

'AGRI-LAWS ARE
ANTI-FARMER'



ELECTORS MEET TO
FORMALLY PICK
BIDEN AS PRESIDENT

P10



EU NEGOTIATOR
STILL SEES HOPE
TO CLINCH UK DEAL

P10



WHY RAHANE IS
EXPECTED TO
BE ON VELVET

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Shallow to moderate fog in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 21 and 08 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 57%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 19.4°C (4) Min: 8.4°C (0)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

07:07 hrs 17:27 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

08:42 hrs 18:08 hrs

THUMBNAILS



People sit beside a fire to beat the biting cold.
In the Capital on Monday. SUBRATA DUTTA

Emergency shouldn't have happened, says SC: Emergency is something which should not have happened, the Supreme Court on Monday said as it agreed to hear a plea of a 94-year-old woman seeking to declare as wholly unconstitutional the proclamation made in 1975 during the tenure of the then Indira Gandhi-led Congress government. The top court, which issued notice to the Centre, said that would also examine whether it is feasible or desirable to make a simpler declaration of the proclamation after a lapse of 45 years. P4

Gmail, other Google services face outage: Gmail and a host of other Google services faced disruptions on Monday evening for about 45 minutes due to an 'internal storage quota' issue, which has now been resolved for a vast majority of the affected users. Google experienced an authentication system outage for approximately 45 minutes due to an internal storage quota issue. Services requiring users to log in experienced high error rates during this period, a Google spokesperson said. The spokesperson noted that the authentication system issue was resolved at 6.02 PM IST.

Armed forces forced PLA to retreat: Rajnath

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

Describing the Chinese action in eastern Ladakh as "unprovoked aggression", Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Monday hailed the Indian armed forces for fighting the People's Liberation Army (PLA) with utmost bravery and forcing them to go back.

Addressing the valedictory session of the FICCI annual conclave here, he said, "There is a big build-up of armed forces at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. In these testing times our forces have shown exemplary courage and remarkable fortitude."

The defence minister said there could be a serious debate on who owned more military might vis a vis India and China but there was no scope of ambiguity when it came to soft power.

The aggression by China on Himalayan frontiers was a reminder of how the world was changing, how existing agreements were being challenged, how power was being asserted not just in the Himalayas but across the Indo-Pacific, he said in a scathing attack on China for its behaviour in recent months.

"The coming generations of this nation will be proud of what our forces have managed to achieve this year," he added.

Singh said there could be a serious debate on who owned more military might vis a vis India and China but there was no scope of ambiguity when it came to soft power.

He also lashed out at Pakistan, saying India has been a victim of cross-border terrorism spon-

sored by its neighbour. But India has fought the scourge single-handedly even when there was no one to support the country. Later, the world understood that India was right about Pakistan being the fountainhead of terrorism.

India, due to its location, size, population and economy, has always been at the strategic forefront of global security, he said. "And now again our brave forces are there in the forefront fighting icy winds to guard our borders and to fulfil their responsibility. The question is: can our industry also stand shoulder to shoulder with our forces?

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The Coronavirus crisis is now "on its way out" and "soon" vaccines would be available in India too. India has been able to handle the crisis well under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, who recognised the crisis early.

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

UNION INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER

AIIMS Nurses
Union announces
indefinite strike



NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

Agri laws are 'anti-farmers' and 'anti-common people': Kejriwal

The Centre's controversial farm laws would lead to price rise by 16 times in 4 years, says Delhi CM as he joins AAP ministers, leaders and activists in observing fast in solidarity with protesting, fasting farmers

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said the Narendra Modi government's controversial new farm laws will lead to immense inflation and will only favour a few capitalists, as he denounced these central legislations as "anti-farmers and anti-common people".

Joining the AAP leaders, ministers, MLAs and volunteers at the party office here in observing a day-long fast in solidarity with fasting farmers — who have been protesting against the Centre's agrilaws at Delhi's borders for the last few weeks — Kejriwal said these farm laws "give licence to effect inflation".

The protesting farmers held a day-long hunger strike against the Centre's farm laws today and said that their protests took place at all district headquarters. They also said that more people are expected to join their agitation at Delhi border points in the coming days.

Addressing his party leaders and activists, Kejriwal said the central law states that people



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal addressing a gathering of his AAP ministers and activists as they observe a day-long hunger strike in solidarity with protesting farmers at the AAP headquarters in the Capital on Monday.

could hoard as much as they want.

"I appeal to parties to stop playing dirty politics over farmers' issue. These laws are anti-farmers and anti-common people and are aimed to benefit a few capitalists. These laws will lead to immense inflation through hoarding. These legislations give licence to inflate," Kejriwal said.

Elaborating his point, the CM said these "anti-farmers" laws are not only "devastating" for the farmers but also "very dangerous" for every citizen of India.

"The price of the day to day items will increase if these laws come into play. These laws have given free licence to hike prices. We can say that these laws have given legal shape to price

rise. We know that many businessmen illegally hoard onions and other essential items. This hoarding causes price hike," he said.

Kejriwal said these laws allow "unlimited hoardings" of essential commodities. "In every religion, hoarding is a sin and is illegal. By this law, if hoarding becomes legalised, then the rich people will start

hoarding more and there will be price hike. These laws say if price hike happens twice a year, only the government can take action against the hoarders. As a chief minister, if I get to know that someone is hoarding pulses or onions leading to price rise of these items, I will not be able to take any action as per these laws. Earlier there was a limit to how much one can stock, now they have removed these caps," he said.

Kejriwal said the central farm law would enable price rise by 16 times in four years.

"So do not think that you are doing any favour to the farmers by supporting them. These laws are already passed. If these laws are not rolled back, then we will be in trouble and crisis. Today the farmers are protesting and doing a favour to us. The farmers are doing a favour to all the citizens of India," he said.

Noting that everyone should protest against these laws, the CM said the AAP was standing beside the farmers and supporting their demands.

"MSP should be legalised. A law should be brought immediately legalising the MSP. Today we all had a day-long hunger

strike in the support of the farmers," he added.

"From the very first day, the Aam Aadmi Party is standing beside the farmers shoulder to shoulder. Today across India, the volunteers of AAP have participated in this day-long hunger strike," he said.

"The BJP-ruled central government wanted to establish makeshift prisons to send protesting farmers to jail. The AAP government immediately rejected this proposal and returned the file to the central government. We stood rock solid beside the farmers," he pointed out.

Kejriwal said the AAP volunteers have worked for the farmers as their 'sewadaars'.

"I also visited the farmers as a sewadar. I told our leaders that if the farmers survive, then only the AAP will survive. All of us are working as caregivers for these protesting farmers," he said. Kejriwal also said that the Centre and the ruling BJP were rattled to see the AAP support the farmers.

"Last week when the farmers called 'Bharat bandh', I wanted to visit the farmers and participate in it. But the BJP government blocked the doors of

my house and did not allow me to go out. They wanted to make the protest unsuccessful but it did not happen. Today I am standing here in support of the farmers and holding a day-long hunger strike," he said.

Speaking to reporters, deputy CM Manish Sisodia said the "farmers are very unhappy with the three black laws of the central government".

"The central government should leave its arrogance and withdraw these laws. The Aam Aadmi Party is observing fast in support of the farmers," Sisodia said.

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

However, farmers have been protesting in different parts of the country for months, expressing apprehensions that the new central laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of minimum support price (MSP) and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates and capitalists.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA EXTRA-ORDINARY APPEAL NO. 1001/2020 PETITION FOR SPECIAL LEAVE TO APPEAL (CIVIL)
No. 9015 OF 2016
ARVIND JAIN (DEAD)
THROUGH LRS. AND
ANOTHER ...Petitioners
VERSUS
MOHD. ISHRAF AND OTHERS
Respondents

To,
1 MOHD. ISHRAF,
S/O MOHD. JAVED,
D/NO. 10, MANGOLPUR, DELHI,
AND ALSO AT R.O. Y-1506,
MANGOLPUR, JR., DELHI

PID: 115355/2020 FOR [1]
IN SLPC No. 9015/2016
(SEC XIV)

2 MS VIKRAM TRAVELS,
THROUGH ITS
PROPRIETOR PARTNER,
AKASH KUMAR, 101
SHUBHAM TIME PLAZA,
11TH FLOOR, PLOT NO.13, ROAD
IN NO.44 BEHAND MZK CINEMA,
PITAMPURA, DELHI-110043

PID: 115355/2020 FOR [2]
IN SLPC No. 9015/2016
(SEC XIV)

WHEREAS the Petition for Special Leave to Appeal above mentioned enclosed filed in the Registry by Mr. YASH PAL DHINGRA, Advocate on behalf of the Petitioners above named was listed for hearing before the Court on 11-12-2020 and the Court was pleased to pass the following order:

"Issue notice."

AND WHEREAS, the main application having been heard before Lt. Registrar's Court on 25th November, 2020, When the following order was passed:

Application for substituted service has been filed for service of respondent No.1 and 2. Application is allowed. Proof of publication to be filed within four weeks.

Respondent No.3 has filed counter affidavit.

List again on 6.1.2021.

AND WHEREAS, the Court in course and your written assurance before this Court either in person or through an advocate on record of this Court duly appointed by you in writing within 30 days from the date of receipt of notice or not later than 2 weeks before the date appointed for hearing, whichever be earlier, but shall do so in the setting of the facts of the case and the operation of the law or grounds set out in the SLPs and may produce such pleadings and documents filed before the Court and may file and shall set out the grounds for not granting interim order or for vacating interim order if already granted.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that if you fail to enter appearance as aforesaid, no notice shall be given to you even after giving notice of hearing of the result of the resulting appeal and the matter above mentioned shall be disposed of in accordance with law.

Dated: 01st December, 2020.
Assistant Registrar

**IN THE COURT OF SH. SUNIL RANA
Addl. District Judge-05
(Central)**

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
PC No. 10/2020
Subhash Chander Suneja
Versus
State & Ors.

N.D.O.H. - 14-1-2021
CITATION UNDER SECTION
271 OF THE INDIAN
SUCCESSION ACT

Whereas an petition under Section 276/278 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, for grant of Probate/Letters of Administration in respect of the Estate of deceased Lt. Sh. Bhagwan Das Suneja, w/o Sh. Ganga Ram, r/o 15A/54, W.E.A., Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005. Who died on 23-02-2019 at Delhi, has been made by Sh. Subhash Chander Suneja, s/o Lt. Sh. Bhagwan Das Suneja, r/o 52/82, Ramjas Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005.

Whereas the 14-01-2021 has been fixed for hearing of the case. Notice is hereby given so that any person having any interest in the Probate/Letters of Administration of the Estate of the said deceased if he/she desires to be heard shall appear before this court on 14-01-2021 before the Grant of Letters of Administration.

My clients Shri Banwari Lal, s/o Late Shri Naubat Singh and his wife Smt. Kasturi Devi, both r/o H. No. 654, Block-F, Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, Dakshinpuri, New Delhi-110062, hereby disown/surrender their son named Shri Subhash Kumar Singh and his wife Smt. Julie from all their properties movable and immovable whatsoever and also severed all their relations, social and economic with them. Any person dealing with them shall do so at his/her own risks and responsibilities.

Surendra Kumar Roy
Advocate
Ch. No. 272,
Saket Courts,
New Delhi-17

IN THE COURT OF MS. SHEFALI BARNALA
TANDON
Administrative Civil Judge-
Court (Arca) (Central)
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-110054
SC-65/2020
N.D.O.H.: 11-01-2021
Shekhar & Anr.
Versus
The State
1. Sh. Shekhar, s/o Lt. Sh. Bal

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Surendra Kumar Roy
Advocate
Ch. No. 272,
Saket Courts,
New Delhi-17

CHANGE OF NAME

BY VIRTUE of an affidavit

before the Notary Public,

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Dt.:

14.12.2020, I have changed my name from Mahesh Reddy to Sunkuru Mahesh Reddy. Henceforth I shall be known as Sunkuru Mahesh Reddy for all purposes.

Sd/-
P.O. (MGNREGS) &
B.O.D. Old Malda Dev.
Block, Malda

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Kolkata-700 001
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(033) 41071700
Fax: (033) 2212-6181 / 7107-1780
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Centre,

AIR-SURCHARGE: Kathmandu - Re. 2, Eastern Region - Re. 1
All other stations in India - Re. 1

STATEMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2020

The Coronavirus crisis is now "on its way out" and "soon" vaccines would be available in India too. India has been able to handle the crisis well under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, who recognised the crisis early.

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

UNION INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER

The AlIMS Nurses Union went on an indefinite strike from Monday over their long pending demands, including those with regard to the Sixth Central Pay Commission and against contractual appointments, even as AIIMS director appealed to them to call off their agitation and return to work. As around 5,000 nurses went on strike from the afternoon hampering patient care services at the premier hospital, AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria in a video message termed the strike in the time of pandemic as "inappropriate and unfortunate". "I appeal to all the nurses and nursing officers not to go on strike, and not to make us feel embarrassed about the dignity that we have as far as the nurses are concerned. I, therefore, appeal to all of you to come back and work and really help us through this pandemic," he said in an emotional message. The strike was earlier scheduled to start from December 16. Guleria said the nurses union had put in 23 demands and almost all of them have been met by the AIIMS administration and the government.

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

However, farmers have been protesting in different parts of the country for months, expressing apprehensions that the new central laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of minimum support price (MSP) and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates and capitalists.

Kejriwal said the AAP volunteers have worked for the farmers as their 'sewadaars'.

"I also visited the farmers as a sewadar. I told our leaders that if the farmers survive, then only the AAP will survive. All of us are working as caregivers for these protesting farmers," he said. Kejriwal also said that the Centre and the ruling BJP were rattled to see the AAP support the farmers.

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TRIVEN德拉·辛格·拉瓦特
UTTARAKHAND CHIEF MINISTER

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2020

Delhi riots:
Court grants bail
to school owner

PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

A Delhi court Monday granted bail to a private school owner in a north east Delhi riots case, saying it was evident that the probe started late only after he was granted bail in another case and statements of witnesses were hurriedly recorded whose veracity would be tested at the time of trial.

While granting bail to Faisal Farooq, owner of Rajdhani School in Shiv Vihar, Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav said though the accused was in jail for a considerable period of time, the police has hardly been able to bring on record any material against him for criminal conspiracy.

The court noted that until June, virtually no investigation was done in the matter.

Farooq was arrested in another case for his alleged involvement in burning and damaging the property of adjacent DRP Convent School during the riots. He was granted bail in the case in June, after which he was arrested in the second case.

It is, however, evident that till June 20, 2020, virtually no investigation had been done in the present matter and after the applicant (Farooq) was admitted to bail in the first case, that the statements were hurriedly recorded, the veracity whereof to be tested at the time of trial. Prima facie, sections 307 (attempt to murder), 153A (promoting enmity on the grounds of religion, caste, language etc) and 155 (liability of person for whose benefit riot is committed) IPC (Indian Penal Code) are not made out against the applicant.

HP to continue with night curfew in 4 dists till 5 Jan

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 14 DECEMBER

The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet on Monday decided to continue with existing Covid-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and night curfew in four districts in the state till 5 January 2021 keeping in view the raging Covid pandemic.

At its meeting chaired by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, the Cabinet gave its approval to grant ex post facto permission to operationalise 'make shift hospitals' at Shimla, Nalagarh, Tanda and Nerkhaw in public interest at a cost of Rs 1.37 crore, Rs 2.36 crore, Rs 3.44 crore and Rs. 6.11 crore respectively, out of which 50 per cent funds have been provided to the CSIR/CBRI (Central Building Research Institute) Roorkee in advance.

An official spokesman also said here that the Cabinet gave its approval to amend the para-1 & 6 of order number F.E.B.A.(3)4/99 dated 10 September 2002 under Himachal Pradesh Land Preservation Act 1978 for felling trees from the private land under the ten-year 'Pattan' programme by empowering Divisional Forest Officers concerned to grant permission for felling of up to 200 trees in place of up to 50 trees in a year, Chief Conservator of Forests/Chief Conservator of Forests concerned up to 300 trees in place of up to 100 trees in a year, Principal Conservator of Forests



up to 400 trees in place of up to 200 trees in a year and Government of Himachal Pradesh above 400 trees in place of up to 200 trees in a year.

The spokesman said the Cabinet also decided that in case trees are not felled within a prescribed year, the competent authority may extend the period up to one year. It is applicable where the process of demarcation of land and marking of trees have been completed during the pre-

scribed year of felling and the felling orders stand issued by the concerned Divisional Forest Officer but felling of trees have not been done or has been done partially and where process of demarcation of land and marking of trees has been completed during the prescribed year of felling but felling orders have not been issued.

The Cabinet gave its consent to shift office of Deputy Inspector General (Intelli-

gence and Security) from Shimla to Dharamshala in the public interest.

The spokesman said the Cabinet also gave its consent to create Pain and Palliative Care Cell under Radiotherapy Department in Indira Gandhi Medical College, Shimla for providing better health facilities to the people.

He further said the Cabinet gave its nod to the Himachal Pradesh Aero Sports Rules 2020 with a view to promote

aero sports activities in the state by adopting complete safety measures.

It also decided that "condemned vehicles" of various departments such as Public Works, Jal Shakti, MPP and Power Departments etc. lying unutilised be transferred to Technical Education Department so that they could be used in various ITIs keeping in view their viabilities.

The Cabinet also gave its approval to the recommen-

dations of the Cabinet Sub Committee for exclusion of few areas of the state from the purview of HP Town and Country Planning Act 1977.

It gave its consent to exclude revenue mohal Palda, Rajor and Chaled in Bharmour Special Area of Chamba district, Bani, Barod, Malga, and Sudharag mohal in Waknaghat planning area of Solan district, and Aarda and Manyana revenue mohal of Mandi Planning area.

Delhi BJP to launch campaign to drum up support for agri laws

PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

The Delhi BJP will launch a four day campaign from Tuesday to drum up support in favour of the three farm laws that have drawn thousands of protesting farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and other states, at the borders of the national capital.

The farmers in Delhi will be apprised of the features of the "historical" agricultural reform laws and clear misconceptions spread by the opposition parties regarding these laws, during the campaign, said Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly.

Most places in the Kashmir valley, with the exception of Qazigund town in the south, recorded subzero night temperature owing to a clear sky,

the Meteorological department said.

In Himachal Pradesh, Keylong, Kalpa and Manali shivered at subzero temperatures, despite dry weather since Sunday. Lahaul-Spiti's administrative centre Keylong was the coldest place in the state at minus 11 degrees Celsius.

Large parts of north India are already witnessing foggy conditions. However, no significant change has been forecast over most parts of Central and East India during the next two-three days, but it can fall by up to four notches thereafter, the IMD said. The weather department also said severe cold day conditions were observed on Monday in many pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi, the epicenter of the



A total of 16 major conferences will be organised along with several chaupal meetings among the farmers.

the lives of the farmers. It has been made clear by the government that the minimum support price will continue, the mandis will be expanded and in case of any dispute with the contractor, the option of going to the courts will be open.

Bidhuri said the protesting farmers should withdraw their agitation and return to their homes once the government has resolved all their doubts.

Haryana launches software for online release and payment of govt ads

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 14 DECEMBER

In a bid to bring transparency and efficiency in the entire process of releasing state government advertisements and payments to media houses, the Haryana government has launched Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP) software.

While inaugurating this online system on Monday, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said that after the launch of this software, release orders and payment of advertisement bills will be done through this online



Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar launching the Online Release Orders and Billing System for the Information, Public Relations and Languages Department at Chandigarh on Monday. SNS

system.

He said that the payment of bills should be made within a period of 30 days to the concerned media houses after the submission of bills.

This system will be made operational from 15 Decem-

ber, 2020. Although, the old cases of payment will not be dealt with through this new software, however all such cases will soon be disposed off.

During the launch, CM while virtually interacting with representatives of vari-

ous media houses requested them to send the list of pending bills to the department so that no bills remain pending till 31 March, 2021.

Khattar said that with the launch of this software, the entire process of issuing release orders and bills will be made computerised.

With this, the government department or organisation will be able to make online applications for their advertisements to the Information, Public Relations and Languages Department.

As per the received requests, a media plan will be generated online. The approval

Absconding drug smuggler lands in Haryana Police net

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 14 DECEMBER

of smuggling 1 kg 700 gram opium and absconding since then," the spokesperson said.

Giving further details, he said that during checking, a police team received information about the accused who had come to attend a wedding ceremony on Dabwali-Kalanwali road. The police team immediately swung into action and arrested the accused by conducting a raid.

The arrested accused was identified as Labh Singh alias Labha, a resident of Jandwala Jattan. A case has been registered against the accused. A remand would be sought by producing him in the court. During the remand period, the accused will be intensively questioned about others connected to the drug network. Further investigation is underway.

North India braces for further dip in mercury; Himachal's Keylong shivers at -11 degrees

PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

Several locations in Jammu and Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh witnessed subzero minimum temperatures on Monday, while severe cold conditions prevailed in other northern states, as the region braced for still colder days with the IMD forecasting the mercury to slide further.

In the national capital, which was swept by cold winds, the minimum temperature dropped to single-digit below zero on Monday, down from 8.4 degrees Celsius, Sunday. The maximum temperature also dropped to 19.4 degrees Celsius, four notches below normal, and the lowest so far this month.

The India Meteorological Department in a bulletin said minimum temperatures over most parts of northwest India are expected to fall by three to five notches during the next four days, leading to colder weather conditions still.

Large parts of north India are already witnessing foggy conditions. However, no significant change has been forecast over most parts of Central and East India during the next two-three days, but it can fall by up to four notches thereafter, the IMD said. The weather department also said severe cold day conditions were observed on Monday in many pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi, the epicenter of the

weather conditions still.

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weather conditions still.

They said Qazigund the gateway town to the valley recorded a minimum of 0.3 degrees Celsius.

Srinagar, the summer capital of the union territory, recorded a low of minus 1.4 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara in the north, registered a low of minus 1.3 degrees Celsius and Kokernag in the south, recorded minus 1.1 degrees Celsius, the officials said.

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Such an Emergency has been imposed in Maharashtra that Marathas are not even allowed to protest.

BJP LEADER DEVENDRA FADNAVIS



Passengers book tickets after Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation, Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation resumed services post strike, in Bengaluru on Monday. **IANS**

Kerala local body polls: Despite Covid-19 scare, Kerala on Monday recorded 78 per cent polling in the third and final phase of elections to the local bodies held in Malappuram (78.86%), Kozhikode (78.98%), Kannur (77.54%) and Kasargod (77.14%). **SNS**

PIL seeks ban on online gambling sites

PTI

NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought response of the Centre and AAP government on a PIL seeking directions to them to take steps to ban websites which are involved in gambling, betting and wagering.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan issued notice to the ministries of Finance and Electronics and Information Technology as well as the Delhi government seeking their stand.

The plea said despite there being laws enacted by various states prohibiting such activities, a large number of websites providing gambling, betting and wagering games are still accessible in India.

The petitioner, Avinash Mehrotra, has contended in his plea that "all these activities, though expressly prohibited by law, are being carried out because of a lack of enforcement of the laws in question".

Mehrotra, who claims to offer financial advisory services, has also said in his petition that the online gambling system in India is unregulated and its "a great place for carrying out hawala operations, laundering money, etc".

"In fact, it is submitted that Foreign Exchange laws, as well as Income Tax laws, are also likely being violated today by the online gambling websites," the petition has alleged.

It has further said that he had last year moved a similar petition which was disposed of with a direction to the Centre to treat it as a representation and take decision in accordance with law. Subsequently, he was informed by the central government that it did not have the legislative competence to deal with his representation to ban or block websites, his latest plea claims.

Emergency should not have happened, says SC

Agrees to examine 1975 proclamation during Indira Gandhi-led Cong govt rule

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

Emergency is something which should not have happened, the Supreme Court on Monday said as it agreed to hear a plea of a 94-year-old woman seeking to declare as wholly unconstitutional the proclamation made in 1975 during the tenure of then Indira Gandhi-led Congress government.

In its notice to the Centre, the top court said it would examine if it is feasible or desirable to make a simpler declaration of the proclamation after a 45-year lapse.

Advocate Harish Salve, appearing for petitioner Veera Sarin, said Emergency was a fraud and the greatest assault on Constitution as rights were suspended for months.

ing over what relief it can grant after passage of such a long time. The bench also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Krishnay Roy said the court would be disinclined to open all such aspects as there may be some wrongs done to persons, but with the passage of almost 45 years, it would not be appropriate to reopen such issues.

It asked the petitioner to amend her petition by 18 December with respect to the prayer of declaration of Emergency as unconstitutional.

Advocate Harish Salve, appearing for petitioner Veera Sarin, said Emergency was a fraud and the greatest assault on Constitution as rights were suspended for months.

Emergency was proclaimed minutes before the midnight of 25 June, 1975 by then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed at the recommendation of then government led by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The proclamation was revoked in March 1977.

Salve said it's an important matter of considerable importance and if the principles of abuse of constitutional power can apply to removal of state governments, presidential proclamations, then the principle should also cover the issues of rights of citizens.

He said they have relied on the Shah Commission report to prima facie say the declaration of Emergency was an abuse of power and if a situation like this ever arises, a court can and will look into it.

The Centre had appointed a commission of enquiry headed by former Chief Justice of India J C Shah in 1977 to inquire into all the excesses committed during the Emergency.

Salve said the petitioner had suffered during the Emergency and the court should see how she was treated during that period.

In the world, war crimes are being punished, gender crimes are being punished and you can see people of 80-90 years being hauled up for their deeds. History cannot be allowed to repeat, he said, adding, for months, rights were suspended.

'Police special branch officer behind Swapna's audio clip'

TIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 14 DECEMBER

Central agencies probing the gold smuggling and related cases have reportedly succeeded in unfolding the force behind prime accused Swapna Suresh's voice clip alleging coercion from the ED to name Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the case.

Swapna confessed to the Customs officials that some personnel of the state police, special branch, were behind the episode. She repeatedly admitted to the Customs that the voice in the clip was her's and that the plan was chalked out by a special branch officer in the state police, reportedly under the instruction of unknown higher powers.

The probe further revealed that the recording was made on 6 August, when Swapna was under ED custody in Kochi. Five women police officers were deployed for Swapna's protection there, and according to sources, one among the five called a special branch officer and handed over the phone to Swapna.

The special branch officer recorded Swapna's statement. Swapna said she was briefed in advance about what was required to be said during the phone conversation. The voice clip was released on an online portal on 18 November. **SNS**

Mayors 'running offices' from streets outside Delhi CM house

NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

Mayors of the BJP-led three municipal corporations on Monday started "running their offices" from the streetsides outside the Delhi chief minister's residence, as they continued their protest to demand release of funds "due to the civic bodies". The dharma entered its eighth day as they refused to budge.

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash said files are being brought to him by officials for signing.

The "camp office" began at 11.30 AM on Monday. Posters bearing 'Mayor of NDMC,' were pasted on a mattress on which Prakash and other civic leaders sat under a temporary tent erected outside the CM House in the Civil Lines area.

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash said files are being brought to him by officials for signing.

The "camp office" began at 11.30 AM on Monday. Posters bearing 'Mayor of NDMC,' were pasted on a mattress on which Prakash and other civic leaders sat under a temporary tent erected outside the CM House in the Civil Lines area.

South Delhi Mayor Anamika and East Delhi Mayor Nirmal Jain too started 'running their offices' from the road sides at the protest venue.

Regional climate centre for Himalayas: IMD chief

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

India is planning to establish a regional climate centre for the Himalayan mountain region which will not only provide weather-related advices within the country but also to its neighbours. India Meteorological Department (IMD) director general Mrutunjay Mohapatra said on Monday.

The work for such a centre has already begun and talks are on with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

China is also building a similar regional climate centre on its side of the Himalayas, he said.

Addressing a webinar on 'Weather and Climate Services over Mountains Region,' Mohapatra said India has the Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats along the Myanmar hills in the northeast.

Considering the size of the Himalayas and its role in India's hydrology, meteorology, disaster management, ecosystem and many other activities, the world has recognised it as the 'third pole of the world,' he noted.

As a part of the ecosystem, as a part of the land, ocean, atmosphere system, the mountains, including the Himalayas, and all other hill ranges play a significant role, Mohapatra stressed. Being a data sparse region, the relative observational network is limited as compared to the plain ranges of the country, he said.

He said there is a scope to improve further the physical understanding of various processes occurring in these mountain regions, their modelling and hence the forecasting and warning services. **PTI**

KCR nod to fill vacancies for govt jobs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, 14 DECEMBER

One of the key demands during the struggle for Telangana was jobs along with water and statehood.

es of providing water for irrigation as well as drinking water through various irrigation projects as well as Mission Bhagiratha to supply water to household taps.

Various welfare schemes were also launched benefiting the old, infirm and women.

However, there was increasing disgruntlement

among youths because of lack of job opportunities, particularly in the government sector.

The Osmania University, a hotbed of Telangana statehood struggle, saw students disillusioned by lack of employment generation. But the string of defeats suffered by TRS seems to have been a wake-up call for the chief minister.

Rao has finally announced that notifications will be issued soon to fill up mass vacancies for government teachers and in police force. The CM instructed the

chief secretary to collect the list of vacancies from all departments.

Apparently, more than 50 per cent vacancies exists across various departments - mostly in teaching posts and police.

Once the vacancies are notified recruitment process is expected to begin in the state.

Chief secretary Somesh Kumar today directed senior officials to compile details of vacancies in the prescribed format which will then be sent to the chief minister.

PIL in HC seeks minimum standards at mental health establishments

PTI

NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought response of the Centre on a PIL seeking framing of regulations for maintaining minimum standards at different categories of mental health establishments under the Mental Healthcare Act.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan asked the Centre to inform it by February 5, 2021 the status with regard to publication of the regulations.

"Take a decision. Tell us how much time it will take," the bench said after the counsel for the central government told the court that the regulations have been sent for publication.

The court was hearing the plea by advocate and mental health activist Gaurav Kumar Bansal who has said that a similar plea filed by him earlier was disposed of by the high court by directing the Centre to treat it as a representation and take a decision on it as expeditiously as possible and practicable.

However, till date the central government has not notified the minimum standards, he has said in the petition.

His petition has contended that under the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 the minimum standards were to be notified within 18 months of commencement of the statute.

The high court on October 12 had directed the Centre to treat Bansal's earlier similar plea as a representation and to decide it in accordance with the law, rules, regulations and government policy applicable to the facts of the case as expeditiously as possible and practicable.

He has also said in his petition that under the Act, every person has the right to make an 'advance directive' which specifies how he/she, suffering from any mental illness, wishes to be cared for and treated or not treated.

However, the regulations for specifying the manner of making the 'advance directive' have also not been notified, the plea has claimed.

people through Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy.

"However, these establishments never register themselves with the Central Mental Health Authority or State Mental Health Authority as required under the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017. Since till date respondent 2 (Delhi government) has neither issued any notification prescribing minimum standards for such establishments nor has clarified whether such establishments shall be treated as mental health establishments, persons with mental illness are finding it difficult to approach such entities," the petition has claimed.

He has also said in his petition that under the Act, every person has the right to make an 'advance directive' which specifies how he/she, suffering from any mental illness, wishes to be cared for and treated or not treated.

It is very obfuscatory that a Muslim boy would become part of an 'unlawful assembly' which mostly consisted of members of the Hindu community, the common object whereof was to cause maximum damage to the property, life and limb(s) of the other community. So, prima facie, the applicant

Did not appeal to senses Muslim accused would rub shoulder to shoulder with Hindu rioters: Court

PTI

NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

A Delhi court has granted bail to a man in two separate cases related to the north east Delhi riots, saying it did not appeal to the senses that accused, being a Muslim, would rub shoulder to shoulder in such a surcharged atmosphere with the members of an unlawful assembly, which mainly consisted of persons from the Hindu community and would beat a Muslim boy to death.

The court said admitted majority of the accused persons which formed the unlawful assembly in the matter were Hindus, whereas Aarif was a Muslim by religion.

(Aarif) cannot be said to be part of 'unlawful assembly' or share 'common object' with them on the date of incident.

The case of applicant is totally on a different pedestal as compared with other accused (jitterer whose bail application has already been dismissed by this court), because it does not appeal to senses that applicant being a muslim would rub shoulder to shoulder in such a surcharged atmosphere with the members of 'unlawful assembly'.

The court said eye witnesses have not specifically spelt out the role of the accused in the matter and their statements prima facie appeared to be general one.

The applicant (Aarif) is not visible in any CCTV/video footage. As regards the call detail record (CDR) location, it is relevant to mention here that applicant is resident of the same locality/area and as such, at this stage his CDR location being found at or around the spot is also not of much consequence to the prosecution.

Furthermore, once the applicant is out of the ambit

of section 149 (unlawful assembly), which mainly consisted of the persons of Hindu community and would beat a Muslim boy to death, Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav said.

The court said in its order passed on December 11 granted bail to Aarif on furnishing of a bail bond of Rs 20,000 with one surety of like amount each in the cases related to the deaths of two Muslim youths during the riots in Dayalpur area.

It further said eye witnesses have not specifically spelt out the role of the accused in the matter and their statements prima facie appeared to be general one.

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Communal violence had broken out in northeast Delhi on February 24 after clashes between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 200 injured.

him by calling him with adjectives such as 'media's biggest predator' that harmed his reputation. He has denied all the allegations of sexual harassment made against him by the women who came forward during the MeToo campaign.

Several women came up with accounts of the alleged sexual harassment by Akbar while they were working as journalists under him. He termed the allegations false, fabricated and deeply distressing and said he was taking appropriate legal action against them.

During the Monday's hearing, senior advocate Rajiv Nayar, representing the producers, said if the media houses are agreeable to the court's earlier order that they will ensure that no defamatory content is uploaded on the social media platforms administered by them or displayed/broadcast on their respective news channels, the suit can be disposed of.

The submission was opposed by senior advocate Sandeep Sethi, representing the Bennett Coleman Group, who said they were not agreeable to the suggestion and are challenging the maintainability of the suit.

Women speaking up against M J Akbar required celebration, Ramani tells court

PTI

NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

Women speaking about the sexual misconduct of former union minister MJ Akbar in the wake of #MeToo movement in 2018 required celebration and not prosecution for defamation, journalist Priya Ramani told a Delhi court on Monday.

She made the submission during the final hearing in a criminal defamation complaint filed by Akbar against her for allegedly defaming him by accusing him of sexual misconduct 20 years

back. Senior advocate Rebecca John, appearing for Ramani, told the court that it was not a crime to speak up on the #MeToo platform and that those were the acts of extreme courage.

#MeToo came to India in 2018. It wasn't a crime to speak up on #MeToo platform. These are acts of extreme courage that require celebration. These are not the acts for which one should face defamation.

Several people spoke up about past incidents and unburdened themselves. They are not guilty, John told Additional

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ravindra Kumar. She told the judge that not just Ramani but at least 15 other women journalists made similar allegations against Akbar. Does it mean that all 15 women were petty liars? Did everyone lose their mind in October 2018? Akbar started his defamation campaign only

Hospital deaths

It is an amazing feature of politic rhetoric that the shoe can often pinch the other foot, as events in central India have demonstrated in recent days. Last Thursday, nine infants were reported to have died in the Rajasthan government-run JK Lone hospital in Kota, which last year too had seen a rash of such deaths. The opposition Bharatiya Janata Party was quick to jump into the fray and quickly seek the resignation of the health minister. It claimed that healthcare had suffered under the stewardship of Congress Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and saw in the deaths of these infants, confirmation of his government's incompetence. Before the last critical volley had been fired, Covid patients in a government-run hospital in neighbouring, BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh had gasped to death after the power supply failed and the back-up generator malfunctioned. This time, it was the turn of the Congress to train its guns on the BJP government of Shivraj Singh Chauhan. In both instances, inquiries have been ordered and doubtless they will in the course of time meander their way to ineffectual conclusions that will do little to ensure such tragedies do not recur. Neither Madhya Pradesh nor Rajasthan, nor indeed any of the states of the Indian Union has an unbesmirched record as far as health care is concerned. Just a couple of weeks ago, six infants had perished in a Government-run hospital at Shahdol in Madhya Pradesh. In 2017, there had been a spate of such deaths with 24 perishing in Vidisha, 36 in Shahdol (both in Madhya Pradesh), 49 in Farukhabad and 60 in Gorakhpur (both in Uttar Pradesh). Deaths in hospitals due to medical negligence or equipment failure are frequent, and scarcely a month goes by without one tragedy or the other being reported from some part of the country. This situation prevailed long before the coronavirus epidemic placed a strain on public healthcare facilities. If anything, while the virus peaked, deaths from other causes seemed to have come down, in part because public hospitals functioned at full strength but equally because the focus of healthcare had shifted to the virus. Now, with the virus case load having come under some kind of control, public hospitals seem to be reverting to their old slothful ways.

The fact is that the colour of the political outfit matters little in the disgraceful narrative of India's public hospitals. Regardless of who is in charge, patients are treated with apathy by an overburdened system that attracts far less public investment than it deserves. While the epidemic has underscored the need for spending much more on public healthcare facilities, it is entirely possible that with the disease having been brought under some form of control and a vaccine within grasp, the exaggerated concerns of the past few months will quickly fade away. And leave us where we have always been, reporting crib deaths and power failures because the state refuses to place a premium on human life.

European gloom

Europe is bracing for possibly its worst post-war Christmas as gloom envelopes a continent coping with the very real possibility of a no-deal Brexit, sharp increases in coronavirus cases and the prospect of significant curbs on movement and activity in the days ahead. Fearing lockdowns to coincide with Christmas, Italian shoppers came out in droves in several cities on Sunday, forcing authorities to block off roads and tourist attractions. Restrictions had been eased last month but already experts are warning of another surge in cases in the weeks ahead, even as Italy over the weekend overtook the United Kingdom as the country with the largest death toll in western Europe. Italy has already announced a ban on travel between regions and said people will not be permitted to leave their towns on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Germany has announced imposition of strict measures from this week until 10 January. Beginning Wednesday, schools, non-food stores and hairdressers will be shut, while restaurants will be restricted to takeaways. While an exception has been made for Christmas day, not more than five people can meet indoors at a time as part of measures that the government of Mrs Angela Merkel has deemed necessary because of a spike in new cases. Other European countries too have placed restrictions on human contact, even as they have advised people to stay indoors and avoid fraternising. The United Kingdom, for instance, has asked its citizens to think "really carefully" about increasing social contacts over Christmas. In the Netherlands, people have been asked to avoid city centres, while in Switzerland hospitals have written to the health authorities to express "great concern" at the prevailing situation which has seen hospital ICUs reaching near-full capacity in several cities. In Spain, social gatherings have been restricted to six while Austrians, already under lockdown since 7 December, will hope there is some easing up as the festival approaches. France has already been under lockdown since late October, to be replaced on December 15 by a night curfew between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m., which will be eased only on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Through the past months, governments in Europe have had to battle both the virus and increasing numbers of people who see restrictions as an imposition on their rights. Indeed, large numbers have even resisted wearing masks, notwithstanding evidence to suggest this can help control spread of the virus. But this evidence has largely been ignored by protestors across the political divide who have gathered in public squares to mark their resentment at the restrictions placed on them. While many experts have echoed the words of Austria's Health Minister who said, "the next two weeks are crucial", Europe must brace for a Christmas where people might choose to break shackles to embrace festive cheer in a year marked by gloom.

Resolving NPAs ~ II

Even the much-hyped IBC's recovery track record is not that impressive which should cause a great deal of concern considering the reform agenda behind its coming into existence. One big question bothers a lot: where are we heading with an average hair cut of 70 to 75 per cent? Things are no better with the advent of forensic audits since auditors are made to deal with lack of cooperation from parties and banks



The recognition of bad loans is undoubtedly the first step to resolve the problem. There are two polar approaches to loan stress. One is to apply Band-Aids to keep the loan current, and hope that time and growth will set the project back on track. Sometimes this works. But most of the time, the low growth that precipitated the stress persists. Lending intended to keep the original loan current grows. Facing large and potentially unpayable debt, the promoter loses interest, does little to fix existing problems, and the project goes into further losses. An alternative approach is to try to put the stressed project back on track. This may require deep surgery. Existing loans may have to be written down. If loans are written down, the promoter brings in more equity, and other stakeholders chip in, the project may have a strong chance of revival, and the promoter will be incentivised to try his utmost to put it back on track. But to do deep surgery such as restructuring or writing down loans, the bank must recognize it has a problem - classify the asset as a Non-Performing Asset (NPA).

Loan classification is merely good accounting - it reflects what the true value of the loan might be. It is accompanied by provisioning which ensures the bank sets aside a buffer to absorb likely losses. If the losses do not materialize, the bank can write back provisioning to profits. If the losses do materialize, the bank does not have to suddenly declare a big loss; it can set the losses off against the prudent provisions it has made. The bank balance sheet then represents a true and fair picture of the bank's health, as it is meant to.

The obvious remedy would be to tackle the source of the problem - to clean the balance sheets of public sector banks, a remedy that has worked well in other countries where it has been implemented. This is not a "foreign" solution. It is an economically sensible solution.

Though over time a plethora of measures have either already gone live or been under experimentation to tame the NPA monster, we strongly believe it is time stakeholders get their acts together and operate in a highly cohesive style to extinguish the evil. Specific call outs such as the role of watch dogs like credit rating agencies, valuers, lawyers, stock auditors, concurrent auditors and auditors of various companies may have to be reimagined and reconfigured in such a way as to optimize the efficacy in meeting the spirit of their role. Low remuneration of monitoring agencies does not augur well for early detection and effective management of NPAs.

Even the much-hyped IBC's recovery track record is not that impressive which

should cause a great deal of concern considering the reform agenda behind its coming into existence. One big question bothers a lot: where are we heading with an average hair cut of 70 to 75 per cent? Things are no better with the advent of forensic audits since auditors are made to deal with lack of cooperation from parties and banks. Forensic auditors need to be empowered to enforce production of records by promoters, management and banks. Banks at times are wary of certain frauds being reported. And, of course, at times there are undesirable practices creeping into forensic audit reporting.

Tendering system for allotment of forensic audits has resulted in fixation of extremely unremunerative fees and the consequential



The writers are chartered accountants

undesirable practices. At times forensic auditors are made to chase the Resolution Professionals (RPs) and banks for their fees. In some cases, restructuring has taken place despite adverse findings by forensic auditors; this is something government and regulators must be wary of. It's safe to say that the void created by not having a near perfect institutionalised mechanism to deal with the situation with an iron fist has made life a picnic for unscrupulous players.

In the absence of a uniform policy on deduction of payables from current assets, it is imperative for RBI to ensure uniformity in practice in the banking industry to ensure proper calculation of drawing power for proper classification of loans. Similarly, undesirable convention of allowing withdrawal of personal guarantees of promoters, which has gained ground in the last decade for no compelling reason, may be discontinued. Segregation of long-term finance from short-term finance is another essential ingredient in tackling the problem and merit evaluation. Most importantly, it is widely believed there is an urgency in forming term lending financial institutions popularly referred to as Development Financial Institutions (DFIs) to ensure exclusivity and increase the systemic efficiency in credit flow.

Most significantly for better monitoring

there is a need for government to facilitate coordination between banks, revenue authorities and Ministry of Corporate Affairs to challenge the discrepancies encountered among various reportings and filings with different agencies. Also, the need for the NCLTs to adhere to timelines and not to allow cases to drag on as in the case of Unitech, JP Associates and other companies cannot be overstated.

The NPA crisis could also be partly solved by encouraging the debt market. Rather than going to the bank, corporates can enter the debt market with their requirement of money and tenure. In short, instead of involving banks, companies can enter into direct transactions. In addition to the concept of creating DFIs, the idea of forming a Bad bank to absorb all sins is widely believed to be a formidable step in the direction of easing out the NPA chaos.

We don't subscribe to the idea of privatisation of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) as an unqualified panacea to this ever-growing malady for the simple reason that private banks' exposure to NPAs are not substantially different from their counterparts in public sector, both in terms of quality and quantity. Functioning of certain private sector banks such as ICICI, Yes Bank, Lakshmi Vilas Bank etc. are a testimony to this. These banks have been as vulnerable to NPAs and certain practices as PSBs. However, failure in bringing high-profile defaulters to book has been a major source of disappointment and that is possibly a credible reason for undeterred spread of this ailment engulfing lending communities across state-owned banks.

There is a need to ensure that as happened with certain transactions of Asset Reconstruction Companies, Resolution Professionals do not become a mask for defaulting promoters and ultimately the assets end up with the same persons. Also, the assets should not be disposed of to enrich few promoters and/or other parties, bankers and RPs. Any such instances should be dealt with strictly.

We sign off by saying the key to NPA management lies in establishing effective processes of early detection. Similarly, on the resolution front seldom, is there an alternative to actual recovery of money from the defaulters as against the writing off loans invariably shown as reduction in gross NPAs? This window dressing practice may be a transitory arrangement of managing fancy headlines to assuage public anger and sentiments sans an enduring solution. As an aspiring emerging economy, we ought to care about this the most.

(Concluded)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

No place for violence

SIR, In a democracy there is no place of violence and it should be condemned by all. Elections will come and go but the spirit and value of democracy should not be minimised.

The attack on Mr J P Nadia's convoy indicates that not much has changed in the political culture

of West Bengal even after so many years of CPI-M rule. While the state has the right to differ with the Centre, action in the Nadda case should not be overlooked just because the incident involved the leader of an Opposition party.

Mamata Banerjee who took on the decades-old Left rule in the

state while laying siege to police stations. Memories of her agitation at Singur that forced Tata Motors to shift its business are still alive.

As Chief Minister, she has had an indifferent relationship with the Governor who had clearly warned her not to do any unconstitutional act. It is an accepted fact that it might be difficult for a non-BJP ruled state to get its demands met by the Centre.

But politics must be carried out in a constructive spirit and in the best interests of federalism.

Yours, etc., Yash Pal Ralhan,
Jalandhar, 14 December

PRESIDENTIAL

SIR, Devendra Saksena's "Consultative process" (12 December) contains good suggestions for lawmakers. His earlier write up on legislative overreach in November was also illuminating.

Unfortunately most legislators are either illiterate or at the beck and call of parties that gave them tickets. It is reported that 89 per cent of the bills introduced between 2014 and 2019 in Parliament were passed without proper discussion on the basis of majority of the ruling party.

Parliamentary democracy has

SHOCKING DEATHS

SIR, I was shocked to read the report "3 patients die after power outage in Covid ward of Bhopal govt. hospital" (The Statesman, 13 December). Framing of an inquiry commission or compensation is not the answer. The tragic incident in Bhopal's government hospital clearly suggests that there should be guidelines to ensure the mandatory provision of "uninterrupted" power supply in critical care units of all hospitals and nursing homes in the country.

Power disruptions may damage electronic equipments which can be repaired or replaced. But human lives cannot be replaced.

Yours, etc., Indrani Guha, Kolkata, 14 December

become a farce. The state legislative assemblies are no different. Time has come for a change to the Presidential form of government.

Yours, etc., Basudeb Dutta,
Santipur, 13 December

'OUTSIDERS'

SIR, With the West Bengal assembly elections due early next year, political parties here have moved into the next gear of campaigning. The Trinamool Congress and their main opposition for next year's election, the Bharatiya Janata Party, have already started their electioneering and have been involved in several rounds of active and fierce campaigning across the state.

Already, a heated debate has

started between these political parties on the issue of "outsiders" as the West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee terms the BJP's central leaders who have been campaigning in the state.

BJP does not have any influential leader from the local populace. They are highly dependent on powerful Central leaders when it comes to campaigning. This is a political ploy on the part of Miss Banerjee and her party to garner Bengali votes.

Traditionally Bengalis do have a huge sense of pride about their language and culture. As such, this issue may emerge as a dominant factor in next year's election.

Yours, etc., Anupam Neogi,
Kolkata, 14 December



A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

When vaccines arrive

Last week, aid groups warned that many developing countries would see almost no vaccine next year because richer countries have bought up more than 50 percent of the vaccine doses expected to be produced in 2021, including those produced by Pfizer-BioNTech, which has already received emergency approval in six countries and the Moderna vaccine, which is most likely the next in line. According to the People's Vaccine Alliance, which includes Amnesty International, Frontline AIDS, Global Justice Now and Oxfam, an analysis of deals done between countries and the eight leading vaccine candidates show that 67 low- and lower-middle-income countries risk being left behind as rich countries hoard doses enough to vaccinate their populations nearly three times over.

Nepal has sent diplomatic notes to at least five countries, whose vaccines against the coronavirus have either received emergency approval or are nearing their third phase trials, seeking their support to make the vaccines available to Nepalis. While the government has also amended the existing law through an ordinance to facilitate the procurement of a suitable vaccine, it has to do a lot more given how wealthy countries are hoarding all they can while pharmaceutical corporations retain exclusive rights over their drugs, despite public funding in developing their vaccines.

THE KATHMANDU POST
THE KATHMANDU POST
An English-language daily newspaper

One of the most promising vaccines for Nepal is the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, which is being manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, which has already stockpiled more than 50 million doses. The vaccine, which awaits emergency-use approvals, is also part of the COVAX pact led by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance to allow equitable access to poorer countries, which Nepal has already signed up for.

The Oli administration must be on tiptoes and follow all developments of the AstraZeneca vaccine as it is the only vaccine to date to have its efficacy and safety peer-reviewed. The World Health Organisation, under the COVAX pact, will also supply vaccines for 20 percent of the population of Nepal, and unlike Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna which are expensive and require ultra freezers, the AstraZeneca vaccine can be stored in regular freezers which makes it the best candidate for Nepal.

Through the COVAX pact, it is expected that a billion doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine will be manufactured and provided at manufacturing cost to developing countries, but there have also been reports of bilateral deals, which raises concerns of supply for a country like Nepal. In India, where the vaccine is being manufactured by the world's biggest vaccine maker, the Serum Institute of India also expects to sell hundreds of millions of doses at home, which currently has the world's second-highest infections.

Regulators in India are also considering emergency use authorisation of Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca and Bharat Biotech within this month. Earlier in March, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had hosted a video conference where SAARC members came together to pledge cooperation and collaboration to fight the effects of the global outbreak of Covid-19.

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Regulators in India are also considering emergency use

HARSHA KAKAR

The farmers' agitation in India drew support from the global Khalistan movement. In London, there were thousands of protestors outside the Indian High Commission waving Khalistan flags. Amongst the participants were members of the Sikh Federation, UK, known to be associated with the Khalistan movement. Also present in the protest was Paramjeet Singh Pamma, a man wanted in India for his connection to the banned terror group, Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), which is believed to be funded by Pakistan's ISI. Attempts in the UK parliament to back the protest were turned down by Boris Johnson, describing it as India's internal matter.

The US-headquartered SFJ threatened to shut down Indian consulates in Europe and North America through rallies in support of the ongoing agitation. Pakistan also waded into the farmer's protest. Their interior minister, Fawad Chaudhary, tweeted, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We must speak up against injustice done to Punjabi farmers. Modi policies are a threat to the whole region." Pakistan has openly been attempting to rekindle the Khalistan movement.

Simultaneously, Delhi Police arrested five individuals who were planning a high-profile assassination in the city. The group consisted of two Khalistan supporters and three Hizbul Mujahideen members. Indian intelligence agencies, in coordination with their counterparts in the UAE, detained ISI henchman, Sukhmeet Pal Singh in Dubai. He had masterminded several killings this year, including that of Shaurya Chakra awardee Balwinder Singh Sandhu. His arrest will be a major setback for Pakistan as their links to the organization would be revealed.

Pakistan's involvement in the Khalistan movement is well documented. Zulfikar Bhutto had stated in support of Khalistan, "Pakistan will also have a Bangladesh carved out of India, except that it will be on Pakistan's border." This agenda was further pushed by Zia-ul-Haq. Hussain Haqqani, the former Pakistani ambassador to the US, gave Pakistan's reasons for supporting the movement.

Pakistan's plan to open Punjab flank



Firstly, it could bleed India. Secondly, if the Khalistan plan succeeded, it could create a buffer between the two countries and finally cut India's land access to Kashmir. He added that the Pakistan leadership is aware that Khalistan can never emerge, however, it could result in turmoil within India.

A study of the proposed Khalistan map displays the direct involvement of Pakistan. Historically, Lahore was the capital of the erstwhile Sikh empire and amongst its holiest shrines remains Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, now connected through the Kartarpur corridor. None of these figure in the Khalistan map. The fact that the Khalistan boundary runs along the Indo-Pak border indicates that movement leaders are unwilling to anger their main financer, ISI. The presence of Gopal

Singh Chawla, a known Khalistan supporter, display of banners for the referendum, and presence of members of the SFJ at the inauguration of the Kartarpur corridor, proved Pakistan's intentions.

While in India there are few takers, abroad there is some support for the movement. In a recent report titled, 'Khalistan, a project of Pakistan', Terry Milewski writes, "Fantasy or not, it's clear who's really driving the Khalistan bus: Pakistan – the same Pakistan where countless Sikhs were murdered and expelled in the name of Islam." He adds, "while separatist Sikhs complain loudly and properly about the killing of several thousand Sikhs in 1984, there are no rallies to demand justice for at least a quarter-million Sikhs massacred by Muslims in 1947." Milewski also quotes Hus-

sain Haqqani whose comments on the proposed referendum for Khalistan were, "the referendum is just a gimmick. And gimmicks make headlines – they don't change maps."

Pakistan has attempted to revive support for Khalistan by despatching drugs and weapons across the border, employing traditional smuggling routes and drones. Narcoterrorism is their current preferred option for purchasing supporters in the state, an act which Indian security agencies are seeking to nip in the bud. SFJ attempts to lure Sikh youth into joining the movement have largely failed.

Khalistan supporters abroad have little link with realities in India. The last elections where separatists received a drubbing is proof enough. Most supporters from abroad protest on occasions such as the current agi-

tation by farmers. Their protests in the vicinity of Indian consulates and embassies give them media coverage. Few would attempt to actively participate in anti-national activities in India. On the other hand, anti-Khalistan supporters are in far greater numbers within and outside the country.

Every nation has radicals as part of its society. These are invariably exploited by hostile countries to their advantage. The US Black Lives Matter and antifa movements are alleged to be funded by China. Radical Muslims in Europe are being exploited to commit heinous crimes by the Islamic state. In India, radicals in Kashmir and Punjab are exploited by Pakistan and in the North East by China. A few slogans of Khalistan and Pakistan, even if raised during the current farmer protests, are a sign of minuscule radical elements seeking lime-light, which must be ignored. They do not represent the majority nor are they backed by the majority.

There are reports of SFJ seeking to incite Indian army personnel into joining their organization. This too is destined to fail. It is only when the government turns a blind eye for political reasons to such movements is when they gain support, which is not the case presently.

The receding Kashmir terrorism, evident from the successful conduct of the District Development Council elections, low local recruitment, incarceration of the Hurriyat and limited political support, indicates Pakistan's Kashmir policy has failed. As an alternative, it is attempting to bring the Kashmir and Khalistan causes together hoping to create internal strife within North India. The recent arrest of the group consisting of Khalistan supporters and Hizbul Mujahideen militants highlights this new attempt.

The abrogation of Article 370 and failure of their Kashmir policy will push Pakistan to attempt reviving the Khalistan card. For them, the closing of one door implies opening a second. While support to the Khalistan cause will never ever be a repeat of the eighties, security agencies must maintain a close watch and prevent the movement from gaining steam.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The other day reference was made to the evidence of progress shown by the annual report on co-operative societies in Bengal. A report has now been issued in blue-book form showing the progress of the co-operative movement in all India. This is the first of a series of publications to be issued by the Department of Statistics, to which the compilation of these periodical statements was transferred last year. The figures and diagrams given in the report show that the co-operative movement, encouraging as its progress has been in Bengal, has made greater advances still in other provinces. Bengal in 1918-19 had 4,257 co-operative societies. This number was nearly equalled by the Central Provinces, which had 4,223, and was exceeded by the Punjab which could show 5,465. The figures showing the number of societies per 100,000 inhabitants are still more striking. Bengal's proportion was 9.5; but Ajmer-Merwara had 79.6, Coorg 39.5, Burma 34.1, Central Provinces and Berar 30/2, the Punjab 28, and Bombay 11.2. Bengal exceeded Madras with 8.9, the United Provinces with 7.2, Bihar and Orissa with 6.4, and Assam with 5.8. These figures might, it is true, be taken as illustrating the illusions of statistics. Proportionately to population Coorg, for instance, with 39 societies per 100,000 inhabitants, is far ahead of Bengal with only about 9; but the actual figures upon which the proportions are calculated are 79 societies in Coorg and 4,257 in Bengal.

NEWS ITEMS

RAILWAY WORKMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Allahabad, Dec 14
The first annual general meeting of the Railway Workmen's Association was held today, presided over by Mr. Jones, President of the Association. Some fifty delegates, representing different railways, namely, the North-Western, Eastern Bengal, Great Indian Peninsula, Howrah-Amra and Calcutta Tramways were present. The annual report showed that there were 16,559 members, and a sum of Rs 12,000 was deposited in the Allahabad Bank. There were two funds, legal defence fund to defend a member if prosecuted, and death benefit fund, in which on the death of a member surviving members have to pay a rupee each to his nominee. Mr. Sorabji said it was not proper to go on strike. He said it was "un-British" to go on strike before the visit of the Duke of Connaught was over.

THE MYTHIC SOCIETY

Dr. E.W. Thomas, of the India Office Library, is on a visit at Bangalore to acquaint himself with historical and other researches. In response to the invitation of Fr. A.M. Tabord, president of the Mythic Society, he visited the Daly Memorial Hall, the habitation of the society, where he looked round the library of the society and met some of the members. Fr. Tabord traced the origin of the society, which was started about eleven years ago, and explained its activities. He also desired to be supplied with a copy of the Catalogue of the India Office Library. Dr. Thomas, in the course of his reply, suggested the affiliation of the Mythic Society to the Royal Asiatic Society in London, and said that he would consider the specific requests made by Fr. Tabord.

VINCENT HILL SCHOOL

Members of the Rotary Club, assembled at luncheon yesterday, listened to a discussion regarding the training of children, particularly domiciled and Anglo-Indian, to equip them for what was termed "the new India of the future." The discussion followed interesting addresses given by Professor T.D. Rowe, Principal of the Vincent Hill School, Mussoorie, and Mr. G.F. Enock, Secretary of the Vincent Hill School Fund. The former, in pointing out that the idea of the Vincent Hill School, was to make children practical and self-reliant men and women, asked how it was possible to make them such under present conditions. Children in this country had too many servants to expect them to be a success. He also urged that parents should take more interest in their children, and not leave so much to the ayah and bearer.

EU crackdown on rights abusers



KAMAL AHMED

In a rare admission of the suffering caused by the targeted sanctions imposed by the United States, Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, told the media that she had lost all banking services and had to transact solely in cash. Defying the US sanction by any commercial bank, even one that is wholly owned by Hong Kong nationals, would have meant the end of their global business. The above-mentioned sanction which Ms Lam has been subjected to is known as the Magnitsky Act. It allows for the imposition of sanctions against individuals and entities accused of serious human rights violations and corruptions. The outgoing Trump administration has

already used this act to slap sanctions, including travel ban and freezing of assets in the US, on over 500 individuals and companies from across the world. The majority of those on the list are from within the American continent, or from Russia and China.

The apparent success of this smart sanctions tool seems to be a preferred choice for western democracies. Human rights groups like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and a few others have long been advocating for the imposition of targeted penalties against individuals and institutions engaged in serious violations of peoples' rights. The European Union is the latest to join in the campaign, following Canada and the United Kingdom. The EU

Council of ministers on December 7 adopted its own version of the Magnitsky Act. The council agreed to establish a global human rights sanctions regime that allows the EU to freeze the assets of, ban entry to, and prohibit dealings with human rights abusers, wherever they may be located.

The EU human rights sanctions regime has a special significance, since it combines 27 European nations with a better record among other western democracies in defending human rights globally. If implemented and enforced consistently and in coordination with the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, it has the potential to make an even wider impact in the global

fight against human rights abuse.

Human rights defenders hailed the Magnitsky Act as a much-needed "smart tool" to counter autocratic regimes, because it allows western governments to target perpetrators without punishing the people of a country. The US Congress in 2012 first enacted the Act and named it after Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian auditor, allegedly tortured to death in a Moscow jail in 2009 following his revelation of a \$230 million dollar fraud by Russian tax officials in the UK. The UK government enacted the British Magnitsky Act last July and imposed targeted sanctions against 49 people and organisations and among them 25 were Russians.

On December 10, Britain announced fresh sanctions on 10 politicians and officials accused of human rights breaches in Russia, Venezuela, the Gambia and Pakistan. The list includes a former president and his wife as well as a lower level police officer. The Gambia's former president Yahya Jammeh, whose election defeat in December 2016 forced him to flee, was one of three from the West African nation. His wife Zineb and the former director-general of the country's National Intelligence Agency, Yankuba Badjie, are also subject to asset freezes and a UK travel ban. Allegations against Jammeh include extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, kidnappings, torture, rape, as well as wider human rights violations. Both the ex-president and his wife are already under similar sanctions from the United States.

However, the inclusion of a former police super of Pakistan in the sanctions' list is a sign that it is being broadened to other countries to locate serious abusers. The Pakistani police official named by the British government is a former senior superintendent of police in Malir District, Ahmad Anwar Khan, who is known to

be an "encounter specialist", suspected of being responsible for more than 190 "hits" that led to more than 400 deaths.

In a sign of coordination in taking actions against the worst abusers, the outgoing US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, in a statement issued to mark International Human Rights Day said: "We stand beside our partners in the UK who similarly took action against those seeking to rob individuals of their rights. We congratulate the UK on the actions it took today under its Global Human Rights sanctions programme." Mr Pompeo noted that in the past 48 hours the US and the UK together took action against 37 actors in total, in connection with corruption or serious human rights abuse. Welcoming the EU's Global Human Rights Sanctions framework, he said together along with other international partners we will ensure corrupt actors and human rights abusers will have no refuge within our jurisdictions.

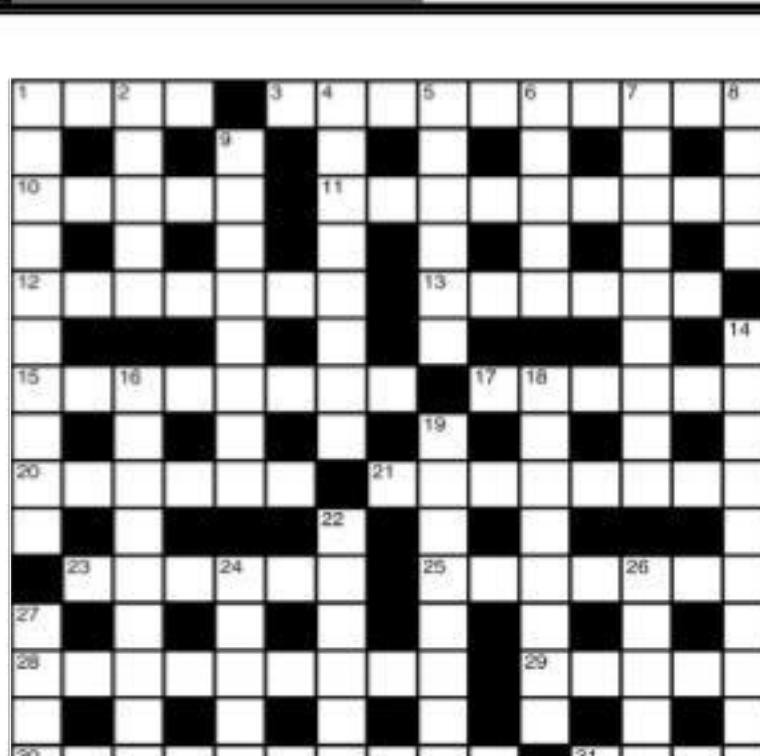
The EU sanctions regime, however, is not a replication of the US or UK legislations. The EU legislation does not include persons accused of corruption and has been criticised by some activists. They argue that autocratic regimes want to silence their critics to suppress their own corruption. Despite this shortcoming, it is expected that the EU's regime would be a powerful tool to fight against human rights abusers as Europe remains an attractive destination to transact assets.

Electoral success of the Democratic Party nominee Joe Biden in the US is seen as an opportunity in the global fight against human rights abuse as he has pledged to make democracy and human rights the core principles of his foreign policy. Rights groups now hope that increased coordination across the Atlantic will be bringing about positive changes in the protection of human rights all over the world.

The Daily Star/ANN

NO 28165

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS

- 1 Pub on map is keeping to route (4)
- 3 Old hard form of silica surrounds geographical feature (10)
- 10 Mouth is where some say river begins (5)
- 11 What's this? a house, almost a settlement (9)
- 12 He rules fifth-rate politician's a gutless mistake (7)
- 13 Nekhayev, Russian revolutionary, conceals this plot for 31 (6)
- 15 We see no dancer waving arms (8)
- 17 30 of more high quality diamonds within (6)
- 20 Senior Guide's bit of road rage (6)
- 21 He searches place with gold in meet of rivers (8)
- 23 Chap with current account? He's
- 25 Dissident in this place has mark of approval curtailed (7)
- 28 Running exercises featured in speech (9)
- 29 Casual walker taking left gets to a traffic light (5)
- 30 The first to spot a saucer perhaps above outskirts of Exeter? (10)
- 31 Plans on having junk mail sent back (4)

DOWN

- 1 Papers, sticking together, adopt sabre rattling (10)
- 2 A little less than honest politician (5)
- 4 This month old NI police need time to train (8)
- 5 Least scary exam takes a minute (6)
- 6 Regularly come round about a dog (5)
- 7 Kill off 'Terminator'? - it's full of
- 8 holes (9)
- 9 Imagine another time when ruined terrace's laid over earth (8)
- 14 Burns before composing ode errs, caught with proctor's jacket (10)
- 16 Use garden rocks and overalls (9)
- 18 One will cut down oak, say, upset thanks to abuse (3-5)
- 19 Heading off for gender reassignment and a short conversation (8)
- 22 Busy disc jockey on ecstasy leaves part of speech (6)
- 24 I am adult fly perhaps (5)
- 26 When climbing cracking section in a bone (5)
- 27 Soldiers put up notice in thoroughfare (4)

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

BOMBAY STEAMERS IDLE

The khalasis and crews of the steamers of the Bombay Steam Navigation Co., of which Messrs. Killick, Nixon and Co. are the Managing Agents, went on strike, demanding an increase of wages, thus dislocating all the coastal traffic from Karachi to Mangalore. The Company's boats form the main system of communication for this coastal service and great inconvenience has been caused to the travelling public and to trade. As a result of this strike thirty steamers have been lying idle in the harbour since Sunday. At a conference between the Company and the serangs of the crew, the Agents, having conceded the crew's demands in full, an agreement was reached whereby the serangs undertook to induce the crews to resume work.

*The pandemic has been a magnifying glass for structural inequities and injustices that exclude millions of citizens from a life of basic dignity*AZIM PREMJI
WIPRO FOUNDER CHAIRMAN

THUMBNAILS

GSTN launch: The GST Network on Monday said it has launched the "communication between taxpayer" feature on its portal.

"The new functionality will provide communication platform for taxpayers wherein a recipient/purchaser can ask his supplier/s to upload any particular invoice/s that has not been uploaded but is required by the recipient to avail input tax credit (ITC)," GST Network (GSTN) said in a statement. Now, businesses can communicate with their supplier on GSTN portal about invoice uploading or any deficiency therein.

PTI

Ficci president: Media executive Uday Shankar has taken over as Ficci president for 2020-2021, the industry body said on Monday. Currently, Shankar is president, The Walt Disney Company APAC & chairman, Star & Disney India. He has taken over from Sangita Reddy, joint MD, Apollo Hospitals Group. The Walt Disney Company had recently said Shankar will step down as president of its Asia Pacific business and chairman of Star and Disney India with effect from 31 December 2020.

PTI

Infinix foray: Chinese smartphone maker Infinix on Monday announced its foray into the smart TV segment in the country with its range of "Made in India" TVs. The company, which has introduced 32-inch and 42-inch display variants, will compete against peers like Xiaomi, Realme and Motorola from the smartphone segment. "We have been working on introducing our smart TVs in the Indian market for some time but that was delayed because of the pandemic," Infinix India CEO Anish Kapoor said.

PTI

Meghela Cable: Meghela Cable & Broadband Services, an Internet service provider and MSO (multi-service operator) from West Bengal, has launched a voice-enabled Android Box for consumers looking to convert their regular TV sets into a smart TV. Powered by Google Assistant, the Android Box provides access to premium OTT platforms and more than 150 live TV channels, said a Press release.

SNS

Philips' help: Philips India Limited on Monday announced the company's association with HelpAge India to install over 400 units of its best-selling air purifiers in old age homes in seven cities across India, including Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata, according to a release.

SNS

Mynta move: Mynta has launched "Mynta-Mall" on its app, a digital mall in partnership with brands, to offer them a unique platform to connect with their consumers. It is expected to offer a truly immersive shopping experience with easy access to the brands, their latest collection, product demos and simplified discovery, said a Press release.

SNS

Tata Group, Interups among 'multiple' bidders for Air India

A group of 219 Air India employees submitted EoI for the carrier in partnership with US-based fund Interups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 14 DECEMBER

Salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group and US-based fund Interups Inc were among "multiple" entities that today put in preliminary bids for buying loss-making carrier Air India.

A group of 219 Air India employees submitted an expression of interest (EoI) for the carrier in partnership with Interups at the close of the deadline today.

"Multiple expressions of interest have been received for strategic disinvestment of Air India. The transaction will now move to the second stage," department of investment and public asset management (Dipam) secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted.

He, however, did not reveal either the identity of the bidders or the number of bids received for buying the national carrier.

Sources said Tata Sons, the holding company of the Tata Group, has put in an EoI and so did Interups, whose

TRANSACTION WILL NOW MOVE TO SECOND STAGE

► "Multiple expressions of interest have been received for strategic disinvestment of Air India. The transaction will now move to the second stage," department of investment and public asset management (Dipam) secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted.

► An official said the transaction advisor will inform bidders before 6 January, if their bids have been qualified.

Qualified bidders will then

be asked to submit financial bids.

The government is selling its entire 100 per cent stake in Air India that has been in losses ever since its 2007 merger with domestic operator Indian Airlines.

The airline, which started as a mail carrier in 1932, will give a successful bidder control of 4,400 domestic and 1,800 international landing and parking slots at domestic airports, as well as 900 slots at airports overseas.

Besides, the bidder would also get 100 per cent of the low-cost arm Air India Express and

a full-service carrier Vistara in partnership with Singa-

50 per cent of AISATS, which provides cargo and ground handling services at major Indian airports.

With previous attempts since 2017 failing to get any significant interest, the government had this time sweetened the deal by giving freedom to potential suitors to decide how much of the airline's debt they want to take on as part of the transaction.

Previously, the bidders were required to take over the entire Rs 60,074 crore debt.

Tatas operate two airlines

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There should not be any illusion at all about reinstatement of monarchy in the country



NEPALI CONGRESS PRESIDENT SHER BAHADUR DEUBA

WHILE ALLEGING THAT NEPAL'S K P SHARMA OLI GOVT WAS TACITLY SUPPORTING PRO-MONARCHY RALLIES

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2020

09

US blames Iran in abduction, death of ex-FBI agent Levinson

Washington identified two Iranian intelligence officers believed responsible for agent's abduction

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 14 DECEMBER

The Trump administration for the first time on Monday formally blamed Iran for the presumed death of retired FBI agent Robert Levinson, publicly identifying two Iranian intelligence officers believed responsible for his abduction.

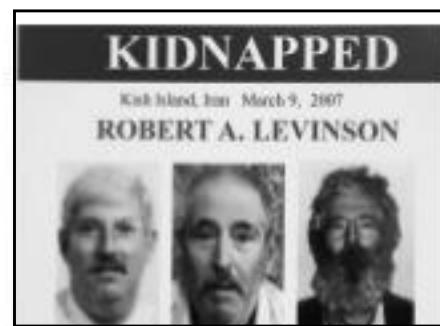
Levinson disappeared in Iran under mysterious circumstances more than a decade ago, and though US diplomats and investigators have long said they thought he was taken by Iranian government agents, Monday's announcement in the final weeks of the Trump administration was the most definitive assignment of blame to

date.

Besides blaming two high-ranking intelligence officers by name, US officials said the Iranian regime sanctioned the plot that led to Levinson's abduction and lied for years about its involvement in his disappearance through disinformation campaigns aimed at covering up the government's role.

The announcement comes nine months after US officials revealed that they had concluded that Levinson may have passed some time ago though they did not disclose at the time the information that led them to that assessment.

Officials on Monday would not describe any additional information that led them to believe Levinson had died in captivity, except to say that all



KIDNAPPED
Kish Island, Iran March 9, 2007
ROBERT A. LEVINSON

Kish Island, Iran March 9, 2007

ROBERT A. LEVINSON

Kidnapped

Robert A. Levinson



Sadly, the next four to six months could be the worst of the pandemic.

MICROSOFT CO-FOUNDER BILL GATES

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	25 H
HONG KONG	16	13 H
TOKYO	8	-1 H
LONDON	12	8 R
DUBAI	26	18 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	14	7 S
NEW YORK	6	-1 R
MOSCOW	-4	-6 H

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

THUMBNAILS



A Yemeni malnourished girl receives medical treatment in Al-Sabeen hospital in Sanaa, Yemen. ■IANS

Singapore approves Pfizer vaccine: Singapore has approved the COVID-19 vaccine developed by American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and German firm BioNTech and the first shipment will arrive by the end of this month, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced on Monday. Lee, in a televised address on Singapore's Covid-19 situation, said other vaccines are also expected to arrive in the coming months.

Windrush payouts: UK Home Secretary Priti Patel, who has previously issued a formal apology for the Windrush immigration scandal which wrongfully denied citizenship rights to thousands of Commonwealth nationals, on Monday announced a major boost to payouts from a compensation scheme set up in its wake.

Japanese space mission: Japan's space agency said Monday it has confirmed the presence of black soil samples inside a capsule that spacecraft *Hayabusa2* brought back from a distant asteroid last week. The capsule was dropped by *Hayabusa2* from space onto a spot in an Australian desert on Dec. 6.

'Andrew stayed at Epstein home around time of alleged underage sex'

LONDON, 14 DECEMBER

Prince Andrew reportedly stayed at Jeffrey Epstein's mansion in New York around the time one of the convicted sex offender's accusers alleges the Duke of York had undergone sex with her.

The duke had three hours of unaccounted-for private time while staying close to Epstein's home during a working visit to the US, the Daily Mail reported.

Virginia Giuffre, formerly known as Virginia Roberts, claims he had sex with her in March 2001 when she was 17, still a minor under US law. She also alleges they had sex a second time weeks later in New York, and a third and final time on Epstein's private island when she was 18. ■THE INDEPENDENT

Largest vaccination campaign in US history gets underway

ASSOCIATED PRESS

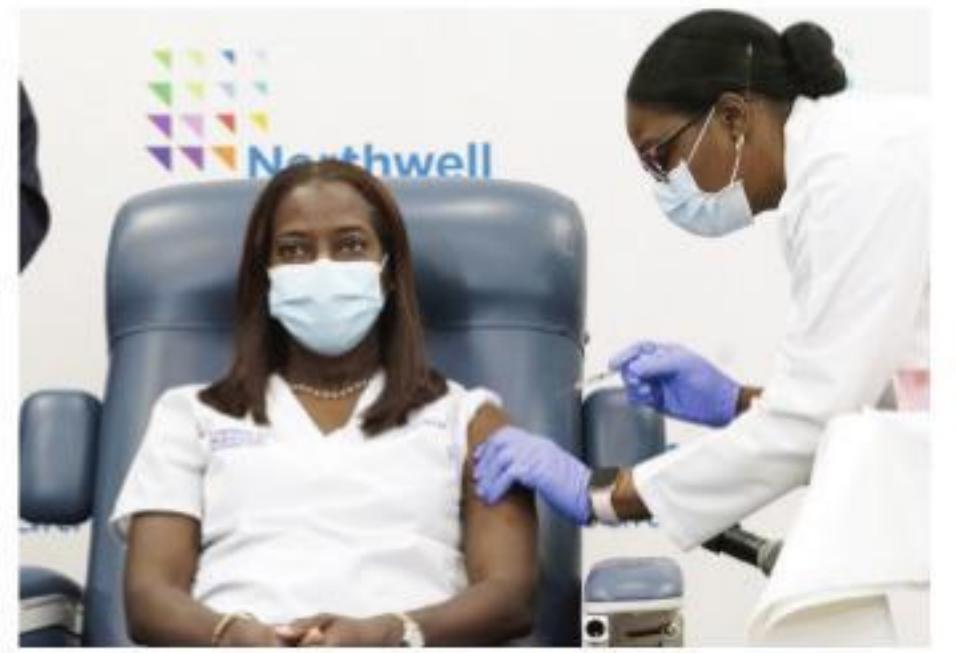
NEW YORK, 14 DECEMBER

The largest vaccination campaign in US history got underway Monday as health workers in select hospitals rolled up their sleeves for shots to protect them from Covid-19 and start beating back the pandemic - a day of optimism even as the nation's death toll neared 300,000.

"I feel hopeful today. Relieved," said critical care nurse Sandra Lindsay after getting a shot in the arm at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in New York.

Shipments of precious frozen vials of vaccine made by Pfizer Inc. and its German partner BioNTech began arriving at hospitals around the country Monday.

"This is the light at the end of the tunnel. But it's a long tunnel," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said as he watched



Lindsay's vaccination via video.

Several other countries also have OK'd the vaccine, including the UK, which started vaccinating last week.

For health care workers who, along with nursing home residents, will be first in line for vaccination, hope is tempered by grief and the sheer exhaustion of months spent

battling a coronavirus that still is surging in the US and around the world.

"This is mile 24 of a marathon. People are fatigued. But we also recognize that this end is in sight," said Dr. Chris Dale of Swedish Health Services in Seattle.

Packed in dry ice to stay at ultra-frozen temperatures,

the first of nearly 3 million doses being shipped in staggered batches this week made their way by truck and by plane around the country Sunday from Pfizer's Kalamazoo, Michigan, factory. Once they arrive at distribution centres, each state directs where the doses go next.

Some hospitals across the country spent the weekend tracking their packages, refreshing FedEx and UPS websites for clues.

More of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will arrive each week. And later this week, the FDA will decide whether to green light the world's second rigorously studied Covid-19 vaccine, made by Moderna Inc.

Now the hurdle is to rapidly get vaccine into the arms of millions, not just doctors and nurses but other at-risk health workers such as janitors and food handlers - and then deliver a second dose three

weeks later. "We're also in the middle of a surge, and it's the holidays, and our health care workers have been working at an extraordinary pace," said Sue Mashni, chief pharmacy officer at Mount Sinai Health System in New York City.

Plus, the shots can cause temporary fever, fatigue and aches as they rev up people's immune systems, forcing hospitals to stagger employee vaccinations.

A wary public will be watching closely to see whether health workers embrace vaccination. Just half of Americans say they want to get vaccinated, while about a quarter don't and the rest are unsure, according to a recent poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Health Research.

The FDA, considered the world's most strict medical regulator, said the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine appears safe

and strongly protective -- and laid out the data behind it in a daylong public meeting last week for scientists and consumers alike to see.

"Please people, when you look back in a year and you say to yourself, 'Did I do the right thing?' I hope you'll be able to say, 'Yes' because I looked at the evidence," Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, said Sunday on NBC's Meet the Press. "People are dying right now. How could you possibly say, 'Let's wait and see.'"

Still, emergency use means the vaccine was cleared for widespread use before a final study in nearly 44,000 people is complete -- and that research is continuing to try to answer additional questions. While effective against COVID-19 illness, it's not yet clear if vaccination will stop the symptomless spread that accounts for half of all cases. The shots

still must be studied in children, and during pregnancy. But the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said late Sunday that vaccination should not be withheld from pregnant women who otherwise would qualify.

While the vaccine was determined to be safe, regulators in the UK are investigating several severe allergic reactions. The FDA's instructions tell providers not to give it to those with a known history of severe allergic reactions to any of its ingredients.

Canada vaccine shipments: The first of many freezer-packed Covid-19 vaccine vials have arrived in Canada. Canada's health regulator approved the vaccine made by US drugmaker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech last Wednesday. The vaccines are bound for 14 distribution sites across the country.

Electors meet to pick Biden as President

Donald Trump clings to false claim that he won the election



ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 14 DECEMBER

Residential electors are meeting across the United States on Monday to formally choose Joe Biden as the nation's next president.

Monday is the day set by law for the meeting of the Electoral College. In reality, electors meet in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to cast their ballots. The results will be sent to Washington and tallied in a January 6 joint session of Congress over which Vice President Mike Pence will preside.

The electors' votes have drawn more attention than usual this year because President Donald Trump has refused to concede the election and continued to make baseless allegations of fraud.

The electors' votes have drawn more attention than usual this year because President Donald Trump has refused to concede the election and continued to make baseless allegations of fraud.

Early voting begins in Georgia runoffs

ATLANTA, 14 DECEMBER

party will control the US Senate.

"It's very important," Democrat Raphael Warnock, who is challenging Republican US Senator Kelly Loeffler in one of the races, said Friday after a speech to labor union canvassers.

"It's how we win in the general and it's how we're going to win in the runoff." No one expects turnout to be as high in the Warnock-Loeffler contest or the race between US Senator David Perdue and Democrat Jon Ossoff. But Bernard Fraga, an

Emory University professor who studies voting, said overall turnout could rise as high as four million.

More than 125,000 people cast ballots in October on the first day of early in-person voting before the general election. Gabriel Sterling, election system implementation manager for the Georgia Secretary of State, said he expects a surge of people on Monday. Some Atlanta-area early voting sites in October and November saw people frequently lined up for hours.

Biden won 306 electoral votes to 232 votes for Trump. It takes 270 votes to be elected.

In 32 states and the District of Columbia, laws require electors to vote for the popular-vote winner. The Supreme Court unanimously upheld this arrangement in July.

Electors almost always vote

for the state winner anyway because they generally are devoted to their political party. There's no reason to expect any defections this year. Among prominent electors are Democrat Stacey Abrams of Georgia and Republican Gov. Kristi Noem of South Dakota.

Wisconsin case: The Wisconsin Supreme Court on Monday rejected President Trump's lawsuit attempting to overturn his loss to Joe Biden in the battleground state, ending Trump's legal challenges in state courts.

The new rules on quarantining are also coming into effect on Monday, with those arriving in the UK from the vast majority of countries, as well as those who have been in contact with someone with a positive coronavirus case, seeing the quarantine period reduced from two weeks to 10 days.

The new rules came into effect in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland on Monday 14 December after Wales unilaterally reduced its self-isolation requirements from 14 days to 10.

London to go into Tier 3 lockdown amidst virus surge

THE INDEPENDENT

LONDON, 14 DECEMBER

London is expected to move from Tier 2 into Tier 3 amid a surge in coronavirus cases, Health Secretary Matt Hancock has told MPs from the city.

One London MP told The Independent that the health secretary confirmed the decision during a phone briefing.

It is understood that tier 3 restrictions will come into effect a minute past midnight on Wednesday morning and will also affect parts of neighbouring Essex and Hertfordshire.

On Monday, London Mayor Sadiq Khan called for an immediate increase in testing provision for London amid what he called a "deeply troubling" rise in coronavirus cases.

Mr Khan urged the Government to shut down schools amid the surge. However, the Government has maintained that schools should stay open.

The London mayor also warned that moving London from tier 2 into tier 3 would have "catastrophic" economic impact on businesses and "put hundreds of thousands of livelihoods at stake".

The government is expected to review all tiers in England on Wednesday, 16



December.

The rise in cases in the capital comes as vaccination clinics run by family doctors begin to administer the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to patients as early as Monday afternoon.

GP practices in more than 100 locations are receiving deliveries of the approved vaccine, allowing some to start offering vaccinations within hours.

New rules on quarantining are also coming into effect on Monday, with those arriving in the UK from the vast majority of countries, as well as those who have been in contact with someone with a positive coronavirus case, seeing the quarantine period reduced from two weeks to 10 days.

The new rules came into effect in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland on Monday 14 December after Wales unilaterally reduced its self-isolation requirements from 14 days to 10.

On Sunday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ditched a self-imposed deadline and promised to go the extra mile to clinch a post-Brexit trade agreement that would avert New Year's chaos and costs for cross-border commerce.

Barnier is willing to accept British trade with no tariffs or quotas, but only if they respect the rules and regulations that have made the EU's single market almost 500 million consumers so successful. "Free and fair competition, fair and free, equitable and open, the two go together," he said.

But Johnson says he does not want British business to be hemmed in by EU restrictions, especially if those restrictions would have to be progressively adapted to mainland standards in the future. On fisheries, Barnier demanded an agreement that guarantees a reciprocal, I insist, reciprocal access to markets and waters." It highlighted that just as EU fishermen crave to continue working in British waters, the UK seafood industry is dependent on exports into the 27-nation bloc.

US investigating computer hacks of govt agencies

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 14 DECEMBER

suspect Russia as responsible for the attack against FireEye, a major cybersecurity player whose customers include federal, state and local governments and top global corporations.

There was no immediate connection between the attacks, and it wasn't immediately clear if Russia was also responsible for the hack of the Treasury Department, which was first reported by Reuters. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said in a statement that the government was taking all necessary steps to identify and remedy any possible issues related to this situation. The government's Cyberse-

curity and Infrastructure Security Agency said separately that it has been working with other agencies regarding recently discovered activity on government networks. CISPA is providing technical assistance to affected entities as they work to identify and mitigate any potential compromises. President Donald Trump last month fired the director of CISPA, Chris Krebs, after Krebs vouched for the integrity of the presidential election and disputed Trump's claims of widespread electoral fraud.

Federal government agencies have long been attractive targets for foreign hackers. Hackers linked to Russia were able to break into the State

Department's email system in 2014, infecting it so thoroughly that it had to be cut off from the internet while experts worked to eliminate the infestation.

Reuters earlier reported that a group backed by a foreign government stole information from Treasury and a Commerce Department agency responsible for deciding internet and telecommunications policy. Intelligence agencies are reportedly concerned that other agencies were hacked using similar tools.

The Treasury Department deferred comment to the National Security Council. A Commerce Department

spokesperson confirmed a breach in one of our bureaus and said we have asked CISPA and the FBI to investigate. Last Tuesday, prominent U.S. cybersecurity firm FireEye said that foreign government hackers with world-class capabilities broke into its network and stole offensive tools it uses to probe the defenses of its thousands of customers. Those customers include federal, state and local governments and top global corporations.

The hackers primarily sought information related to certain government customers. FireEye CEO Kevin Mandia said in a statement, without naming them. He said there was no indication they got cus-

tomer information from the company's consulting or breach-response businesses or threat-intelligence data it collects.

FireEye responded to the Sony and Equifax data breaches and helped Saudi Arabia thwart an oil industry cyberattack and has played a key role in identifying Russia as the protagonist in numerous aggressions in the burgeoning new world of global digital conflict.

Neither Mandia nor a FireEye spokesperson said when the company detected the hack or who might be responsible. But many in the cybersecurity community suspect Russia.

A giant of a writer who excelled at exploring the grey areas of morality

MARTIN CHILTON

John le Carré, who has died at the age of 89, dominated spyfiction for more than half a century. But the author of classics such as *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and *A Perfect Spy*, was, at heart, a writer who explored human frailty, the dynamics of betrayal and the moral ambiguities of serving political authority. "I think he has easily burst out of being a genre writer," said fellow novelist Ian McEwan, "and will be remembered as perhaps the most significant novelist of the second half of the 20th century in Britain."

Born David John Moore Cornwell in Poole on 19 October 1931, le Carré was intrigued by deception and the power to manipulate people, themes

that appeared throughout his fiction, and traits he learned intimately from his own dysfunctional childhood". His father Ronald was a "con man", who did hard labour in prison in the late 1930s after being convicted for insurance fraud. Out of prison, his father maintained his criminal life "under the guise of respectability", a lesson for the youngster in just how far in life subterfuge can take a "chancer".

Le Carré, who graduated from Lincoln College, Oxford, had a procession of odd jobs. "I have in my time sold bath towels, washed elephants, run away from school, decimated a flock of Welsh sheep with a 25-pound shell because I was too stupid to understand the gunnery officer's instructions, and taught children in a spe-

cial school." The school he was referring to was Eton, a place where he said "the worst pupils provide a unique insight into the criminal mind". His second novel, *A Murder of Quality*, was "set in a school that was quite like Eton".

The formative influence on his



Looking for inclusive solutions

India is not a homogeneous country so we should stop searching for one-size-fits-all types of answers

ANKIT ARORA

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our lives completely, and while most sectors are still recovering and adjusting to this "new normal", it is a slow process. Healthcare and education are the ones amongst the worst sectors to be hit.

Indian ecosystem in the realm of education was already at the mercy of an infrastructure installed during the colonial period. High population, less distribution of equitable resources, lack of internet penetration and IT infrastructure to move academic and business operations online are some of the major factors leading to an increasing divide in access to education.

The idea of online classes as a boon or a bane in this lockdown period is still debatable in an Indian context. Easy accessibility with wifi, flexibility of attending lectures at one's own pace and studying at one's own pace are some freedoms students enjoy with an online education module.

While the perks of shifting to online education have been brought to the fore by students, a large section of children coming from under-privileged sections have seen online classes as a major source of anxiety and struggle owing to lack of access. There have been depressing cases from parents selling their valuable possessions to arrange for the online infra-

structure to students committing suicide if they cannot afford to continue with the system.

The non-accessibility for such parents or students is not only limited to lack of internet penetration but also lack of sophisticated devices to attend these classes. More often than not, even if these families are able to afford a gadget like a smartphone or a laptop, kids still end up missing classes if there are clashes in schedule amongst family or siblings. It is an ordeal, compounded by extreme anxiety and depression in students, who have to miss on these classes.

Many educationists and policy experts are highlighting how online learning is a functioning wedge further dividing those with strong academic skills from less proficient students. For advanced learners, online classes are a preferable option, but academically challenged students need an in-classroom environment with a teacher's support and immediate intervention to amplify learning outcomes. Other roadblocks which holds back the discourse of online education is the duration of the sessions.

From an ergonomics standpoint, the eye strain and exhaustion students face from sitting for long hours in front of screens to attend these lectures is stressful for the students.

The gap between private and government schools is wide. Most private schools have begun online classes but government schools

are themselves not equipped for these owing to the lack of infrastructure and resources.

The divide can be seen across three dimensions – of income status, gender and geography. The digital divide has disrupted the gender equality scenario in the Indian ecosystem. Ever since the provenance of the Covid-19 pandemic, the society has taken a few steps back in terms of women's discourse in India. The pre-existing opportunity gap for women in the public and private space has dwindled even further. The ratio of girls dropping out of school is twice more likely in countries affected by conflict as compared to those living in non-affected countries. This gap in women's education is reinforced by the patriarchal regime that nurtures perception of the girl child as being a "liability" to the family.

Girls enrolled in schools often get assigned more household work and chores than their male counterparts. The systematic oppression and misogyny found a legitimate path to manifest itself in certain households as women withdrew from schools, colleges or jobs; never to return, with pandemic as an excuse.

Digital divide is another evil in the urban-rural nexus of the Indian ecosystem. Many are forced to withhold their desire to study or be creative in the face of social distancing because they either don't have access to the digital resources or there is a lack of internet penetra-

tion in their region to continue an alternative setup for these activities.

Girls are now finding themselves getting heavily involved in daily household chores, in some cases, looking for paid work and in the worst-case scenario are married off as a way to reduce family expenditure. With increased care and workload at home and lack of income coming in, families struggling to make ends meet are finding themselves weighing up the opportunity cost of school, and boys' education can often take priority over girls' schooling. Furthermore, bound by the walls of their houses, opportunities to explore their creative side has been blocked by undue pressure by the residents of the household.

India is not a homogenous country so we should stop looking for one size fits all types of solutions. It is important to scale but let's not forget that there can be multiple interventions that can be scaled-up rather than just one – case in point online classes. There have been many innovative models including IVR layer on top of textbooks, sending worksheets on a weekly/monthly basis etc. Still many are left behind and we need to continue to find these innovative solutions and help small NGOs working in silos to scale up their work across districts and states with the help of the government.

The writer is founding director, Saarthi Education

WITH A RAZOR-SHARP APPROACH

Opting for Civil Services Examination requires unshakable focus, eliminating all kinds of misconceptions that one may fall prey to in the digital era

MRUNAL PATEL

Every year, Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) conducts Civil Services Examination for recruitment in IAS, IPS, IFS and other prestigious services. This exam is conducted in three stages - prelims, mains and interview. Here are the 10 commandments to follow to crack this highly competitive test:

Do not waste excessive time in daily news/current affairs

Out of the 100 multiple choice questions (MCQ) in prelims-2020: 53 were from theory while 46 were from current and contemporary issues. Yet, candidates tend to spend an excessive amount of time on daily news analysis. It is advised that they avoid such lopsided strategy.

Do not stress on supplementary material at the expense of core subject

There are only seven subjects in the UPSC prelims GS paper: geography, environment, agriculture, economic, polity, history-culture, and science-technology. Current affairs is not

the eighth subject, but is tested only in the context of the above seven areas. Similarly, PIB, IDSA, Rajya Sabha TV, All India Radio News, EPW, Frontline, etc. are not the subjects. They are "supplementary" preparation sources.

Do not try to grab the highest hanging fruit

The average difficulty level of Prelims paper-1 (GS) includes 35 easy MCQ plus 32 medium + 33 tough MCQ = 100 MCQs. Even if candidates solve only the easy and medium difficulty level questions, they can cross these cut-offs. Prelims marks are not counted in the final merit list, yet many first attempt candidates unnecessarily spend 90 per cent of their study time in preparing those 10 per cent toughest topics, for example, types of horse breeds, rivers passing through each and every national park etc.

Study in brief and move to the next topic

Mains-GS papers require candidates to answer in not more than 250 words. Hence, the moment one has prepared five to seven core

bullet points of a topic, one can move on to the next topic. This simplified approach will help candidates retain information better.

Observe previous years UPSC question papers

Many platforms provide monthly free current affairs (CA) PDF files and free study material. Such free-PDF files are littered with an excessive amount of factual information and in-depth analysis, beyond the scope of the exam. Hence it is necessary to observe previous year's papers to avoid wasting time in material, which is free but useless for the exam.

Finish the entire block of syllabus before attempting mains answer writing practice

Too much mass-hysteria has been created on platforms for daily mains answer writing. It is not possible to follow through the same in a systematic manner unless one has finished a significant portion of the syllabus and read newspaper columns and other supplementary reading material to build good answer key points.

Don't waste excessive time watching lecture videos on YouTube

UPSC Prelims-2021 is scheduled in June 2021. There is barely sufficient time to finish the syllabus of prelims, mains and optional subjects. It is most important to be very parsimonious when it comes to spending time online. Telegram, WhatsApp and Facebook are not going to make one more studious or intelligent. Constantly searching for new electronic gadgets, apps, softwares or secret study-tips doesn't help much.

Take online advices /strategies/material with a pinch of salt

In the name of free strategies, videos, articles, study-material and mock tests- plenty of learning material is created, but, often it is created for pageviews, marketing and subscribers, instead of exam oriented razor sharp utility. It is of dire necessity to stay away from such misconceptions.

The writer is course director, Unacademy



PLUS POINTS

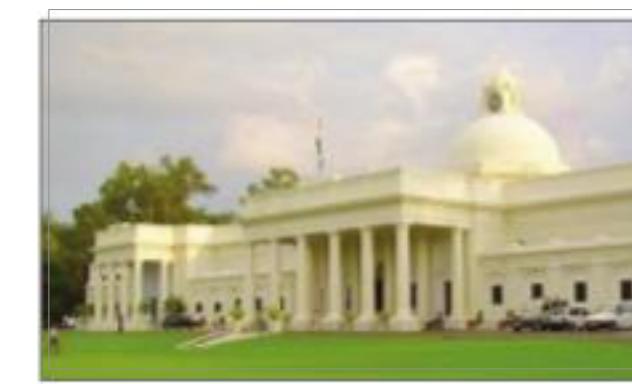
Beneficial workshop



IMS Law College Noida organised a workshop on forensic science recently. In this online programme senior director of IMS Noida Dr Kulneet Suri was present. Inaugurating the programme, Dr VC Mishra, a forensic science expert said that handwriting is an effective tool for identifying the culprit.

He said that handwriting of the same people can be different in the morning and different in the evening. Handwriting and writing arts of different people also differ. Dean of IMS Law College, Dr KS Bhati said that forensic science is very important in the Indian Evidence Act. He said that the programme was especially beneficial for law students, which would help them to become successful advocates in future.

Nurturing skills



IIT Roorkee has been adjudged as the "The Most Innovative Institute of the Year" for its innovation quotient, in the CII Industrial Innovation Awards 2020. The award ceremony was recently held during the 26th DST-CII Technology Summit. The award was presented by Prof Ashutosh Sharma, secretary, DST, Government of India and Kris Gopalakrishnan, former president, CII and chairman of CII National Startup Council.

On this occasion, CII also launched a compendium featuring three innovations of IIT Roorkee, along with the top 25 innovative companies of 2020. The three innovations are nano-coating mask- an anti-microbial nano-coating for masks, PPEs and other protective gears, prana vayu ventilator- portable mechanical ventilator with feedback control and respiratory monitoring with a remote interface and health-agnostic - breast lung oral cancer detector-screening device for detecting breast, lung or oral cancer using exhaled breath.

Enthusiastic participation



World Computer Literacy Day is observed to promote digital literacy and reduce the digital gap in the world. This year, students of the primary section of Sushila Birla Girls School celebrated this day by imparting some basic computer skills to their grandparents that can help them delve into the digital world confidently and safely. They realised that the knowledge of computers is essential for people of all ages; hence they should not be left behind. While students of classes I, II and III taught their grandparents how to design greeting cards, students of classes IV and V taught them how to search for information on the internet, write emails, access YouTube and many others.

Inter-school competition



KIIT World School celebrates its online annual function "Rockers 2020" recently. The event was packed with numerous events filled with joy and enthusiasm. An inter-school competition was organised, where more than 15 schools of Gurugram had participated. The entire premises buzzed with numerous events filled with patriotic and cultural songs and various types of activities that took place throughout the day.

Neelima Kamarah, KIIT mentor said that this year taught us so much and made us understand the value and cherish little things in our life. The purpose of this competition is to understand the value of freedom, ideas and innovations through various competitions.



UP AGAINST IT
Alex Carey (photo, left), having captained Australia A in their second warm-up match against India, would "love" a chat with Allan Border, who tore into the team. "They are young blokes trying to make their way. That fielding performance, bowling performance, captaincy performance – an absolute disgrace," said Border.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Barca win: Lionel Messi dragged a nervous Barcelona to a 1-0 win at home to Levante in La Liga on Sunday to cool tensions after a chaotic week at the Catalan club. Barca had dominated the game but failed to keep their composure in front of goal until Messi struck.

Milan unbeaten: Serie A leaders AC Milan maintained their unbeaten league record in dramatic fashion on Sunday when Theo Hernandez scored twice, including an injury-time equaliser, as they fought back from two goals down to draw 2-2 at home to Parma.



Neymar injured: Paris Saint-Germain find the top spot in Ligue 1 elusive after being beaten 1-0 by Lyon at home. Sunday's PSG slump gave the first place to Lille, who defeated Bordeaux 2-1. PSG's Neymar was screaming in agony after a heavy tackle.

Pogba's denial: Paul Pogba has broken his silence on his situation at Manchester United, insisting he is "1,000 per cent involved" and "will always fight" for the club. Pogba's agent Mino Raiola said earlier his client was unhappy at Old Trafford and would move away.

Favre sacked: Borussia Dortmund have sacked manager Lucien Favre following Saturday's 1-5 loss to promoted VfB Stuttgart in the Bundesliga. "We are all grateful to Lucien Favre for his excellent work over the past 2-1/2 years," the club said in a statement.

Azam out: Pakistan cricket captain Babar Azam will not be available for the New Zealand Twenty20 Internationals after suffering a fracture in his right thumb during Sunday morning's practice session, the Pakistan Cricket Board has confirmed it.

Starc comeback: Mitchell Starc was to rejoin Australia's squad in Adelaide on Monday to prepare for the first Test against India after withdrawing from the Twenty20 International series owing to a family illness. He will travel with some other members of the side.

Delayed recovery: Roger Federer said his recovery from knee operations had taken longer than expected and he was unsure whether he would be ready for the Australian Open. He has not played a competitive match since losing in this season's semi-finals at Melbourne.

Hockey hope: The head coach of the Indian men's hockey team, Graham Reid, says the players worked extremely hard during the national camp at the Sports Authority of India in the past four months and were now close to the levels they hit in international matches.



Hamilton deal: The newly-crowned seven-time world champion, Lewis Hamilton, who finished third in the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on return from a bout of Covid-19, said talks with team chief Toto Wolff were likely to start in the near future.

With victory, New Zealand top Test cricket rankings

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WELLINGTON, 14 DECEMBER



New Zealand shot to the top of the world Test rankings today when they thrashed the West Indies by an innings and 12 runs to wrap up an emphatic series win. It lifted the Black Caps to 116 points, equal with Australia at the head of the rankings table, and also extended their unbeaten home run to 15 Tests. New Zealand also stayed in the hunt for the inaugural World Test Championship final as they overtook England to move into third in the standings behind Australia and India, who start a four-Test series this week.

"It does sound pretty cool," said Tom Latham, New Zealand's stand-in captain while Kane Williamson was on paternity leave. "I didn't realise that until this morning," he said of the rankings boost. We have been playing some good cricket as of late in our conditions, and away for that matter, and it's a pretty cool thing."

After Williamson pulled out on the eve of the second Test, Latham said the team had stepped up with Henry Nicholls overcoming a form slump to score 174 and lay the foundations of the victory. Kyle Jamieson (in photo), in only his fourth Test, took five wickets in the first innings and two in the second to be man of the series. Tim Southee took seven in the Test. New Zealand also won the first Test in Hamilton by an innings.

"It was great for our squad that we do have depth where guys can come in and perform straight away," Latham said. But it was a disappointing tour for the West Indies, with both Tests ending on the fourth morning. They have now lost four in a row since beating England in Southampton in July. Captain Jason Holder said they only had themselves to blame. "It's just tough when we didn't take our opportunities when they came. We were good in patches but still not good enough," he said. "I don't think conditions were that tough in order to get runs. The wicket was a really good wicket. We've just not been consistent over a period of time. We haven't been able to string

it together, more often than not."

After

losing the first Test in New Zealand by an innings and 134 runs, and being rolled for 131 in the first innings of the second Test, they saved their best for their final bat on tour, scoring 317 all out in their second innings. The tourists resumed the day at 244 for six, needing a further 85 runs to make New Zealand bat again and with Jason Holder on 60 and Joshua da Silva on 25.

Holder added one to his overnight 60 before he was bowled by Tim Southee, who also had Alzarri Joseph caught behind after an entertaining 24 -- all from boundaries. Da Silva marked his maiden Test with a half-century but on 57 he fell lbw to Neil Wagner,

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