served four years imprisonment for amassing wealth disproportionate to her income.

Though she has been late admitted to Bangalore Victoria Hospital after having tested positive for Covid-19, her release is imminent.

Sasikala, who still wields a good amount of influence among the Thevar community,

which dominates in the AIADMK, was almost written off by political pundits, as chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami and his deputy O Panneerselvam almost have full control over the party with comfortable administration in the state for the past four years after Jayalalithaa's death and is expecting to retain power with the help of BJP and other small allies.

However, superstar Rajinikanth's sudden decision to withdraw from entering poll politics with his new party has made the BJP central leadership to think of a new route to make inroads into the state with Sasikala's help and the pressure is mounting on AIADMK leadership to accept Sasikala again into the party.

Though BJP is part of

AIADMK alliance in the state, the party had a plan B in which they were trying to cobble a non-Dravidian alliance with Rajinikanth's help. Frustrated over the new developments on Rajinikanth's decision to not enter politics just before the Assembly election, pushed the BJP to opt for Plan C in which they wanted to have good say in the alliance with Sasikala's help, though she could not compete for any constitutional post for some more time due to her conviction in DA case.

BJP's plan C kick started on the 51st anniversary celebration of *Tuglak* magazine in Chennai. *Tuglak* editor and RSS ideologue S Gurumurthi during the function indirectly asked the AIADMK to join hands even with Sasikala to defeat DMK in the upcoming Assembly election.

While AIADMK leadership is adamant on not to accept Sasikala, now the state leadership again came out with support to Sasikala. BJP state president L Ganesh came out with a statement on Friday urging media not to sensationalise her health condition. "Everyone knows the friendliness and loyalty between Jayalalithaa and Sasikala are incomparable," the BJP leader said. "If anyone betrayed the AIADMK and its two-leaves symbol, it would amount to an indirect betrayal of Jayalalithaa," Ganesh said. "Sasikala would be aware of it too. I wonder how people can assume she will do that (betrayal). So, let's not be in a hurry to comment about her. Let us believe that good things will happen," he added.

Pak cross-border tunnels, drones new challenge for J&K forces

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 24 JANUARY

Cross-border tunnels on the India-Pakistan boundary for infiltration of terrorists and drones for dropping arms and ammunition on this side of the international border (IB) have become a challenge for the Indian security forces.

Tunnel after tunnel are being detected at the IB by the BSF.

Pakistani security agencies have started building tunnels and using Chinese drones to bypass the border fencing by India that had to a great extent helped curbing infiltration of terrorists and also dumping arms and ammunition for them by the ISI and Pakistani army.

Similarly, drones are flown at low height to just cross the border fence and drop arms and ammunition for terrorists. Several dumps of AK47 rifles, Chinese grenades and other explosives have been recovered along the 30ft deep from the surface.

BSF and the Army have

already installed highly sensitive devices and night vision cameras on the IB and the Line of Control (LoC) to detect infiltration of terrorists. However to bypass such gadgets, the tunnelling process has been done by the enemy.

During his tenure as Home Minister, Rajnath Singh inaugurated the pilot project of the laser technology based Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) on the IB in Jammu.

A police team reached the spot and found three women, two men and a teenager were present there on blue-coloured Yulu bikes, they said. During questioning, it came to light that they had come to the India Gate area and had rented the Yulu bikes, then they decided to race on the bikes and call each other by names based on countries, Pakistan. Thus, they had shouted "Pakistan zindabad" in a lighter vein, the officer said, adding that an enquiry is still being conducted.

tunnels have been detected on the IB during past some time in the three districts of Jammu division, Kathua, Samba and Jammu, where the soil is soft and as such digging tunnel is easy.

DFG of BSF Rakesh Asthana and the J&K DGP Dilbag Singh had recently said that drones being used by Pakistan to drop arms and ammunition on this side of the border are a new challenge for security forces.

Pakistan and its Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) have started using bigger drones to enhance the capacity to smuggle arms and ammunition across the border in India's Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

During his tenure as Home Minister, Rajnath Singh inaugurated the pilot project of the laser technology based Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) on the IB in Jammu.

Congress slams govt over rise in fuel prices

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

The Congress on Sunday slammed the Centre over fuel prices touching an 'all-time high' and demanded that the excise duty hike affected by the Modi government during its tenure be immediately rolled back to give relief to the masses.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attacked the Centre over the rise in fuel prices, saying people are suffering due to inflation while the Modi government is busy on tax collection. The party's tax collection on the government came a day after petrol and diesel prices in the country touched new all-time highs after rates were increased for the fourth time

in the week. Congress spokesperson Ajay Maken said the petrol prices have reached an all-time high of Rs 85.70 per litre and diesel has reached Rs 75.88 a litre.

What is more shocking is that during the Congress' regime when we left power in May 2014, the international crude oil was USD 108 per barrel

A President in dock

The trial of Donald Trump for "inciting the insurrection" in the Capitol is likely to start as early as next week. If the latest reports from Washington are any indication, the House of Representatives will advance its article of impeachment to the Senate on Monday. The formality will signal the start of a trial, almost unprecedented in American history, according to a statement by Chuck Schumer on Friday. As the majority leader, he said the decision had been "relayed" by the Speaker, Nancy Pelosi. Perhaps in accord with legal certitudes, details of how the trial would run were not disclosed. These certitudes also envisage that once the "article of impeachment" reaches the Senate, the chamber must almost immediately be transformed into a court of impeachment and sit in judgment until a verdict is reached. This must rank as a classic instance of the conjunction between the legislature and the judiciary and in the best traditions of a functioning democracy. For the past few days, negotiations have been held between Schumer and Senator Mitch McConnell, his Republican counterpart, over further parameters for the trial of the former President. Democrats are trying to set a dual track to enable the Senate to confirm President Biden's cabinet nominees before the trial gets underway each day. Pelosi's decision to set the process in motion on Monday has served to rebuff a request McConnell had made to delay the trial to enable Trump's newly appointed legal team to prepare the groundwork. Indeed, he never wanted what he called the "heart of the trial" to begin until the middle of February. Democrats, involved in the planning, have indicated that they are not wholly averse to granting Trump's team some time. This is in keeping with the best traditions of an unbiased judiciary. Notably, the Senate has not proceeded from conclusion to premise.

A particularly striking development over the weekend, albeit unrelated to Trump's trial, was the Senate confirmation of Lloyd J. Austin who becomes the nation's first black Secretary of Defence. He rose to the army's elite ranks and marched through racial impediments in a career spanning 41 years. Austin's confirmation can be coupled with the confirmation of Avril Haines as the first woman who will serve as Director of National Intelligence. President Biden is expected to secure approval for others as well, pre-eminently that of Antony Blinken as Secretary of State. Biden is looking forward to stability in the Pentagon, which bears witness to two Secretaries of Defence, confirmed by the Senate, and four others who held the post on an interim basis under Donald Trump. Austin's confirmation was complicated by his status as a recently retired general. He required a waiver of a legal prohibition of a military officer serving as Secretary of Defence within seven years of his retirement. The nitty-gritty has been cleared. Round One to Joe Biden.

A symbolic memorial

Finishing touches are being given in a hurry to a phoenix-shaped structure next to the MGR memorial on Marina beach in Chennai to commemorate former Chief Minister J Jayalalitha. Intended to be inaugurated on 24 February, her birth anniversary, it was suddenly advanced to 27 January, the day her alter ego and de facto number two in the AIADMK, VK Sasikala, will walk free from the central jail in Bengaluru after serving a four-year prison term in a disproportionate assets case. She still commands awe, goodwill and support of the majority of elected representatives and workers of the AIADMK which the present leaders, including Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy and Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam, sorely lack. Her supporters had planned a mammoth rally stretching from Bengaluru to Chennai, a distance of 350 km, in a motorcade of thousands of cars and vans. Unnerved by such a spectacle taking place, Palaniswamy advanced the inauguration of the Jayalalitha memorial to 27 January with a view to diverting at least a part of the crowd from the Sasikala rally to the Marina beach. Amidst these developments, Sasikala was admitted to hospital in Bengaluru on Wednesday owing to slight fever and breathlessness, shifted to another hospital on Thursday and yet another hospital on Friday. Her initial Covid-19 test showed negative, a repeat test showed "features suggestive of severe respiratory infection," and she was shifted to the Covid-19 block in the hospital. None of her close relatives was allowed to see her. Their plea to shift her to Manipal Hospitals was turned down.

After the death of Jayalalitha in December 2016, the men who are in power now went on bended knees to Sasikala, pleading with her to take over as Chief Minister and general secretary of the AIADMK. The general council of the AIADMK unanimously elected her as general secretary and the Legislature Party elected her leader. The Supreme Court order confirming her conviction and sentence in the wealth case put paid to her taking over as Chief Minister. Before going to Bengaluru to serve her jail term, she handpicked Palaniswamy for the CM's post. Palaniswamy now says Sasikala's readmission to AIADMK "will not happen 100 per cent" and that there was no difference of opinion within the party. At a general council meeting convened by Palaniswamy in September 2017, a resolution cancelling Sasikala's election as general secretary was passed without following the procedures enshrined in the party constitution and her name was dropped from the membership roll. Legally she continues to be the general secretary. The BJP had planned to capture power in Tamil Nadu by taking a piggy-back ride on the AIADMK for which the ruling party must remain united. It is unlikely Sasikala will be able to return to Chennai on 27 January as planned.

From defeat to hero ~ II

When the AICC met Subhas was in the peculiar situation of being the president without a Working Committee. Realising its untenability, Subhas had no choice but to resign, proving MN Roy's observation of the Congress being Gandhi's Congress as correct. Subhas unlike Nehru did not want to compromise at the cost of his principles and sensibilities



It was under strained circumstances that the election to the post of Congress president was held. Subhas secured 1580 votes against Sitaramayya's 1377 votes. In a public statement Gandhi stated that as he did not allow Sitaramayya to withdraw from the contest it was more his defeat than Sitaramayya's. He expressed his happiness at Subhas' election but made it plain that he did not agree with his views. He praised his nationalism and mentioned his sufferings. He also thought that the election had provided Subhas with an opportunity to have a homogeneous team so that he could implement his programme unhindered.

Subhas expressed his dismay at Gandhi's statement, as Gandhi was not the candidate. He added that he had all his personal respect for Gandhi but the differences were on policies. In a conciliatory tone he added that it would be tragic that he had won the confidence of others but not of India's "greatest man". This sordid episode ended with the Pant proposal which stipulated that the Congress would not only follow Gandhi's policies but choose working committee members with Gandhi's approval.

Even after all these assertions by Gandhi loyalists Subhas tried to patch up with Gandhi by placing two alternatives: (1) Gandhi could form the working committee accommodating Subhas' views and (2) to form the committee the way Gandhi wanted. He then added a significant rider that if Gandhi chose the second alternative, it would be the "parting of ways".

Gandhi did not reply directly to Subhas but advised him to form his own committee without clarifying as to whether he would approve of it or not. But Subhas knew fully well that his choice would be vetoed and therefore insisted on seeking Gandhi's advice. He elaborated his vision of attaining Poorna Swaraj within 18 months which Gandhi did not endorse.

On 29 April 1939 he heard from Gandhi who expressed his incompetence to suggest names to the Working Committee pointing out to their fundamental differences, the fact his suggestion would be understood as an imposition and thereby gave him a free hand to choose his own committee.

When the AICC met Subhas was in the peculiar situation of being the president without a Working Committee.

Realising its untenability, Subhas had no choice but to resign, proving MN Roy's obser-

vation of the Congress being Gandhi's Congress as correct. Subhas unlike Nehru did not want to compromise at the cost of his principles and sensibilities. Tagore openly supported Subhas.

Subhas formed the Forward Bloc within the Congress immediately hoping to unite all the radical elements against the right-wingers. His unity plans however was received lukewarmly by the various left groups as they were keen on preserving their distinct identities but agreed to form a Left Consolidation Committee with Subhas as chairman. The latter embarked enthusiastically on a tour to various parts of the country to garner support for his plank of "an uncompromising anti-British campaign".

The right wing that was in total control of the Congress passed two resolutions to thwart Subhas' efforts especially among the youth: one, to allow satyagraha with the prior



The writers are, respectively, Professor (retired) of Political Science, University of Delhi and Associate Professor in Political Science, Jesus and Mary College, New Delhi

permission of the party only and second, freeing provincial ministers from taking directions and orders from provincial parties. These measures were considered by Subhas and his associates as efforts in throttling intra-party democracy and in response they organized a protest on 9 July in Mumbai.

The Congress establishment considered it as a breach of party discipline and banned him from holding any elected office within the party for the next three years. Subhas on his part proclaimed his loyalty to the Congress but added that the aforesaid action against him was indicative of the increasing "Right consolidation" within the party. His two-decade old relationship with the Congress which was mostly turbulent and

unorthodox came to an end.

A defiant Subhas organised an All-India Anti Compromise Conference in Ramgarh at the same time as the Congress session in March 1940. He argued for immediate action as time was ripe, quoting examples from Lenin and Mussolini though he continued in his attempt to renew contact with Gandhi whom he met in June 1940. The ice between the two did not thaw. Gandhi in January 1940 wrote: "I had thought I had gained Subhas babu for all time as a son. I have fallen from grace". Earlier he commented on Subhas behaving like a spoiled child of the family.

A major reason for their sharp difference was their very different perceptions of contemporary Indian reality. Gandhi feared the possibility of an outbreak of violence and anarchy which he wanted to avoid as far as possible. Subhas on the contrary was convinced that India's salvation could never be achieved by the path indicated by Gandhi and wanted therefore to radicalise the Congress.

His deep interest in history and his belief in the theory of the rise and fall of civilizations led him to conclude that the West was in turmoil in the 1930s and 1940s and the time had come for India's renewal. Hence, he wanted an ultimatum to be served to the British Government in India when the Munich crisis shook the world in 1938 but Gandhi refused.

Gandhi showed considerable impatience and unnecessary anger toward a young leader, elected democratically, one whom he acknowledged as sincere, principled and one had endured immense suffering. He perhaps knew that most Congressmen followed him not out of conviction but because of convenience. Perhaps he underestimated Subhas' resolve to fight for India's independence through means other than the ones that he subscribed to.

Subhas' dramatic escape and tales of heroism of the INA which came to be known only after the Second World War electrified the nation like no other movement. An immediate fallout of it was the revolt by RIN ratings that conveyed to the British that their days in India were numbered. As Herman rightly observed "Ironically, the one Indian mass movement that he (Gandhi) did not start, did the most long-lasting damage to British rule including the Indian army". It is for this reason that Subhas is rightly recognized as the co-architect of India's freedom.

(Concluded)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Vaccine facility fire

SIR, Please refer to your yesterday's report '5 dead in SII fire; vaccine facility not hit', says CEO'. The deadly fire in an upcoming production facility at the Serum Institute of India (SII), in Pune has sent shock waves because of the key role played by the company in producing the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covishield Covid-19 vaccine. Five workers engaged in construction were killed, and there are indications that expensive equipment has been destroyed. There is understandable concern about the accident at the SII building, which is located

away from the Covishield unit, as the company, reputedly the world's biggest vaccine manufacturer, is now an institution of global importance. It is scheduled to deliver several hundred million doses of Covishield to a host of countries, including less affluent nations depending on the COVAX initiative led by WHO. Such a position of indispensability for the Pune facility in the war against the pandemic casts upon India and SII, the responsibility of ring-fencing vaccine production against all threats, including the one that normally gets

low importance in India, that is fire safety. The initial assessment indicates that Thursday's blaze may have been triggered by inflammable materials set aside during construction work, trapping and asphyxiating workers. It is welcome that the company has offered a solatium to the families of the victims, who included migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, but the bigger task is to convince the world that critical vaccine supplies are not jeopardised by lax safety protocols.

The storage and transport of vaccines, which are time and temperature-sensitive pharmaceutical products, require special care, and Covid-19 has come as a

wake-up call to governments to overcome supply bottlenecks and capacity constraints. Even the creation of new vaccine plants to meet future needs would be entirely justified. With a scramble for approved vaccines and inability to produce enough for all countries, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that bilateral deals were threatening the smooth rollout of the COVAX initiative.

At close to 3 billion doses, it is the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine that forms the bulk of over 10 billion doses of different vaccines ordered so far. Clearly, Indian production is vital to

meeting this demand. Pharmaceutical production must satisfy precision, quality and safety standards comparable to high-technology sectors such as defence and space. High standards of fire safety form the core of all manufacturing: WHO model guidance for pharmaceutical units emphasises the availability of site security, automatic fire detection systems, mechanical or manual ventilation, sprinkler systems and fire drills, among other aspects.

Too often, safety during construction and operation suffers dilution due to cost considerations, with almost no fire awareness among workers. The SII fire shows that lives and reputations depe-

nd on full adherence to good practice.

Yours, etc., Khokan Das, Kolkata, 23 January.

HITHER GRAB?

SIR, I wonder at the headline, 'Amartya betrays his political leanings' with respect to the letter of Dipak Kumar Prodhani published on 21 January. I thought there was at least a thin line of distinction between betraying one's political leanings and giving expression to one's political stance.

But I have a problem with his position on the question of land grabbing. In this letter there is no reference to anything that could be construed as even an indirect proof of grabbing of somebody else's land by Amartya Sen.

Is it really so strange that a social thinker of some stature should have critical ideas about issues like demonetisation, GST, Article 370, CAA and NRC?

Finally, I am sure that your editorial policy still sticks to the distinction, however subtle, between censorship and editorial intervention.

Yours, etc., Sourin Bhattacharya, Kolkata, 22 January.



WRONG MESSAGE

SIR, This refers to your report, 'Govt-farmers talks hit road block, protests on', published today.

Consequent upon the failure of the 11th round of talks between farmers' organisations and the Union Government, a wrong message is being sent out. For the first time in the history of independent India, there is a possibility that tractor rallies of farmers will be held parallel to the Republic Day parade. This will tarnish India's image. Republic Day proclaims our sovereign prowess and the parade is very important.

By taking out parallel tractor rallies, farmers want the bright image of India to be eclipsed. The farmers' organisations must stop this. We are interested in viewing the diverse cultures of states through Republic Day celebrations and least interested in tractor rallies.

Yours, etc., Yugal Kishore Sharma, Faridabad, January 23.

SUNIL SHARAN

At the Democratic National Convention in August, which seemed more a Michelle Obama show than anything else, he seemed to have faded. Major papers commented that the party had left Bill Clinton behind.

Now there he was at the presidential inauguration, a tall, handsome figure, wrapped in black, seated next to his wife, Hillary, who must be wondering how many of these tortuous ceremonies she will have to endure in her life. Every time she sits as a spectator, she must be wanting more participation. Much more participation. But that is not to her destiny.

Bill Clinton though is sated. He had his two terms in office. From 1992, when he first became president, Democrats have been in the White House at least 20 years (until 2025). Republicans on the other hand have controlled the presidency for only 12 years. So Democrats have led the executive branch almost twice as much as Republicans.

Let's go back to 1960. From 1960 to 1992, the Dems had the White House for 12 years; the Republicans for 20. An exact reversal.

Who brought on the Democratic revival? Who created the modern Democratic party? An unknown governor from Arkansas did it. He had little knowledge of DC politics when he became president. Yet, he was the first candidate in the last 40 years to unseat a sitting president. He focused on the economy. It was the economy. Stupid, he cried, and he won on that basis.

Before him, Democrats were always considered tax and spend liberals, unable to manage budgets. Clinton is the only president alive as well as in living memory who created a budget surplus. Even Barack Obama, who built a solid economy, or Donald Trump, who built a roaring one, failed to do that. The deficit just balloons and balloons. Dems or Republicans, they just print more money and spend, spend, spend.

The Dems were also painted by the Republicans as being weak on the national security front. Not so Clinton, he wasn't weak there either.

If you compare the last few presidents, the only one who truly

The importance of being Bill Clinton

seemed to love working the ropes was Clinton. George W Bush never seemed at ease being a politician. Barack Obama was the professor, the pontificator, who got so lost in his celebrity and his soaring rhetoric that he forgot that he was a politician first and foremost.

Funnily enough, only Trump, with his rallies, seemed to feed off crowds in as manifest a way as Clinton did. Ah, those rallies. Let future presidents remember that they must never engage in those Trump-style rallies. They evoked memories of other rallies held by another autocrat in the not too distant past.

Bill Clinton also reached across the aisle more often and more effectively than any other recent president. That's why he's sometimes called the most effective president of the modern era.

Did he make mistakes during his wife's two campaigns for the presidency? He sure did. His political nous seemed to have deserted him then. South Carolina sometimes decides the Democratic primaries as it did for Joe Biden this time. In 2008, Barack Obama was facing the South Carolinian primary when Clinton allegedly made racist remarks, which turned the primary on its head, forcing blacks to ditch Hillary for Obama. Hillary never recovered thereafter.

It's a strange thing, these racist remarks. Today, some are painting the 74 million people who voted for Trump as racists. Many of the people doing so are white liberals, like Clinton is, who feel that if they were to demonize Trump supporters, they would have exorcised themselves of any racism. But before they point a finger at others, they should note that three point back at themselves.

As VP Joe Biden had struck a pact with Obama. Biden was the experienced man; Obama a relative rookie. The pact was that before Obama took any major decision, Biden would be the last person he would consult with. It seems that Kamala Harris has



reached a similar accord with Biden. But Harris has a very thin resume. She has been a prosecutor all her life. She has little knowledge of domestic policy, much less of foreign.

What advice can she give Biden? It seems that right now she's learning on the job how to be just the VP. Obama basked in celebrityhood. Harris seems to be doing the same. Books are being published, overnight, about her. She's on the cover of fashion magazines. TV documentaries paint her in glowing light. Is this any way to

begin her tenure as VP? Why doesn't Biden ask her to calm down?

Biden has said that the nation faces as big a challenge today as it did during the Great Depression or at the onset of World War II. Biden therefore needs firm counsel. There's no person more ready to take up the challenge that America is facing today than Bill Clinton. Unfortunately he cannot be president anymore. But he certainly should be the last person Biden should call before taking any major decision.

Bill Clinton built the modern Democratic party. He moved it from a party of left-wingers to one occupying a centrist position. Today, once again, left-wingers threaten to derail the Biden presidency. Biden should know who to turn to. He may need to be reminded that he would not be president today but for the path-breaking presidency of Bill Clinton.

The writer is an expert on energy and contributes regularly to publications in India and overseas.

NEWS ITEMS

CONGESTION IN THE PORT

Shipping in the Port of Calcutta is at present in a unique position. Recent labour troubles, combined with exchange difficulties, have created a situation at the docks and jetties which, while not alarming at the moment, still gives the authorities reason to apprehend an acute congestion of goods unless consignees remove speedily the accumulating stocks. Import warehouses are already congested, and, as a number of big ships is expected during the next few weeks, the authorities urge that it is imperative, in the interests of trade generally that goods lying undelivered should be removed at once. There was a record number of ships in the Port on Monday, viz, 111. Of these 69 were at the river moorings, 35 in Kidderpore Docks, one in the Upper Union Docks, and six lying at anchor at Garden Reach.

CADETS SURPRISE AMBUSH PARTY

A party of a dozen ambushers watching for Black and Tans from Gortenstown, the training centre for the Royal Irish Constabulary north of Dublin, were surprised by Cadets at Tulka Bridge, near Dublin, this morning. One of the ambushers was seriously wounded and six were taken prisoners. The authorities in Dublin learning of the ambush rushed the Cadets off in motorcars. The ambushers were provided with bombs, but bolted after a rapid exchange of shots. The Cadets had no casualties. Five alleged Sinn Feiners appeared at the South-Western Police Court today in connection with the attempted outrage at Wandsworth. Twenty-three arrests made in Cork include the Unionist Magistrate Crawford, a Deputy Lieutenant of the County, and the owner of a brewery, in which it is stated bombs were found.

REDUCING NAVAL EXPENDITURE

A Washington message states that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has returned a favourable report on Mr. Borah's resolution in favour of negotiations between the United States, Britain and Japan, with a view to the reduction of the naval programme. Instead, however, of the original proposal for 50 per cent reduction during the next five years the proposed negotiations provide for such reductions as can be agreed upon. It was decided not to include France and Italy in the scope of the negotiations. The resolution of Mr. Walsh that the United States have an American representative on the disarmament commission of the League of Nations was defeated by 8 votes to 3.

MR. JUSTICE IYER'S ADVICE TO LAWYERS

Mr. Justice Seshegiri Iyer, who retired yesterday from the service, in reply to Mr. K. Srinivasa Iyengar, who on behalf of the vakil bar bade him farewell, said: Long before we were regarded as capable of exercising high political rights, the Government of the country considered that we were fit to discharge the duties of the judicial office. That I take to be an appreciation of Indian lawyers' loyalty to the constitution, and of Indian lawyers level-headedness. At no time in the history of this country are these two traits in our character more required than now. I ask everyone of you, who may take to politics or who may be engaged in social reform, not to forget this loyalty to the constitution and this level-headedness.

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

He did not come back

Rob is certainly the most handsome old-timer among my friends. He walks erect, has a radiant face and an easy laugh. His brother, Ron, only two years older than him, whose photos adorn his living room, could have been as impressive a figure as Rob. We will never know.

Ron would have been 87 now, but he did not reach that age. His life story came to a halt in April 1951 when he was just 21. Exactly how and why nobody knows.

Rob, the younger brother, told me the story and stopped when the story ended. But it was really a story without an end. What makes it so excruciatingly painful is that it has no end.

Ron was just twenty when, in a spurt of patriotic fervor, he joined the US Air Force. The year he wore a uniform was also the year the US entered the Korean War.

During the Second World War, the allied forces liberated Korea, which had been under brutal Japanese rule for 35 years. The Soviet Union liberated the north, while the US freed the south. The two regions had separate governments, and, as the Cold War heated, they turned hostile, each declaring the other a usurper.

In June 1950, 75,000 North Korean troops marched into the south and nearly brought it to heel. The UN declared it an invasion and the US entered the war to lead a multilateral force. Four months later, when US troops crossed the Yalu River in pursuit of northern soldiers, China entered the fray and the war turned vicious. Fortunes turned many times; Seoul changed hands four times. Through it all, the US conducted regular and massive bombing raids on the north.

A young recruit, Ron completed his training at Maxwell airbase with enthusiasm. He started participating



and the engine were Ron's only protection.

The first two runs went well. On the third run, the enemy fire was more pointed, and Bosworth's plane took a minor hit and he ordered a return to base. Three planes turned, but not Ron's. He had been hit badly; they saw him going down.

The posse returned to Suwon and reported. A file was opened showing Ron as missing. Limited efforts were made to ascertain Ron's fate, but he had gone down in enemy territory and intelligence was slow and scant. Little information came through in the second year, and the air force authorities declared him officially dead at the end of the year and started the procedure of essentially closing

his file.

A lingering issue remained in the minds of all who knew Ron. The posse members who had the last glimpse of Ron noticed his plane did not crash. It did not burn either. Ron somehow managed to land his damaged plane slowly and carefully on the ground. They saw no more. Based on the report, subsequent US pilots went over the ground more than once. They saw neither Ron's plane on the ground nor Ron. The North Koreans were unlikely to have any interest in an old plane, to glean technological insights, when everybody was turning to jet planes. Its swift removal was mysterious. If the North Korean army captured Ron, there were never any sightings or reports from retrieved prison-

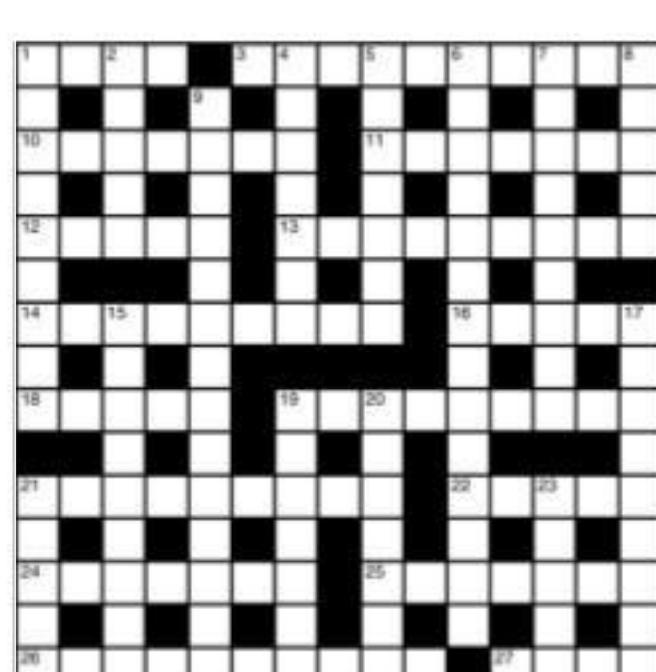
ers of war. Was he able to get away from his ruined plane and the Korean soldiers out to capture him? Did he successfully escape and find refuge somewhere?

Brenda, Ron's fiancée, took it hard. She waited five years, three years after the armistice was signed in July 1953 ending the war, then moved to another town and reportedly married a schoolteacher twenty-one years older.

Ron's family waited anxiously for years, hoping to get some good news. Then, even some bad news that could bring them closure. They still wait.

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Seabirds or seabird coming west (4)
- 3 Eastern film director walked around to guillotine (10)
- 10 Given up working in smithy (7)
- 11 Figure provided in month before November (7)
- 12 Cover verse in song for two (5)
- 13 Body going round worried student pair entering place (9)
- 14 Retribution from Gene after bashing in lead at church (9)
- 16 Limitlessly rich ore that filled ancient vessels (5)
- 18 Old character is prickly sort (5)
- 19 One has aspirations before the contract bid (9)
- 21 Outstanding concert in Argentina's centre (9)
- 22 Bird embracing hawk-headed god's attribute (5)
- 24 God wants Noah initially into his Ark at sea (7)
- 25 Stops home being covered in sticky stuff (5,2)
- 26 Teacher in rush changed tune? (10)
- 27 Victorious time without end in sacred text (4)

DOWN

- 1 Statement FIFA put out: US lawyer against it (9)
- 2 Revolutionary drink sweetheart uncovered (5)
- 4 Poet remains active when book released (7)
- 5 Preacher throws stone into a bar (7)
- 6 Bright bunch working for TV hearing news as it breaks (14)
- 7 Dolorous one in Scots area - he had to go under (9)
- 8 Man from drive-in restaurant turned up (5)
- 9 Celestial phenomenon stars follow and not sailors (8,6)
- 15 Go on, smile - that's rude new word (9)
- 17 Hope land has game girl raised in America (9)
- 19 Rapper revised English in draft (7)
- 20 Muse quiet in tree swaying at country club? (7)
- 21 Metal rod for hand-to-hand combat? (5)
- 23 Passage your compiler will read aloud (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

NO 28806

The speeches delivered by Sir Surendranath Banerjea and Mr. Provas Chandra Mitter at garden party given by the Council of the National Liberal League were marked by a buoyancy and vigour that augur well for the success of the new Ministers in the functions they have undertaken. It might be added that the address of Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, as Minister of Agriculture, to the District Board Conference the other day gave equal promise of progressive and fruitful work. "To us," said Sir Surendranath Banerjea, "have been entrusted what are known as the nation-building departments of the State - education, sanitation, local self-government, and industries"; and, now that the time has come to exchange the role of critics for that of constructive statesmen, Sir Surendranath and his colleagues have shown that they mean to take up their tasks courageously and with confidence. Sir Surendranath laid emphasis on the fact that the Ministers are not members of the bureaucracy. There would be nothing to be ashamed of if they were, for the bureaucracy, despite the unceasing efforts that have been made to give it a bad name, has done and is still doing the best work ever accomplished for India. His only point was the line of distinction. Let us hope accordingly that they will not hide their light under a bushel as the silent bureaucracy has been more or less obliged to do.

NEWS ITEMS

CONGESTION IN THE PORT

Shipping in the Port of Calcutta is at present in a unique position. Recent labour troubles, combined with exchange difficulties, have created a situation at the docks and jetties which, while not alarming at the moment, still gives the authorities reason to apprehend an acute congestion of goods unless consignees remove speedily the accumulating stocks. Import warehouses are already congested, and, as a number of big ships is expected during the next few weeks, the authorities urge that it is imperative, in the interests of trade generally that goods lying undelivered should be removed at once. There was a record number of ships in the Port on Monday, viz, 111. Of these 69 were at the river moorings, 35 in Kidderpore Docks, one in the Upper Union Docks, and six lying at anchor at Garden Reach.

CADETS SURPRISE AMBUSH PARTY

A party of a dozen ambushers watching for Black and Tans from Gortenstown, the training centre for the Royal Irish Constabulary north of Dublin, were surprised by Cadets at Tulka Bridge, near Dublin, this morning. One of the ambushers was seriously wounded and six were taken prisoners. The authorities in Dublin learning of the ambush rushed the Cadets off in motorcars. The ambushers were provided with bombs, but bolted after a rapid exchange of shots. The Cadets had no casualties. Five alleged Sinn Feiners appeared at the South-Western Police Court today in connection with the attempted outrage at Wandsworth. Twenty-three arrests made in Cork include the Unionist Magistrate Crawford, a Deputy Lieutenant of the County, and the owner of a brewery, in which it is stated bombs were found.

REDUCING NAVAL EXPENDITURE

A Washington message states that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has returned a favourable report on Mr. Borah's resolution in favour of negotiations between the United States, Britain and Japan, with a view to the reduction of the naval programme. Instead, however, of the original proposal for 50 per cent reduction during the next five years the proposed negotiations provide for such reductions as can be agreed upon. It was decided not to include France and Italy in the scope of the negotiations. The resolution of Mr. Walsh that the United States have an American representative on the disarmament commission of the League of Nations was defeated by 8 votes to 3.

MR. JUSTICE IYER'S ADVICE TO LAWYERS

Mr. Justice Seshegiri Iyer, who retired yesterday from the service, in reply to Mr. K. Srinivasa Iyengar, who on behalf of the vakil bar bade him farewell, said: Long before we were regarded as capable of exercising high political rights, the Government of the country considered that we were fit to discharge the duties of the judicial office. That I take to be an appreciation of Indian lawyers' loyalty to the constitution, and of Indian lawyers level-headedness. At no time in the history of this country are these two traits in our character more required than now. I ask everyone of you, who may take to politics or who may be engaged in social reform, not to forget this loyalty to the constitution and this level-headedness.



Indian industry feels that India and USA would play a strong role in re-shaping the global economic agenda together

UDAY KOTAK

PRESIDENT, THE CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN INDUSTRY

THUMBNAILS

CCI nod to deal: The Competition Commission of India said it has approved the acquisition of 7.8 per cent minority stake in Aditya Birla Fashion by Flipkart Investments Private Ltd (FPL). Aditya Birla Fashion had in October last year approved plans to raise Rs 1,500 crore by issuing a 7.8 per cent stake on a preferential basis to Walmart-owned Flipkart Group. "Commission approves acquisition of a 7.8 per cent minority stake in Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd by Flipkart Investments Private Ltd," the regulator said. PTI

Star MF Plus: Stock exchange BSE has announced the launch of Star MF Plus, a premium platform with key features for distributors and their clients. Star MF Plus will offer complete front office, order management, analytics, back office and business support solutions, the exchange said in a statement. The new platform would be a complete solution for distributors, enables client onboarding as well as e-KYC and provides customer portfolio management. PTI

Nazara Tech IPO: Gaming firm Nazara Technologies has filed preliminary papers with Sebi to float an initial public offering. The company, backed by ace investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, is popularly known for its games on World Cricket Championship, Chhota Bheem and Motu Patlu series. Nazara's public issue will see a sale of 49,65,476 equity shares by the promoters and existing shareholders, according to draft red herring prospectus. PTI

Punjab & Sind Bank: Punjab & Sind Bank said the government has raised its authorised capital to Rs 10,000 crore. "Government of India vide Gazette Notification No.F.No.1/8/2019-BOA-I dated 06.01.2021 has increased the authorised share capital of the bank from Rs 3,000 crore to Rs 10,000 crore," the bank said. PTI

States fiscal deficit likely to rise to historic high

Combined fiscal deficit of states will hit a peak of 4.7 per cent of their GSDP this fiscal, says Crisil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 JANUARY

The combined fiscal deficit of the states will hit a peak of Rs 8.7 lakh crore or 4.7 per cent of their GSDP this fiscal on the back of steep fall in tax collections due to disruptions inflicted by the pandemic, according to a report.

Revenue of the states have so badly fallen that as much as 70 per cent of the fiscal deficit is contributed by revenue deficit, which normally used to be only around 15 per cent, a Crisil study has said.

Economic activity slumped from late March last when the country was brought under a lockdown, and subsequently improved as the restrictions were eased.

While the first quarter saw the economy tanking by a historic 23.9 per cent, by the second quarter the contraction narrowed to 7.5 per cent and now analysts are expecting Q3 and Q4 to print in the green.

FOUR-FOLD JUMP IN REVENUE DEFICIT



► The pandemic has hit tax collections of the states and resulted in a near four-fold spike in their revenue deficit this fiscal over FY20, according to a report by Crisil.

► This will not only expand states' aggregate gross fiscal deficit to an all-time high of Rs 8.7 lakh crore, or 4.7 per cent of their gross state domestic product or GSDP

The pandemic has hit tax collections of the states and resulted in a near four-fold spike in their revenue deficits this fiscal over FY20, the report said.

This will not only expand states' aggregate gross fiscal deficit to an all-time high of Rs 8.7 lakh crore, or 4.7 per cent of their gross state domestic product or GSDP

but also skewed its composition towards revenue deficit, it said.

► Revenue of the states have so badly fallen that as

Though tax collection may slowly recover with improving economic outlook, higher interest burden, because of the high debt funding of this year's gross fiscal deficit, coupled with sticky revenue expenditure, may keep revenue deficit high for the states and the deficit composition skewed over the next two-three years, the report said, adding that this will, in turn, increase their credit risk.

The analysis is based on the data from 18 large states, which account for over 90 per cent of aggregate gross state domestic product, the agency said.

According to Manish Gupta, a senior director at the agency, composition of gross fiscal deficit of the states apart from its level, is one of the critical indicators of credit quality. The higher contribution of capex in a state's deficit composition is viewed positively as it supports the capital formation and improves its tax potential.

This fiscal, revenue deficit would contribute around 70

per cent of fiscal deficit, sharply higher than the average 15 per cent seen over the last five fiscals, he said, adding this is because of a 15 per cent on-year decline in revenue this fiscal.

Revenue expenditure may also remain sticky as these are either committed (related to salaries, pension and interest cost), making it difficult to cut or have been necessitated by the pandemic (such as grants-in-aid, medical and labour welfare-related expenses), the report noted.

High revenue deficit will also compel states to moderate their capex so that they remain within fiscal borrowing limits, thus aggravating gross fiscal deficit. To fill the gap, states will be forced to borrow more this year, further increasing their indebtedness.

Revenue collections are expected to reach close to the pre-pandemic level next fiscal, factoring in unlocking that began in July 2020 and a real GDP growth forecast of 10 per cent in FY22.

Insurers prepared to withstand economic downturn: Moody's

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 JANUARY

enabled insurers to offer protection against the virus.

"We expect health premiums to continue growing strongly into 2021, when we anticipate that India's GDP growth will rebound to 10.8 per cent, leading to a gradual normalisation of economic activity," the agency said.

The growth prospects for general insurance are particularly positive, with the country's general insurance penetration rate standing at just 0.9 per cent. This is less than half the rate for China (2 per cent), which in turn lags behind developed markets such as the US (8.5 per cent), the report said.

According to Moody's, insurers in the country have also responded to the crisis by rapidly developing appropriate products and improving their digital offerings.

"This has led to an increase in sales of health and protection policies, which we expect will drive further growth in the future," it noted. The report said some Indian insurers' solvency remains inadequate due to weak profitability, resulting from the intense competition in the market.

Govt to exit its holding in VSNL, sell 26.12% stake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

The government will sell its entire 26.12 per cent stake in Tata Communications Ltd (TCL), erstwhile VSNL, through offer for sale and strategic sale route in the current fiscal.

In a notice, the department of investment and public asset management (Dipam) said a part of the shareholding will be offered through OFS and the balance, including any leftover portion in the OFS, will be offered to strategic partner Panatone Finvest.

The transaction is to be completed by 20 March 2021, the Dipam said.

At the current market price, 26.12 per cent stake in the firm would fetch the

exchequer around Rs 8,400 crore.

Public sector VSNL was privatised in the year 2002 by disinvesting 25 per cent shareholding along with transfer of management control to Panatone Finvest Ltd, the strategic partner.

In a notice, the department of investment and public asset management (Dipam) said a part of the shareholding will be offered through OFS and the balance, including any leftover portion in the OFS, will be offered to strategic partner Panatone Finvest.

The government has mopped up Rs 15,220 crore from disinvestment proceeds so far in the current financial year.

The budgeted disinvestment mop-up for current fiscal is Rs 2.10 lakh crore. Of this Rs 2.10 lakh crore is to come from minority stake sale in CPSEs and Rs 90,000 crore from stake sales in state-run financial institutions.

Offered shares" at the OFS discovered price, it said.

As per the shareholding pattern of Tata Communications, the promoters hold 74.99 per cent in the company. Of this, the Government of India holds 26.12 per cent stake, while Panatone Finvest has 34.80 per cent and Tata Sons 14.07 per cent. The remaining 25.01 per cent is with the public.

The government has mopped up Rs 15,220 crore from disinvestment proceeds so far in the current financial year.

The budgeted disinvestment mop-up for current fiscal is Rs 2.10 lakh crore. Of this Rs 2.10 lakh crore is to come from minority stake sale in CPSEs and Rs 90,000 crore from stake sales in state-run financial institutions.

Aluminium industry seeks govt support

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

The Indian aluminium industry is going through a challenging phase and is under immense threat by rising imports, declining domestic market share, increasing production and logistics costs...the industry seeks immediate government support to tide over this challenging phase and looks forward to supportive measures in the forthcoming Union Budget 2021-22.



The aluminium industry has urged the government to increase the basic custom duty on primary aluminium and aluminium scrap to 10 per cent, eliminate the cess on coal among others as the sector is going through a challenging phase and is under immense threat by rising imports.

In a representation to the government ahead of the Union Budget for financial year 2021-22, the Aluminium Association of India said: "The Indian aluminium industry seeks immediate government support to tide over this challenging phase and looks forward to supportive measures in the forthcoming Union Budget 2021-22."

In this regard, it said the Budget suggestions for aluminium industry are "increase in basic custom duty on alu-

minum scrap at par with primary metal to proposed 10 per cent, as in line with other non-ferrous metals like copper, zinc, lead, nickel, tin etc., elimination of cess on coal (GST compensation cess of Rs 400/MT) to support highly power intensive industries like aluminium," among others.

The industry has also sought reduction in basic custom duty and correction of

inverted duty structure on critical raw materials for aluminium industry value chain like aluminium fluoride and coal tar pitch.

The Indian aluminium industry is going through a challenging phase and is under immense threat by rising imports, declining domestic market share, increasing production and logistics costs," it said.

These challenges have been

further compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic which has adversely impacted the domestic demand for aluminium.

At the same time, the industry is not able to compete effectively in the global markets as the burden of Central and state taxes and levies amounting to 15 per cent of aluminium production cost puts the domestic industry in a significant disadvantage compared to its global peers.

In this context, the Indian aluminium industry under representation from Aluminium Association of India urges the Union Government for support," it said.

India is one of the fastest growing economies and fastest emerging markets in the world and aluminium industry plays a vital role in the nation's economy and the country's vision for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

5G smartphone shipment to rise more than nine times

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

5G smartphone shipment is expected to rise more than nine times to reach 38 million units in 2021, driven by a strong portfolio of products from brands like OnePlus and Apple, according to research firm Counterpoint.

Counterpoint noted that India's smartphone market was one of the fastest to recover after Covid-19-induced restrictions were lifted all over the world in the third quarter of 2020. The market recorded its best quarter ever in the September 2020 quarter in terms of shipments, riding on the pent-up demand and the emergence of newer use cases.

"Q1 2020 witnessed the first 5G smartphone launch in India. However, high prices

and non-availability of 5G networks ensured slow pickup in 5G smartphone sales. Things started changing after the launch of the mid-priced OnePlus Nord in August 2020," the report said.

It added that India's 5G shipments stood at 1.7 million units at the end of September 2020 quarter and this is projected to cross 4 million units by the end of 2020.

These shipments were driven by two brands - OnePlus, the only brand with a 100 per cent 5G portfolio, and Apple, which launched the iPhone 12 series with 5G connectivity. Going forward, 5G smartphone shipments are expected to increase by more than nine times to reach 38 million units in 2021," Counterpoint said.

The research firm said the key to higher adoption of 5G

Forex intervention by RBI to touch \$93 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 JANUARY

ASSESSMENT BY BOA SECURITIES

► So far this fiscal, the central bank's forex intervention has touched \$73.7 billion, according to the assessment by Bank of America Securities India economists Indranil Sen Gupta and Aastha Guadani.

► The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to spend at least \$20 billion more to support the rupee



and increase the forex kitty through the remainder of the financial year, taking its overall forex intervention to \$93 billion.

They also feel the RBI to intervene with \$45 billion in 2021-22 if the current account deficit (CAD) remains at 0.5 per cent of GDP, which is dependent on the crude oil averaging at \$50 a barrel," the report said.

It, however, added that since high forex intervention is limiting OMOs, the RBI is expected to raise banks' HTM limits by 2 per cent of their books to fund the fiscal deficit.

The report further said they are more confident now that the RBI will continue to buy forex when the dollar is weakening and let the rupee depreciate when it strengthens.

On Saturday, Das had said: "To mitigate global spillovers, EMs (emerging markets) like India have no recourse but to build their own forex reserve buffers, even though at the cost of being included in the currency manipulators list."

This aspect needs greater understanding on both sides so that EMs can actively use policy tools to overcome capital flow related challenges, he had said.

Das further said a weak external sector can pose a threat to domestic financial stability in the face of swift changes in the global economic environment as was the case during the 2008 crisis or the taper tantrum period in 2013. According to these economists, this public statement marks a signal departure from the over 15 years of RBI stance of intervening in the forex market only to contain rupee volatility.

"Das has achieved a silent rupee revolution by returning the RBI to adequacy of forex reserves after eight years. This will ensure the rupee stability putting large depreciations in global crises years of 2011, 2013 and 2018 behind us," the economists added.

They also see the rupee at 70.5 to a dollar by December, assuming dollar trading at 1.25 to a euro.

Sugar production increases by 31%: Isma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

tions last year. Releasing the latest production update, Isma said the country's sugar output is higher by 33.76 lakh tons so far this year as compared to last year's production for the corresponding period.

As many as 487 sugar mills were in operation as against 440 in the said period, it said.

Sugar production in Uttar Pradesh, the country's leading sugar producing state, remained slightly lower at 42.99 lakh tons till 15 January of this marketing year, as against 43.78 lakh tons in the year-ago period because of reportedly lower cane yield and lower sugar recoveries in the state.

The output in Maharashtra, the country's second-

largest sugar-producing state, rose to 51.55 lakh tons from 25.51 lakh tons in the said period.

► The production in Karnataka, the country's third-largest sugar-producing state, increased to 29.80 lakh tons from 21.90 lakh tons in the year-ago period.

in Karnataka, the country's third-largest sugar-producing state, increased to 29.80 lakh tons from 21.90 lakh tons in the year-ago period. Production reached 4.40 lakh tons in Gujarat, 1.15 lakh tons in Tamil Nadu, while remaining states of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Odisha have collectively produced 12.81 lakh tons of sugar till 15 January of this year, Isma said in a statement.

On ethanol, Isma said oil marketing companies (OMCs) have allocated about 309.81 crore litres for 2020-21 marketing year, including about 39.36 crore litres from damaged food grains and surplus rice. This would enable ethanol-petrol blending of 7.8 per cent, depending on the total fuel demand.

However, some states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Uttarakhand have already achieved blending percentage of 9-10 per cent on 11 January. The industry body said that the allocated quantity of ethanol indicates about 20 lakh tons of estimated net lower sugar production during 2020-21 due to diversion of B-heavy molasses and sugarcane juice to ethanol.

As per market reports, about 3 lakh tons of sugar was exported during October-December 2020 as per the maximum admissible export quota (MAEQ) allotted to sugar mills during the 2019-20 marketing year, which was extended up to December 2



In (these) four years the world has changed, the region has changed and Pakistan has changed and you have to engage with this new Pakistan

PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER SHAH MAHMOOD QUERESH
SAYING HIS COUNTRY WAS READY TO WORK WITH THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, MONDAY 25 JANUARY 2021

09

11 trapped miners rescued from gold mine in east China

Authorities have been racing to dig out 22 miners trapped underground since explosion on 10 Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING, 24 JANUARY

Eleven miners, trapped underground for two weeks following a blast in a gold mine in east China's Shandong Province, have been rescued, the state media reported on Sunday.

Authorities have been racing to dig out 22 miners trapped underground in the partially built gold mine in the city of Qixia in Shandong Province, since the explosion blocked their exit on 10 January. The rescuers set free two workers on Sunday, bringing the number of rescued miners to 11, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The first miner was rescued from the mine in the morn-



ing. The worker, said to be in "extremely weak condition", was rushed to the hospital for treatment, the report said.

Currently, 633 people and 407 equipment are at the site for rescue operations.

Before Sunday, rescuers had established contact with only 10 of the miners, who were

in good physical and psychological condition. Another is believed to have been dead, the report said, adding the deceased worker had been in a coma. Efforts have been underway to reach the workers since the blast occurred about 240 meters from the mine's entrance, but Chinese

officials said on Thursday it could take 15 days to drill through 70 tons of debris trapping many of the miners. Food, medical supplies, blankets, and batches of nutrient solution have been passed down a shaft to the 10 workers who have been located.

According to state media, rescue teams are hoping to pull the miners out through a 711-millimeter diameter passage. By noon on Thursday, rescuers had drilled 18 meters into the mineshaft but heavy debris could slow efforts.

Concern has been growing for the uncontacted miners. Some of the workers in the chamber are trying to help rescuers locate their missing colleagues by using laser pointers and loudspeakers, but

they have received no response. Rescuers have also drilled smaller channels into other sections of the mine and are lowering nutrient solutions and other means to detect breathing or movement, but no signs of life have been encountered.

Rescue workers are reported to have first heard knocking sounds from those trapped on January 17, followed by pulling on iron ropes, CNN reported, adding that on Monday miners were able to get a note to rescuers.

A Xinhua report quoted the note as saying: "We are heavily exhausted and in urgent need of stomach medicine, painkillers, medical tape, external anti-inflammatory drugs, and three people have high blood pressure."

Fourth Zimbabwean Cabinet member dies of Covid in surge

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARARE, 24 JANUARY

Four Zimbabwean Cabinet ministers have died of Covid-19, three within the past two weeks, highlighting a resurgence of the disease that is sweeping through this southern African country.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa said the coronavirus is reaping a grim harvest in the country.

The pandemic has been indiscriminate. There are no spectators, adjudicators, no holier than thou. No supermen or superwomen. We are all exposed, Mnangagwa said on a nationally televised address. Mnangagwa presided at the burial of one Cabinet

NCP's Prachanda-led faction expels PM Oli from party

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 24 JANUARY

The ruling Nepal Communist Party's splinter faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda on Sunday expelled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli from the party's general membership.

The opposition accuses the government of using Covid-19 as a weapon by detaining its members of parliament, officials and other critics in over-crowded jails where the disease is easily transmitted.

Critics also accuse the government of neglecting the public hospitals, where Covid patients cannot get oxygen needed to survive. Zimbabwe initially recorded low numbers of Covid but has recently experienced a spike.

party chair. Madhav Nepal was named as the party's second chairman. Prachanda is the first chairman of the party.

The Prachanda-led faction on 15 January sought clarification from Oli alleging that he was carrying out activities that go against the party's policies. The faction decided to strip Oli off even from the ordinary membership of the party after he chose not to furnish any clarification, party sources said.

Oli had been accused of violating party statute by the splinter group.

The latest political development came two days after the NCP's splinter faction led a massive anti-government rally, saying the "unconstitutional" dissolution of the Parliament by Prime Minister

people. Madhav Nepal, who last month replaced Oli as the chairman of the party by Prachanda-led faction, said that the Constitution has not given rights to the prime minister to dissolve Parliament.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on 20 December after Oli, known for his pro-China leanings, in a surprise move dissolved Parliament, amidst a tussle for power with Prachanda.

His move to dissolve the 275-member House, sparked protests from a large section of the NCP led by Prachanda, also a co-chair of the ruling party. Oli, who is the chairperson of a faction of the NCP, has said he was forced to dissolve the House after knowing that the Prachanda-led faction was planning to file

Prachanda last week said that by dissolving the House, Oli has given a blow to the Constitution as well as the democratic republic system which has been established in the country through seven decades of struggle by the

Oli has posed serious threats to the country's hard-earned federal democratic republic system.

Prachanda last week said

that by dissolving the House, Oli has given a blow to the Constitution as well as the democratic republic system which has been established in the country through seven decades of struggle by the

arrested, police said.

With the country experiencing a raging coronavirus outbreak, the Israeli government last week extended the country's third nationwide lockdown until the end of January.

Israel's Health Ministry has recorded over 595,000 cases of the virus since the start of the pandemic and 4,361 deaths. New cases of the disease continue to climb, even as the country has launched a massive vaccination campaign.

Sunday's clashes were the latest incident of heightened tensions over enforcement of lockdown rules in ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods in Israel.

On Friday, ultra-Orthodox Israelis attacked a police vehicle in the city of Bnei Brak, outside Tel Aviv. A crowd pelted the police car with stones and punctured its tires.

Israeli police, ultra-Orthodox protesters clash over schools

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, 24 JANUARY

Ultra-Orthodox demonstrators clashed with Israeli police in two major cities on Sunday, as authorities faced new difficulties in enforcing coronavirus restrictions in the country's religious communities.

The clashes occurred in Jerusalem and Ashdod as police attempted to close religious schools that had opened in violation of lockdown orders.

The clashes occurred in Jerusalem and Ashdod as police attempted to close religious schools that had opened in violation of lockdown orders

making up just over 10% of the population.

In Jerusalem, police fired tear gas and putrid-smelling water to disperse a crowd of hundreds of ultra-Orthodox residents outside a reopened school.

Demonstrators cried get out of here, Nazis at officers who were filmed arresting participants. In the coastal city of Ashdod, police scuffled with dozens of protesters outside an ultra-Orthodox school.

Five police officers were wounded in the disputes, and at least four people were

Pak approves emergency use of Sputnik V Covid vaccine

ISLAMABAD, 24 JANUARY

Pakistan has authorised the emergency use of Russia's Sputnik V, the third anti-Covid-19 vaccine approved by the country against the deadly coronavirus, authorities said on Sunday.

The government has given a go-ahead to a local pharmaceutical company for the import and distribution of the Russian-developed Sputnik V, the Dawn newspaper quoted an official as saying.

Sputnik V is the third vaccine to be approved for the emergency use in the country, the report said.

In a meeting conducted by the registration board of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), another vaccine has also been given EUA (emergency use authorisation) which was developed with the backing of Russian Development Investment Fund, the official said. A local pharmaceutical AGP, he said, had been authorised as the sole importer and distributor of the Russian vaccine, according to the paper.

Pakistan reported 48 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the number of fatalities due to the disease to 11,295, while 2,070 patients were in a critical condition, according to the ministry of National Health Services.

The ministry further reported that 486,489 people have recovered, meaning that the number of active patients was 34,628.

South African Hindu priests 'overcharging' for funerals of Covid victims

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JOHANNESBURG, 24 JANUARY

Cashing in on the fearful atmosphere prevailing in South Africa amidst a second wave and a new variant of the Covid-19 virus, some Hindu priests in the country are allegedly charging exorbitant rates for conducting funerals of coronavirus victims.

The priests are under fire for charging between 1,200 rand (\$79) and 2,000 rand (\$131) to conduct a funeral, according to Pradeep Ramall, a member of the Hindu Dharma Association of South Africa and Manager of the Clare Estate Crematorium in Durban.

This is not right. As per our scriptures, this is our seva (service) to the community. If a family wants to give a priest a donation, then that is acceptable but priests should not be charging people, he told the Weekly Post newspaper as he slammed the priests who are overcharging.

Ramall said the organisation has received a number of complaints from people whose relatives succumbed to the deadly contagion.

In recent weeks, in view of a second wave and a new variant of the Covid-19 virus, the crematorium has had to introduce double shifts amid daily deaths in the city which is home to more than a third

of South Africa's Indian-origin population of about 1.4 million.

I was in my vehicle. The priest had conducted a Covid-19 victim's funeral. While he was in the parking lot, he removed 100 rand (\$6.6) notes from his pocket and counted it before sanitising each note and putting the money back into his pocket, Ramall said recounting an incident that he had personally witnessed.

He called on the community to avoid being exploited under the current trying circumstances which was bringing grief to so many families and asked them to conduct the cremation themselves.

We have pre-recorded videos that they can use. If they insist on having a priest, then the priest can conduct the funeral through Zoom or through a WhatsApp video call. We need to embrace technology, Ramall said.

South African Hindu Sabha President Ashwin Trikamjee said they had a list

of accredited priests on the Sabha's Facebook page that families could contact to conduct the last rites at no charge.

Citing the massive increase in the number of Covid-19-related deaths, Trikamjee said there were funerals being done at odd hours by priests who use their own transport and personal protective equipment (PPE) which they might expect reimbursement for, although families would not be obliged to pay.

Earlier, Lucy Sigaban, a Hindu priestess in the sprawling Indian suburb of Lenasia near Johannesburg, had urged the government to assist priests who are conducting

funerals of Covid-19 victims free of charge by providing them with PPE at no cost, but this has not happened yet.

For the last two months, Covid-19 infections and deaths have been rising exponentially in South Africa.

On Thursday alone, there were 647 deaths and over 11,000 more infections reported, bringing the total deaths to 39,501 and infections to 1.38 million since the first case was reported in March last year.

The government is awaiting a shipment of over 15 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines from India within the next month to prioritise health care workers and other essential services staff.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Dock platform (5)
- Simple tune (3)
- Scoff (4)
- Curative (8)
- Reduction in value over time (12)
- Second Greek letter (4)
- Evaluate (4)
- Non-alcoholic drink (7,5)
- Confine (8)
- Curve (4)
- Label (3)
- Foe (5)

DOWN

- Persuade by flattery (7)
- Flying vehicle (9)
- Involuntary (6)
- Axis (6)
- Fishing pole (3)
- Ring of light (4)
- Record player part (9)
- Despotism (7)
- Bandage (6)
- Notion (4)
- Tasteless articles (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

13 Immortalise, 17 Gemstone, 21 Opinion, 23 Tie, 24 Cheers, 25 Despotism, 26 Tasteful, 27 Beret, 28 Conserve, 29 Medium, 30 Egress, 31 Edon, 32 Edict, 33 Tie, 34 Emissary, 35 Rash, 36 Tasteful, 37 Beret, 38 Conserve, 39 Medium, 40 Egress, 41 Edon, 42 Edict, 43 Tie, 44 Emissary, 45 Rash, 46 Tasteful, 47 Beret, 48 Conserve, 49 Medium, 50 Egress, 51 Edon, 52 Edict, 53 Tie, 54 Emissary, 55 Rash, 56 Tasteful, 57 Beret, 58 Conserve, 59 Medium, 60 Egress, 61 Edon, 62 Edict, 63 Tie, 64 Emissary, 65 Rash, 66 Tasteful, 67 Beret, 68 Conserve, 69 Medium, 70 Egress, 71 Edon, 72 Edict, 73 Tie, 74 Emissary, 75 Rash, 76 Tasteful, 77 Beret, 78 Conserve, 79 Medium, 80 Egress, 81 Edon, 82 Edict, 83 Tie, 84 Emissary, 85 Rash, 86 Tasteful, 87 Beret, 88 Conserve, 89 Medium, 90 Egress, 91 Edon, 92 Edict, 93 Tie, 94 Emissary, 95 Rash, 96 Tasteful, 97 Beret, 98 Conserve, 99 Medium, 100 Egress, 101 Edon, 102 Edict, 103 Tie, 104 Emissary, 105 Rash, 106 Tasteful, 107 Beret, 108 Conserve, 109 Medium, 110 Egress, 111 Edon, 112 Edict, 113 Tie, 114 Emissary, 115 Rash, 116 Tasteful, 117 Beret, 118 Conserve, 119 Medium, 120 Egress, 121 Edon, 122 Edict, 123 Tie, 124 Emissary, 125 Rash, 126 Tasteful, 127 Beret, 128 Conserve, 129 Medium, 130 Egress, 131 Edon, 132 Edict, 133 Tie, 134 Emissary, 135 Rash, 136 Tasteful, 137 Beret, 138 Conserve, 139 Medium, 140 Egress, 141 Edon, 142 Edict, 143 Tie, 144 Emissary, 145 Rash, 146 Tasteful, 147 Beret, 148 Conserve, 149 Medium, 150 Egress, 151 Edon, 152 Edict, 153 Tie, 154 Emissary, 155 Rash, 156 Tasteful, 157 Beret, 158 Conserve, 159 Medium, 160 Egress, 161 Edon, 162 Edict, 163 Tie, 164 Emissary, 165 Rash, 166 Tasteful, 167 Beret, 168 Conserve, 169 Medium, 170 Egress, 171 Edon, 172 Edict, 173 Tie, 174 Emissary, 175 Rash, 176 Tasteful, 177 Beret, 178 Conserve, 179 Medium, 180 Egress, 181 Edon, 182 Edict, 183 Tie, 184 Emissary, 185 Rash, 186 Tasteful, 187 Beret, 188 Conserve, 189 Medium, 190 Egress, 191 Edon, 192 Edict, 193 Tie, 194 Emissary, 195 Rash, 196 Tasteful, 197 Beret, 198 Conserve, 199 Medium, 200 Egress, 201 Edon, 202 Edict, 203 Tie, 204 Emissary, 205 Rash, 206 Tasteful, 207 Beret, 208 Conserve, 209 Medium, 210 Egress, 211 Edon, 212 Edict, 213 Tie, 214 Emissary, 215 Rash, 216 Tasteful, 217 Beret, 218 Conserve, 219 Medium, 220 Egress, 221 Edon, 222 Edict, 223 Tie, 224 Emissary, 225 Rash, 226 Tasteful, 227 Beret, 228 Conserve, 229 Medium, 230 Egress, 231 Edon, 232 Edict, 233 Tie, 234 Emissary, 235 Rash, 236 Tasteful, 237 Beret, 238 Conserve, 239 Medium, 240 Egress, 241 Edon, 242 Edict, 243 Tie, 244 Emissary, 245 Rash, 246 Tasteful, 247 Beret, 248 Conserve, 249 Medium, 250 Egress, 251 Edon, 252 Edict, 253 Tie, 254 Emissary, 255 Rash, 256 Tasteful, 257 Beret, 258 Conserve, 259 Medium, 260 Egress, 261 Edon, 262 Edict, 263 Tie, 264 Emissary, 265 Rash, 266 Tasteful, 267 Beret, 268 Conserve, 269 Medium, 270



If it's early, it's because Scott Morrison doesn't have the confidence in his own government to be able to last a three-year term

AUSTRALIA'S OPPosition LABOR PARTY ANTHONY ALBANESE

World

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	30	24 H
HONG KONG	21	17 CL
TOKYO	13	04 CL
LONDON	05	0 CL
DUBAI	24	15 S
SAN FRANCISCO	11	06 CL
NEW YORK	05	01 CL
MOSCOW	03	01 CL

S=sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



Hot lava runs down from Mount Merapi as it's activity continues in Kalu-rang, Indonesia. AP

NZ reports 1st community case in months: New Zealand has reported its first case of community transmission in more than two months, although there was no immediate evidence that the coronavirus was spreading. The case was a 56-year-old woman who recently returned from Europe. AP

Estonia to get first female PM: Estonia's two biggest political parties say they have clinched a deal to form a new government to be led by a female prime minister for the first time in the Baltic country's history. AP

Pirates attack Turkish ship off W. Africa: Armed pirates attacked a Turkish cargo ship off the West African coast, kidnapping 15 sailors and killing one of them as Turkey sought to recover the captured crew. The Liberian-flagged M/V Mozart was sailing from Lagos, Nigeria, to Cape Town, S. Africa. AP

Russia police violence under scanner after 3,300 protesters held: Monitor



More than 3,300 protesters were arrested at demonstrations in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, a monitor reported on Sunday (Jan 24), as prosecutors probed possible violence "on the part of law enforcement".

Police clashed with demonstrators in Moscow as tens of thousands took to the streets across the country on Saturday following Navalny's call to protest against President Vladimir Putin's rule.

Mr Putin's most charismatic critic was detained at a Moscow airport on arrival a week ago from Germany, where he had been recovering from a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent.

OVD Info, which monitors opposition rallies, said on Sunday that police seized at least 3,324 demonstrators across dozens of cities, with 1,320 people detained in Moscow and 490 in the second city Saint Petersburg.

It was the largest number of detentions at opposition rallies in the history of modern Russia.

A number of protesters were injured at the rallies in the capital and Saint Petersburg.

Prosecutors in St Petersburg said in a statement late Saturday that they were probing violations including "on the part of law enforcement" and the use of force against an unidentified woman.

The statement was released after local media published a video showing a middle-aged woman falling to the ground after being kicked by riot police.

AGENCIES

Why Biden's immigration plan may be risky

New president's immigration overhaul last week will provide path to U.S. citizenship for 11 million people who are in the United States illegally

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 24 JANUARY

President Joe Biden is confronting the political risk that comes with grand ambition. As one of his first acts, Biden offered a sweeping immigration overhaul last week that would provide a path to U.S. citizenship for the estimated 11 million people who are in the United States illegally.

It would also codify provisions wiping out some of President Donald Trump's signature hard-line policies, including trying to end existing, protected legal status for many immigrants brought to the U.S. as children and crackdowns on asylum rules.

It's precisely the type of measure that many Latino activists have longed for, particularly after the tough approach of the Trump era.

But it must compete with Biden's other marquee legislative goals, including a \$1.9 trillion plan to combat the coronavirus, an infrastructure

package that promotes green energy initiatives and a "public option" to expand health insurance.

In the best of circumstances, enacting such a broad range of legislation would be difficult. But in a narrowly divided Congress, it could be impossible. And that has Latinos, the nation's fastest growing voting bloc, worried that Biden and congressional leaders could cut deals that weaken the finished product too much - or fail to pass anything at all.

"This cannot be a situation where simply a visionary Bill - a message Bill - gets sent to Congress and nothing happens with it," said Marielena Hincapie, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center, which advocates for low-income immigrants.

"There's an expectation that they will deliver and that there is a mandate now for Biden to be unapologetically pro-immigrant and have a political imperative to do so, and the Democrats do as well."

But it must compete with

BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Biden's immigration plan will also codify provisions wiping out some of President Donald Trump's signature hard-line policies, including trying to end existing, protected legal status for many immigrants brought to the U.S. as children and crackdowns on asylum rules

It must compete with Biden's other marquee legislative goals, including a \$1.9 trillion plan to combat the coronavirus. In the best of circumstances, enacting such a broad range of legislation would be difficult. And that has Latinos, the nation's fastest growing voting bloc, worried that Biden and congressional leaders could cut deals that weaken the finished product too much - or fail to pass anything at all

If Latinos ultimately feel betrayed, the political consequences for Democrats could be long-lasting. The 2020 election provided several warning signs that, despite Democratic efforts to build a multiracial coalition, Latino support could be at risk.

Biden already was viewed skeptically by some Latino activists for his association with former President Barack Obama, who was called the "deporter in chief" for the record number of immigrants

who were removed from the country during his administration. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont defeated Biden in last year's Nevada caucuses and California primary, which served as early barometers of the Latino vote.

In his race against Trump, Biden won the support of 63% of Latino voters compared with Trump's 35%, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 110,000 voters nationwide. But Trump narrowed the margin somewhat in some



where the Trump campaign's anti-socialism message resonated with Cuban- and some Venezuelan Americans.

Biden also fell short in Texas even though running mate Kamala Harris devoted valuable, late campaign time there. The ticket lost some sparsely populated but heavily Mexican American counties along the Mexican border, where law enforcement agencies are major employers and the GOP's zero-tolerance immigration policy resonated.

There were more warning signs for House Democrats, who lost four California seats and two in South Florida while failing to pick up any in Texas.

Booming Hispanic populations reflected in new U.S. census figures may see Texas and Florida gain congressional districts before 2022's midterm elections, which could make correcting the problem all the more pressing for Democrats.

The urgency isn't lost on Biden. He privately spent months telling immigration advocates that major overhauls

would be at the top of his to-do list. As vice president, he watched while the Obama administration used larger congressional majorities to speed passage of a financial crisis stimulus Bill and its signature health care law while letting an immigration overhaul languish.

"It means so much to us to have a new president propose bold, visionary immigration reform on Day 1. Not Day 2. Not Day 3. Not a year later," said New Jersey Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez, his chamber's lead sponsor of the Biden package.

Menendez was part of a bipartisan immigration plan championed by the "Gang of Eight" senators that collapsed in 2013.

Obama then resorted to executive action to offer legal status to millions of young immigrants. President George W. Bush also pushed an immigration package - with an eye toward boosting Latino support for Republicans before the 2008 election - only to see it fail in Congress.

Defence chief orders review of sex assault programmes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 24 JANUARY



Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who had vowed to address the problems of sexual assault in the ranks, has given his senior leaders two weeks to send him reports on sexual assault prevention programmes in the military

repeatedly called for action, including changes in the Code of Military Justice.

"You do agree that we can't keep doing the same thing that we've been doing for the past decade?" Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., said during Austin's confirmation hearing.

The 2018 increase fueled congressional anger over the issue, and lawmakers have

of sexual violence in the military?" Austin agreed, telling senators, "This starts with me and you can count on me getting after this on Day One."

Technically, the directive came on Day Two. Austin arrived at the Pentagon on Friday shortly after noon, but he spent his first hours as defense chief in meetings with key leaders as he began the transition to his new job. He was in the Pentagon again Saturday, making calls to defense counterparts around the world, and he signed the memo.

In his hearing and in the memo, Austin acknowledged that the military has long struggled with the problem, but must do better.

The directive calls for each leader to submit a summary of the sexual assault and harassment measures they

have taken in the last year that show promise, and an assessment of those that didn't. And he asked for relevant data for the past decade, including efforts to support victims.

"Include in your report the consideration of novel approaches to any of these areas," he said, adding that "we must not be afraid to get creative." And Austin said he plans to host a meeting on the matter with senior leaders in the coming days.

Nate Galbraith, the acting director of the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, said last April that he was cautiously optimistic that the lower increase in 2019 suggested a trend in declining assaults. But he said it's too difficult to tell because sexual assaults are vastly under-reported.

Boris Johnson presses Biden for new trade deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 24 JANUARY

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson made clear to President Joe Biden on Saturday that he's eager to forge a new US-UK trade deal.

The push for a new deal came in a broad-ranging call between the two leaders that touched on the global response to the coronavirus pandemic as well as the Biden administration announcing this week that the US would rejoin the Paris climate accord and the World Health Organization, according to a statement from Downing Street.

A new trade agreement between the allies is a high priority for Johnson than it is for Biden.

The UK regained control over its national trade policy at the start of the month following the end of a post-Brexit transition period.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki had said on Friday that the administration had no timeline for forging a new trade deal as Biden's attention is largely focused on getting the coronavirus pandemic under control and pressing Congress to pass the president's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan.

Downing Street said on Saturday that Biden and Johnson discussed the benefits of a potential free trade deal between our two countries," and Johnson reiterated his intention to resolve existing trade issues."

Portugal chooses a president amid a severe pandemic surge

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LISBON, 24 JANUARY



Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, 72, is regarded as the clear front-runner among seven candidates. He is an affable law professor and former television personality

saying that unprecedented planning had gone into ensuring that the vote can take place safely.

With the country in lockdown, the election campaign featured none of the usual flag-waving rallies but restrictions on movement were lifted for polling day.

Among the incumbent's six challengers, right-wing populist Andre Ventura has attracted curiosity as the first extremist to break into Portuguese mainstream politics. Ventura, 37, could conceivably place second, likely far behind Rebelo de Sousa but drawing a level of support that until recently was unthinkable.

Prime Minister Antnio Costa, in a tweet, urged people to turn out for the ballot, saying that the turnout will be high and kept a safe distance from each other.

Prime Minister Antnio Costa, in a tweet, urged people to turn out for the ballot,

France faces third lockdown if curfew not enough

PARIS, 24 JANUARY

France's government may impose a third lockdown in the coming days if an existing 12-hour-a-day curfew doesn't significantly slow virus infections.

Exactly a year after France announced Europe's first confirmed case of the coronavirus, Health Minister Olivier Veran said in an interview to *Le Parisien* newspaper that if infections don't drop, and "if the variants start to spread everywhere, we will take extra measures. And that's called confinement... We will close down."

An official in French President Emmanuel Macron's office said that "everything is on the table" but no firm decisions will be made until the effect of the nationwide 6 p.m.-6 a.m. curfew is clear in the coming week.

French public places have been closed since October. But virus infections, and deaths have started rising again this month.

VITAL SIGNS



A snowman stands outside Buckingham Palace during a snow fall in London on Sunday. Conditions are set to become more hazardous with weather warnings for snow and ice.

'Vaccinated people may still transmit Covid'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 24 JANUARY

One of England's leading medical officers on Sunday urged the public to continue to follow the strict lockdown rules because any vaccine-related immunity from Covid-19 takes at least three weeks to kick in.

Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer, also warned that there is no clear evidence yet to show that vaccinated people cannot transmit the deadly virus on to others.

Regardless of whether someone has had their vaccination or not, it is vital that everyone follows the nation-

al restrictions and public health advice, as protection takes up to three weeks to kick in and we don't yet know the impact of vaccines on transmission, said Van-Tam.

His warning comes as the UK registered another high daily death toll from the virus of 1,348 this weekend, taking the country's total to 97,329.

Argentina's abortion law enters force under watchful eyes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BUENOS AIRES, 24 JANUARY



ilar actions across the socially conservative, heavily Roman Catholic region.

But Pope Francis had issued a last-minute appeal before the vote and church leaders have criticized the decision.

Supporters of the law say they expect lawsuits from anti-abortion groups in Argentina's conservative provinces and some private health clinics might refuse to carry out the procedure.

Another huge task lies ahead of us, said Argentina's minister of women, gender and diversity, Elizabeth Gmez Alcorta, who has acknowledged there will be obstacles to the law's full implementation across the country.

The vote was hailed as a triumph for the South American country's feminist movement that could pave the way for sim-

ilar actions across the socially conservative, heavily Roman Catholic region.

But Pope Francis had issued a last-minute appeal before the vote and church leaders have criticized the decision.

Supporters of the law say they expect lawsuits from anti-abortion groups in Argentina's conservative provinces and some private health clinics might refuse to carry out the procedure.

Doctors and health professionals can claim conscientious objection to performing abortions, but cannot invoke the right if a pregnant woman's life or health is in danger.

The anti-abortion group Unidad Provida also urged doctors, nurses and technicians

to fight for their freedom of conscience and promised to "accompany them in all the trials that are necessary."

Under the law, private health centers that do not have doctors willing to carry out abortions must refer women seeking abortions to clinics that will.

Any public official or health authority who unjustifiably delays an abortion will be punished with imprisonment from three months to one year. The National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion, an umbrella group for organizations that for years fought for legal abortion, often wearing green scarves at protests, vowed to continue monitoring compliance with the law.</

The Zou affair



Zou, in black and white shirt, after his arrest in 2018

YAMBEM LABA

The Special Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Court in Manipur recently declared Lhoukhosei Zou, former chairman of the Autonomous District Council of Chandel district, as "not guilty". He was alleged to control both the drugs trade as well as local politics in the state but instead, his driver and a 19-year-old boy were found guilty in the multi-crore scandal.

Zou's arrest garnered national headlines in 2018 and it was a major embarrassment to his party, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. Along with six others, he was arrested by a team of state police personnel belonging to the Narcotics and Border Affairs department. The team was led by then Additional SP Thouanojam Brinda, the no-nonsense cop and daughter-in-law of RK Meghen, former chairman of the proscribed United National Liberation Front of Manipur. The arrest, which was effected on the intervening night of 19 and 20 June 2018, yielded almost five kilogrammes of pure "Number 4" grade heroin and nearly 300,000 tablets of a party drug called "world is yours" worth around Rs 27 crore in the open market, and more than Rs 57 lakh in cash. They were seized from the official VIP quarters of Zou in Lamphelpat.

At the time it was the single largest seizure of drugs made from the residence of a politician in power, who roamed around with armed guards of Manipur Police. However, the drama only began thereafter. There were charges levelled against Zou's senior counsel and the then SP of Imphal

West, who allegedly went to the NDPS court and tried to convince the investigating office of the NAB to withdraw the chargesheet. An enraged Yumkham Rathor, judge of the NDPS court, wrote letters to the chairman of the Manipur Bar Council and Director General of Police, Manipur seeking action against the duo.

The N Biren Singh government announced Brinda as the recipient of the Chief Minister's Medal for Gallantry. Soon thereafter, Zou, under judicial custody in the security ward of the state-run Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences, was found missing. Officially, that meant he was absconding from the state trial against him.

All was quiet until one fine day six months ago. Zou made a dramatic reappearance in court stating that he was being held by a Kuki militant organisation called the Kuki National Army, which had abducted him from a hospital ward that is under guard 24x7. His grand reappearance was accepted by the court and government without enquiring into how he was abducted in the first place or filing a police FIR to look into the matter. Zou was given bail on medical grounds.

It triggered the displeasure of Manipur's super cop, Brinda who reportedly stormed out of the NDPS court. She followed that up with a tirade against the judge on social media after which a complaint was lodged against her and those who responded to her post in the Manipur High Court.

In her response to the notice from the High Court, Brinda stated

how she had come under pressure from CM Biren Singh to have the charge sheet against Zou dropped. She included details like one Ashnikumar, a common turned BJP office bearer, barging twice into her bedroom to allegedly convey the CM's wishes. But Brinda held her ground. She was named a warrior against drugs and her situation was deliberated on at a United Nations meeting in New York.

Brinda, however, was released as the Additional SP of NAB and posted to the police headquarters without any designation. A Rs 50 crore defamation suit was filed against her in court along with another case implicating her for a drugs haul in Thoubal district but that was subsequently dismissed.

The BJP must have thought their troubles were over but the judgement setting Zou free raised a hue and cry. The first to react was Brinda who, as a mark of protest, returned the Chief Minister's Medal for Gallantry. Speaking to this writer, she said, "The medal is awarded to those whom the government deems obedient and in the know of everything that is ethically wrong, morally rotten, politically authoritarian, socially unjust and destructive. If it is meant to reward uncritical acceptance of malicious designs and hypocritical showmanship, then I do not deserve it. Such awards may be given to more deserving and loyal officers". She also felt that there were lapses on the part of the NAB *inter alia* in presenting the charge sheet against Zou.

Another strong reaction came from a civil society organisation called the "3.5 Group". It is committed to the charge sheet against Zou.

In the meantime, Zou was accorded a public welcome in Moreh by his supporters, associates and various tribal groups. They have gone on record to say that any further move to

UN's Sustainable Development Goal of strengthening the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drugs abuse and harmful abuse of alcohol. They sent a petition to the CM stating that they were deeply concerned that Zou, caught red handed with large quantities of drugs in his official quarters, was acquitted by the NDPS court vide its judgement dated 17 December 2020. It added that the conviction of a 19-year-old and Zou's driver were mere eyewash rather than any genuine act of delivering justice. They stated that the judgement not only set an unhealthy precedent but also demonstrated the ailing state of the criminal justice system. If the trend continued unchecked, the drug cartels operating in Manipur would be emboldened further. Hence, they requested that the state government of Manipur appeal against the said judgement in the High Court seeking re-investigation and a re-trial.

Speaking to this writer, Babloo Loitongbam, noted human rights activist and convenor of the "3.5 group", said that the judgement of the NDPS court simply lacked common sense -- a 19-year-old and a driver, who had a meagre salary, could not possibly operate a drugs network worth hundreds of crores of rupees. He added that a People's Tribunal would gather signatures and move the Supreme Court of India seeking a review of the judgement.

In the meantime, Zou was accorded a public welcome in Moreh by his supporters, associates and various tribal groups. They have gone on record to say that any further move to

malign his image would be met with *bandhs* and blockades of the highways that they control. Biren Singh, who had declared a "War on Drugs" after being elected, has reportedly said that the state would not approach the High Court as there were many other cases seeking reviews already in the pipeline.

The menace of drugs continues unabated, however. It can be gauged by the fact that there are more than 60 private drugs rehabilitation centres in the state. Thousands of acres of land in the tribal areas of Manipur are under poppy cultivation as it provides quicker and greater returns on investment. A number of locally established clandestine units, which turn opium into base morphine and heroin, have sprung up and taken prices down appreciably. A gram of heroin that used to cost Rs 3,000 in the early 1990s is now available at around Rs 500. Children of rickshaw-pullers and mason workers are getting addicted and the minimum age has also plummeted with 14/15-year-olds getting hooked.

With the induction of former Congress Party MLA Okram Henry, who was involved in a CBI drugs haul case, as a cabinet minister in the government and the refusal to go for an appeal against the NDPS judgement on Zou, the "War of Drugs" seems to be petering out. It is a sorry situation for a state that has lost hundreds of lives to insurgency and is staring at the same fate because of the drugs menace.

The writer is the Imphal-based Special Representative of *The Statesman*

because of eating toxic meat with a high percentage of diclofenac, which is commonly used as a veterinary drug to treat domestic animals. The analgesic causes dehydration in the birds and they die of visceral gout or kidney failure.

Statistics reveal that India used to have nine species of vultures in the wild, including the Oriental white-backed vulture, long-billed vulture, slender-billed vulture, Egyptian vulture, red-headed vulture, Himalayan griffon, cinereous vulture and bearded vulture. Among them, the white-backed, long-billed and slender-billed vultures were already recognised as critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Moreover, they were listed as Schedule I species in the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which is also applicable to the tiger and one-horned rhinoceros.

As vultures were increasingly missing for a few years, the government as well as non-government agencies and organisations came forward to bring them back. Scientists and environmentalists apprehend that after Pakistan and Nepal, the vulture population in India had declined by more than 90 per cent in the last few decades.

There were about 40 million vultures in the early 1980s in India, but a survey conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society in 2007 revealed that there remained only 11,000 white-backed vultures, 1,000 slender-billed vultures and 44,000 long-billed vultures in the country.

BNHS officials on different occasions claimed that over 75 per cent vultures, which were discovered dead, had died of visceral gout with diclofenac in their tissues. They also launched a rigorous campaign against

diclofenac in 2003. Though the drugs were introduced in 1993, India later banned its manufacture and import for veterinary purposes.

With an aim to preserve vulture numbers, various wildlife groups propagated the concept of captive breeding as the only viable option to save the creatures. BNHS runs a vulture conservation breeding centre at Rani in Guwahati. Other than Assam, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra are natural habitats for vultures.

Various environmental and animal protection groups suspected that villagers had started using diclofenac, meant for human use, for their domestic animals as it was cheaper and widely available in the country. However, there are people who do not subscribe to the vulture-diclofenac theory.

Many veterinary doctors believe that apart from the analgesic drug, malaria is also major cause of vulture deaths. They argue that a full-grown vulture requires only 500 grams of meat a day and so there should be very little trace of diclofenac in their bodies. Many dead vultures reportedly tested positive for a malaria parasite in their blood.

Conservation activist Soumyadeep Datta asserts that captive breeding of vultures would result in nothing. He rather emphasised on encouraging community protection and rescue missions in the region.

"Vultures are monogamous birds and they select their partners in the wild for breeding. They lay eggs in only such a situation, which can never be arranged in captivity," said Datta while adding that indiscriminate lifting of chicks from nests for the purpose of captive breeding would only disrupt the male-female ratio.

The writer is the Guwahati-based Special Representative of *The Statesman*

Declared by chief minister N Biren Singh after he was elected, the 'War on Drugs' in Manipur seems to have been abandoned



Brinda after returning her award

PLUS POINTS
Farmers in Nagaland



Representatives of farmers protesting at the Delhi border reached the North-east to garner support from farmers of the region for repealing the Centre's new farm bills, says a report in the Dimapur-based *Moring Express*.

At a press briefing at Hotel Saramati in Dimapur, Sukhjinder Gill and Manjinder Singh Randhawa, two Punjab-based farmers told media persons that their visit to the North-eastern states was to create awareness on the three new farm bills, especially on minimum support price. The two Punjab farmers along with Abhilash Rajkhowa, a student assisting the farmers' tour and PH Tripathi, president of Bharatiya Farmers Agro Business Development Co-operative Limited, explained at length, the implications and adverse effects the farm bills would have on farmers.

On the Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020, they said that though the government claims that the Act would help in expanding the scope of trade of farmers' produce from selected areas to "any place of production, collection, aggregation," the reality is different. The farmers pointed out that 86 per cent of India's farmers own less than five acres of land and 67 per cent farmers own less than 2.5 acres of land.

They also argued that with the entry of new private *mandis* owned by big corporations, there would be no regulation of tax by the state government and gradually the state *mandis* would inevitably become obsolete along with minimum support price.

The farmers also said that according to the government, The (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act 2020, would provide a legal framework for farmers to enter into pre-arranged contracts with buyers including mention of pricing. But the farmers said the bill does not specify the minimum price or the minimum support price set by the government. On Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, they said that since the majority of farmers own land less than five acres in size, they cannot afford to store agricultural products.

New bus service



More than seven decades after India's Independence, the first-ever passenger bus service was flagged off on the Roing-Anini route in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang Valley district along the China border, officials said. The bus service on the 233-km route was flagged off by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Mopi Mihu, and will connect the North and North-eastern part of the border state.

A mini passenger bus of the Arunachal Pradesh State Transport Service would ply thrice a week between border village Roing and district headquarters Anini, he said. "The bus service was a long-awaited demand of the local people of the remote areas. It would facilitate the local people to come to the district headquarters, then to the state capital. From Anini, Itanagar is more than 700 km," Mihu said over the phone from Anini, the district headquarters of Dibang Valley District.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu, in a social media post, said, "Sea of change visible under PM Narendra Modi Ji. First time in 73 years of India's Independence, a government passenger bus has reached Anini near Indo-Tibet (China) border (sic)." He said that the bus service was made possible as a two-lane highway reaches the remote border district.

Largest among Arunachal Pradesh's 25 districts with the lowest density (one person per square km) of population in India, Dibang Valley district came into existence on 1 June 1980 with its headquarters at Anini, after being carved out from Lohit district.

With a population of only 8,004 (2011 census), it is named after the Dibang river consisting of the Dri, Mathun and Talon and three other smaller rivers -- Ahi, Awa and Emra. Dibang Valley, whose North and North-east areas fall along the China border, consists of rugged undulating mountains with breath-taking green valleys, deep gorges, enchanting waterfalls, natural lakes of various dimensions and innumerable meandering rivers and turbulent streams.

-IANS

Contentious cause of death

Scientists and environmentalists are divided over the reason for the decreasing number of vultures in Assam



NAVA THAKURIA

contrast to a publicity-generating captive breeding initiative.

Several months ago, as reported in these columns, more than a hundred vultures were found dead in various parts of Assam like Sivasagar and Tinsukia after eating carcasses in paddy fields. It is still common in Assamese villages to keep dead domestic animals open for feeding by vultures. However, the residue of diclofenac in domestic animals is contributing to reducing numbers.

Vultures do not normally hunt living animals (in rare cases, the birds may kill the wounded or sick) but depend on carcasses of livestock and wildlife as their primary food source. Unlike dogs, crows or other natural

scavengers, they eat the flesh of carcasses completely and cleanly. The birds thus prevent the spread of severe diseases like rabies or anthrax among wildlife and also, humans.

Even though farmers have no interest in killing vultures by using banned drugs like diclofenac for their cattle, the people involved in the tannery business always prefer to get carcasses without bite marks. Therefore, they seemingly encourage villagers to intentionally poison dead animals, so that vultures cannot destroy the skin.

A mature vulture may weigh up to 10 kilograms and it needs almost half a kg of meat every day. The common theory concerning the decline of the vulture population is fatalities

because of eating toxic meat with a high percentage of diclofenac, which is commonly used as a veterinary drug to treat domestic animals. The analgesic causes dehydration in the birds and they die of visceral gout or kidney failure.

Statistics reveal that India used to have nine species of vultures in the wild, including the Oriental white-backed vulture, long-billed vulture, slender-billed vulture, Egyptian vulture, red-headed vulture, Himalayan griffon, cinereous vulture and bearded vulture.

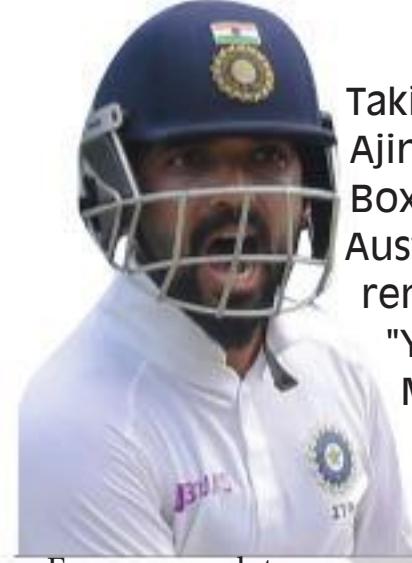
Among them, the white-backed, long-billed and slender-billed vultures were already recognised as critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Moreover, they were listed as Schedule I species in the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which is also applicable to the tiger and one-horned rhinoceros.

As vultures were increasingly missing for a few years, the government as well as non-government agencies and organisations came forward to bring them back. Scientists and environmentalists apprehend that after Pakistan and Nepal, the vulture population in India had declined by more than 90 per cent in the last few decades.

There were about 40 million vultures in the early 1980s in India, but a survey conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society in 2007 revealed that there remained only 11,000 white-backed vultures, 1,000 slender-billed vultures and 44,000 long-billed vultures in the country.

BNHS officials on different occasions claimed that over 75 per cent vultures, which were discovered dead, had died of visceral gout with diclofenac in their tissues. They also launched a rigorous campaign against

The writer is the Guwahati-based Special Representative of *The Statesman*



SPECIAL CENTURY

Taking over the team's reins after the Adelaide humiliation, Ajinkya Rahane (*in photo, left*) had led from the front in the Boxing Day Test, producing a master-class hundred against Australia, and the Indian vice-captain says the century will remain special as it paved the way for the series victory. "Yes Melbourne Test hundred was really special. I said in Melbourne that my Lord's hundred was special but many people told me that I think Melbourne hundred was better than my Lord's hundred," Rahane said.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Pak squad: The Pakistan selectors on Sunday retained six uncapped players in the pruned 17-man squad, named for the first Test against South Africa. The uncapped players include off-spinner Sajid Khan and left-arm spinner Nauman Ali, who are expected to partner the experienced leggie Yasir Shah in the match, starting Tuesday in Karachi.

Sandeep, Amir emerge National Racing Champions: Chennai's Sandeep Kumar and Amir Sayed from Kotayam emerged champions in the Formula LGB 4 and Novice Cup category respectively in the 23rd JK Tyre-FMSI National Racing Championship in Coimbatore on Sunday. Multiple national champion Hemanth Muddappa of Mantra Racing was in his elements once again winning both the gold in the top-two categories as he emerged as the national champion for the successive fourth year.

First point for Indian Arrows: All India Football Federation's developmental side Indian Arrows held Alizawl FC to a 1-1 draw to pick up their first points of the I-League season in Kalyani on Sunday.

Maiden win: After three back-to-back draws, a clinical performance by Tiddim Road Athletic Union (TRAU) saw the Manipur based club grab their first win of the Hero I-League season after defeating Chennai City FC 2-0 at the VYBK Stadium in Kolkata on Sunday. Title contenders Mohammedan SC were held to their second draw on the trot against RoundClass Punjab FC, as the match ended without a goal at the Kalyani Municipal Stadium in Kalyani, West Bengal on Sunday.

Sevilla win: Youssef En-Nesyri scored a hat trick to lead Sevilla to a 3-0 win over Cdiz, lifting the Andalusian side past Barcelona and into third place. En-Nesyri has 12 goals in 19 rounds and leads the league scoring charts. The Morocco striker also scored a treble two weeks ago.

COVID protocol breach: The Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Sunday took cognizance of an alleged breach of COVID-19 protocols during the ongoing Wrestling National Championships in Noida and a sought a report from the federation by Monday.

Marin, Axelsen win titles: Reigning Olympic badminton champion Carolina Marin and Denmark's Viktor Axelsen on Sunday came out with dominant performances to win the respective women's and men's singles titles at the Toyota Thailand Open tournament.

New role for Sangakkara: Sri Lankan batting great Kumar Sangakkara was on Sunday appointed as the director of cricket by Indian Premier League franchise Rajasthan Royals for the upcoming season. Sangakkara, the current President of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), will be responsible for overseeing the entire cricketing ecosystem of the franchise.

Wrestling championships: Haryana's Rohit emerged as the champion in the 65kg category while Delhi's Praveen Chahar took the title in the 86kg event as the men's freestyle national wrestling championships concluded in Noida on Sunday.

Chelsea through in FA Cup: Tammy Abraham scored a hat-trick as Chelsea beat second-tier side Luton 3-1 to reach the fifth round of the FA Cup on Sunday. The striker took his tally on the season to 11 by netting twice in seven first-half minutes. Jordan Clark profited from the struggling Kepa Arrizabalaga's last goalkeeping error to reduce the deficit to 2-1 on the half-hour before Abraham struck again in the 74th minute.

Taking over the team's reins after the Adelaide humiliation, Ajinkya Rahane (*in photo, left*) had led from the front in the Boxing Day Test, producing a master-class hundred against Australia, and the Indian vice-captain says the century will remain special as it paved the way for the series victory. "Yes Melbourne Test hundred was really special. I said in Melbourne that my Lord's hundred was special but many people told me that I think Melbourne hundred was better than my Lord's hundred," Rahane said.

AGENCIES
LONDON, 24 JANUARY

Former skippers Nassar Hussain (*in photo, right*) and Michael Vaughan are not happy with England's squad selection for the first two Tests against India, in which they have rested wicketkeeper-batsman Jonny Bairstow.

After the culmination of the ongoing second Test against Sri Lanka, England will be touring India for four Tests, five T20Is and three ODIs beginning February 5.

"I would say it's a concern that one of England's best three players of spin -- I would say Bairstow is alongside Joe Root and Ben Stokes in that -- has been given a boarding pass home and the others are going to Chennai. I'd have to rethink," Hussain wrote in his column for Sky Sports.

"England fans switching on when it is turning and England are 20/2 may well have the argument, 'I want to see our best batsman against spin, or one of them, in Bairstow.'

"If the next Test after this series was Brisbane in the Ashes, would we send our best side? So why when it's the first Test against India, one of the great sides, aren't we sending our best team? It is that balancing act of being fair to the public and winning what's in front of you and long-term planning all year," he added. Bairstow, Mark Wood and Sam Curran have been rested for the first two Tests against India, while Ben Stokes, Jofra Archer and Rory Burns -- who are not part of the Sri Lanka series -- have been recalled. "The only player in England's Top 3 that's play-



ing the sub-continent conditions with any control or calmness is resting for the first 2 Tests against the best Team in world at home #India!!! The world is officially mad," tweeted Vaughan. The first two Test matches are set to play in Chennai, before the series moves to Ahmedabad for the final two Tests. The third Test will be a day-night encounter, beginning on 24 February.

Tour dates: Friday 5-9 February: 1st Test - India v England, MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai.

Saturday 13-17 February: 2nd Test - India v England, MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai

Wednesday 24-28 February: 3rd Test - India v England, Sardar Patel Stadium, Ahmedabad.

It will be disrespectful to Indian team: Pietersen

Lambasting Jonny Bairstow's omission from the England squad for Tests against India, former skipper Kevin Pietersen (*in photo, left*) said that it will be disrespectful to the host team if visiting team does not put on field its best XI in the marquee series. The 40-year-old said a win against India is similar to a victory against arch-rivals Australia. They're a business! They can have a break after that!"

'See you soon': Stokes heads to India ahead of Test series

England all-rounder Ben Stokes has headed to India ahead of the full-fledged tour which will see the two teams compete in four Tests, five T20Is and three ODIs beginning February 5.

"Big debate on whether ENG have picked their best team to play India in the 1st Test. Winning IN India is as good a feeling as winning in

Aus. It's disrespectful to ENG fans & also @BCCI to NOT play your best team. Bairstow has to play! Broad/Anderson have to play!" Pietersen tweeted.

In another tweet, Pietersen said the best players wouldn't want to miss the opportunity to play against an informed Indian team at home, while suggesting players can be rested after the Indian Premier League.

"The BEST England players will want to play as many games as possible against India, in India. PICK THEM!

Then they go to IPL & earn everything they deserve. Cash is king for every sportsman. They're a business! They can have a break after that!"

England squad (for the first two Tests): Joe Root (c), Jofra Archer, Moeen Ali, James Anderson, Dom Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler*, Zak Crawley, Ben Foakes, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes, Olly Stone, Chris Woakes.

Tour dates: Friday 5-9 February: 1st Test - India v England, MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai.

on a plane with a caption: "See you soon India".

The Joe Root-led England are currently in Sri Lanka, taking part in the two-Test series. India, on the other hand, have returned from the successful Australia tour which saw them clinch the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in a thrilling fashion. Both the teams have announced their respective squads for the first two Test matches which will be played in Chennai.

India are currently at the top spot in ICC World Test Championship (WTC) standings -- both on percentage points and points. They need to win the upcoming four-match Test series against England with a 2-0 margin to seal a spot in the WTC final. If they lose one Test against England though, they will need to win three matches.

England, on the other hand, first need to win the second Test against Sri Lanka and then defeat India 3-0. Even a 2-2 drawn series will not be enough for England to go past India and finish among the top two on the WTC.

England near Sri Lanka's 1st innings total after Root's 186

AGENCIES
GALLE, 24 JANUARY

bread and butter and he executed it to perfection, finding gaps frequently despite Sri Lanka having three fielders in the leg-side boundary.

The 30-year-old reached his 19th test hundred in the morning and after his knock went past the run tallies of three former England greats David Gower, 8,231, Kevin Pietersen 8,181 and Geoffrey Boycott 8,114. Root, playing in his 99th test match, now has 8,238 test runs and is fourth among England batsmen.

Apart from Embuldeniya, the rest of Sri Lanka's bowling failed to impress, with off-spinner Dilruwan Perera failing to pick up a wicket despite the 38-year-old bowling 32 overs. England resumed from the overnight score of 98 for two and lost Jonny Bairstow (28) and Daniel Lawrence (3) early.

Vice-captain Jos Buttler (55) added 97 runs for the fifth wicket with Root. An 81-run stand for the seventh wicket between Dominic Bess (32) and Root took England's total to 333 for six. But Sri Lanka struck back, taking three wickets for six runs late in the day to reduce the tourists to 339 for nine.

Brief Scores: Sri Lanka 381, England 339/9 (114.2 Overs), England trail by 42 runs.

Did not expect to debut for India in Aus: Natarajan

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 24 JANUARY

Taken to Australia as net bowler, pacer Thangarasu Natarajan (*in photo*) ended up making history by debuting in all three formats and he said he didn't expect to get the opportunity and was under pressure in his first match in India colours.

The 29-year-old Natarajan became the only India player to make a debut in all the three formats in the same tour. He made his India debut in the third ODI in Canberra on December 2. "I was keen to do my job. I didn't expect to get an opportunity in the ODIs. When I was told that I will be playing there was pressure. I wanted to make use of the opportunity. Playing and taking a wicket was like a dream," Natarajan told reporters in Chinnappampatti in Salem district.

The left-arm pacer made his Test debut in the fourth and final match at Gabba which India won to seal a historic series win against Australia. Natarajan took three wickets in the match. He said representing the country was a dream come true.

"I cannot express my happiness in words about playing for India. It was like a dream. I got a lot of support from the coaches, players. They supported and motivated me a lot. I was able to perform well because of their backing," he said in Tamil. Natarajan also said he enjoyed playing under the captaincy of Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane, adding they both supported and encouraged him a lot. "(Virat) Kohli and

Ajinkya Rahane handled me very well.. they had positive things to say and encouraged me a lot. I enjoyed playing under both of them," he added

'I used to be petrified of bouncers'

The promising Shubman Gill on Sunday revealed he used to be "petrified of bouncers" before eventually overcoming all his fears to get his Test career off to a rolicking start against some of the world's fastest bowlers.

Gill, 21, announced his arrival on the big stage with a classic knock of 91, which set the tone for India's incredible victory on the final day of the series-deciding fourth Test against Australia recently.

In the six innings that he battered against the likes of Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, Gill never looked in any sort of discom-

fort. But it wasn't so easy many years ago.

"When you get hit by a ball, your fear disappears. You are only scared until you get a blow but once you get hit, you feel like it was pretty normal! And then you lose the fear entirely," Gill was quoted as saying by his IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders on website www.kkr.in.

"When I was young, I used to be petrified of bouncers. I used to be prepared for the chest-height balls way in advance. I used to practise drives a lot so I got mature in playing the pull shot with a straight bat."

"I also developed one more shot where I move aside a little to play the cut. I used to feel scared of short deliveries so I always wanted to get away from the line of the ball and play the cutshot. These two-three shots were my favourite as a kid and now they have become a part of me."

ISL: Hyderabad end up splitting points with Jamshedpur

AGENCIES
GOA, 24 JANUARY

Jamshedpur FC and Hyderabad FC shared a point each as they canceled each other out in a goalless draw in the Hero Indian Super League at the Tilak Maidan Stadium, here on Sunday.

While Hyderabad ended up drawing their third game on the trot, Jamshedpur nabbed their first win of the calendar year, after a treble of losses.

New signings Farukh Choudhary and Seimineni Doungal were among the four changes made by Jamshedpur while Roland Alberg was handed his first start as Hyderabad rang in two changes.

The opening half was an intriguing, open-ended contest with both sides hitting the post but failing to find the net. Hyderabad fashioned better chances but Jamshedpur keeper Aitor Monroy's cross, allowing Stephen Eze to head the ball. But his effort struck the woodwork before being cleared out. The second half turned out to be a scrappy affair. Neither sides were able to carve out clear-cut chances with both sides defending resolutely. Hyderabad had a chance to score through a set-piece but Santana failed to keep his shot on target. Hitesh Sharma's free-kick was cleared by Eze and it fell to Santana, who sliced his volley wide of the post. Jamshedpur registered their first shot on target in the 87th minute, with Nerijs Valskis missing a half chance. Farukh won the ball and delivered a cross in the box for Valskis whose header was aimed straight at Katimani.

Bengaluru 1-1 Odisha

Bengaluru FC's winless streak continued as they managed a 1-1 draw against Odisha FC in an Indian Super League (ISL) clash on Sunday at the Fatora Stadium, Goa.

Diego Mauricio had broken the deadlock in the eighth minute from Manuel Own's assist but Erik Paartalu equalised for the Blues in the 82nd minute to earn the South Indian club at least a point.

FA Cup holder Arsenal eliminated, Manchester City survive scare

AGENCIES
SOUTHAMPTON, 24 JANUARY

year and the dream today is over," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. Arsenal has won the FA Cup a record 14 times and Arteta before kick-off called it "our favorite competition."

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored both of the team's goals in the 2-1 win over Chelsea in last year's final, but he wasn't available Saturday due to what Arteta called "a personal matter."

Vietnam's Tran Thi Quy Phuong moved to Southampton on loan from Chelsea and scored the winning goal in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final was secured by a goal from James Ward-Prowse in the 85th minute.

Southampton's 1-0 win over Chelsea in