



on Sunday



We are not in favour of imposing family planning, govt. tells SC
page 8



National Family Health Survey records jump in childhood vaccination
page 8



Trump administration did not close trade deal, says Jaishankar
page 8



Vihari and Pant's centuries highlight day two of warm-up game
page 14

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NEARBY



Delhi records 1,935 new COVID cases, 47 deaths

NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 1,935 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total to 6,05,470 on Saturday. The death toll has reached 9,981 after 47 more fatalities were recorded in a single day. The test positivity of COVID-19 cases was 2.64% on Saturday.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

SOCIOLOGY
Online Open Session
On Answer Writing
On Dec 13 at 5-7 PM
999963160 / adityadse@gmail.com
Sociology by Aditya Mongra
www.sociologybyadityamongra.com

Gujars demand Parliament session

JAIPUR
Gujars in Rajasthan, demanding reservation in jobs and education, have sought the Centre's intervention for Ninth Schedule protection to a 2019 State law which accords Most Backward Class category for the community.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 7

CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4
MAGAZINE ▶ 8 PAGES

Farmers picket 165 toll plazas nationwide

Commuters allowed to travel free; blockade of Delhi-Jaipur NH begins as protesters step up agitation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Farmers' groups picketed toll plazas at 165 locations across the country, allowing toll-free movement of vehicles on major national highways on Saturday, as part of the ongoing protests demanding the repeal of the three contentious farm laws.

By evening, a small group of farmers from Rajasthan had moved to block the Delhi-Jaipur highway at Rewari in Haryana, while thousands more gathered on the Rajasthan side of the border to begin a march to Delhi on Sunday morning.

This is the 17th day of protest on the highways surrounding the national capital, with tens of thousands of farmers, under the joint banner of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, already blocking four major crossing points on Delhi's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Since the talks broke down earlier this week, with farmers rejecting the Centre's proposal to amend some provisions in the laws, the Morcha has vowed to step up the agitation.

"We will go for talks if the government calls us, but the focus is on these three laws. Until these laws are repealed, we will not begin discussing other issues," said Kanwalpreet Singh Pannu, president of the Kisan Sang-



No let up: Farmers heading to join the protest at the Singhu border on Saturday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

Farmers are sacrificing their lives: Rahul

"How many more sacrifices would it take from our farmer brothers to repeal the farm laws," asked former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Twitter, and shared photos of 11 farmers who

reportedly died in the past 17 days of the farmers' stir.

The party also accused Cabinet Ministers of branding every opponent of the government as Maoists and traitors.

harsh committee, at a press conference at the Singhu border point.

Hunger strike
He added that farm union leaders would also sit on a day-long hunger strike on Monday.

Across States, protests were held at about 165 out of the 450 toll booths, according to estimates provided by the All India Kisan Sabha.

In Punjab, all toll plazas have been free since October after the new laws were passed. In Haryana, farmers staged sit-ins, shouting anti-BJP slogans, at toll plazas in 20 locations. They also picked petrol pumps and malls run by the Reliance group, which farmers see as an example of large corporates set to benefit from these laws.

"Farmers staged dharna at almost all the toll plazas in

Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala alleged that the Modi government was refusing to listen to the farmers despite so many of them dying during the agitation. ▶ PAGE 7

Haryana. Group of farmers gathered at toll-plazas since morning on the Ambala-Hissar highway. Besides, we were picketing at toll plazas in Hisar district, situated on the roads leading to Delhi, Rajgarh, Sirsa and Chandigarh," Rattan Mann, president of the Haryana Bharatiya Kisan Union (Tikait), told *The Hindu*.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

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Committed to welfare of farmers: PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the government is committed to the welfare of farmers through "niti aur niyat" (policy and intention), adding that the aim of the reforms is to help them increase their income.

Speaking at the 93rd annual general meeting of the industry body FICCI, Mr. Modi said the reforms will open up new markets for farmers.

Mr. Modi said in a vibrant economy, when one sector grows, it has a direct impact on other sectors as well. However, unnecessary walls between industries were hampering growth, and reforms being undertaken will remove these walls.

"The agriculture reforms are part of this process. We have seen such walls between agriculture and allied sectors such as agriculture infrastructure, food processing, and cold chains. We are now removing these walls," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

We must not only revise our ambitions, but also review our achievements against targets already set. Only then our voices can be credible for future generations

NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER

"In 2047, India will celebrate 100 years as an independent modern nation. Centennial India will not only meet its own targets but also exceed expectations," Mr. Modi said.

He was among the several heads of state – including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan – to address the meeting.

India has announced its Nationally Determined Contribution of reducing emissions intensity of GDP by 33-35% by 2030 along with its renewable energy and forest cover targets. India, however, didn't announce new goals on Saturday.

Mr. Modi and President Ramnath Kovind earlier announced that India was planning to increase its renewable energy capacity to 450 GW by 2030.

India set to exceed climate targets: Modi

Emissions intensity cut by 21%, says PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India was not only on track to fulfilling its climate commitments but would go further, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the Climate Action Summit on Saturday. However, he refrained from announcing enhanced ambitions or targets.

The online event was organised to mark five years since the signing of the Paris Agreement, in which 190 countries committed to taking action to limit global temperature from rising beyond 2 degrees Celsius.

'Rise in renewables'

In his five-minute address, Mr. Modi said India had reduced its emissions intensity by 21% since 2005. Installed solar capacity had grown to 36 gigawatt in 2020. The country's renewable energy capacity was the fourth largest in the world and would reach 175GW before 2022.

"We have an even more ambitious target, 450GW of energy capacity by 2030. We have also succeeded in increasing forest cover," he added.

India had pioneered the International Solar Alliance as well as the Coalition for Disaster Relief, he said.

Delhi officials to inspect transplant site

Tree shifting for new Parliament violated terms of approval

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The CPWD has also requested for a one-year extension for compensatory plantation of 4,040 trees.

"It is not feasible to complete compensatory afforestation by January 2021 as the land needs to be developed... Completion by revised date of 31.01.2022," read a letter by the CPWD dated December 3.

The transplantation was done in violation of the approval given by the Delhi government, according to which the trees were to be transplanted near the existing Parliament and India Gate as per the Delhi government approval.

On November 25, *The Hindu* had reported how trees from a plot next to the current Parliament are being transplanted at the Eco Park, about 22 km away, in violation of the approval given by the Delhi government.

Citing the news article, the Delhi government had sent a show-cause notice to the CPWD. "Violation of the conditions of the approval can attract a fine of up to ₹10,000. But the fine will increase if any tree has died due to this violation," a Delhi government official said.

Army veterans to lay down 25,000 medals for farmers' cause

The govt. has let down soldiers and farmers, we are willing to sacrifice these medals for repeal of the laws'

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Army veterans camping at the Singhu border, the heart of the farmers' agitation, have collected 5,000 gallantry medals since November 26 to return to the Union government "in lieu" of a decision to repeal the three new farm laws.

Predominantly hailing from Punjab and Haryana and with farming as a source of sustenance now, the veterans said on Saturday that they planned to

collect 25,000 medals over the next two days. Lakhs more are on their way to the protest site, they added.

"I come from a family of jawans (soldiers) and kisans (farmers), which have eight martyrs either in war or at

the border. I was proud of that fact, but because of what the government is doing to us now, it has begun feeling like this country is no longer worth living in, leave alone to die for," said retired Havaldar Balwant Singh, 80, from Jhajjar in Haryana.

"We have been here since the 26th [of November] and the government, instead of listening to us cry, is busy finding ways to force upon us these black laws created by people in

air-conditioned rooms."

Retired Subedar S.P. Singh from Gurdaspur said some six farmers were detained when they had attempted to meet President Ram Nath Kovind to return a small batch of medals last week. Retired Havaldar Barat Singh from Patiala alleged that the group of veterans was detained for two whole days and their phones and belongings were confiscated.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Odisha's brides go missing in ration cards

Inordinate delay in name inclusion

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Mamita Pujari, 22, may have made Poharighat, a remote village in Odisha's Kalahandi district, her marital home for the past three years, but in government records, she does not exist.

Nor is she the only 'invisible' woman in the village.

Soon after Ms. Pujari got married in 2017, her name was struck off the ration card in her parental home at Khairbadi village. Her assumption that her name would be added to her husband's card soon has been rudely challenged.

SPECIAL

Around the same time, Mangala Naik, 25, also came to Poharighat, under the Chancher gram panchayat, as a bride.

Both women have since made several attempts in vain to get their names included in the ration cards belonging to their husbands' families.

In Nagjhari village, under the Sagada panchayat, Jaso-dha Dharua's struggle to add her name to her husband's

card has continued for more than seven years.

Neither Ms. Dharua nor her two children figure in the ration card, which deprives them of subsidised foodgrains in one of the country's poorest districts.

After marriage, Anita Majhi, 21, shifted to Talapipli, but her name continues to remain in her parents' ration card.

"I badly need the subsidised rice as my husband, who works as daily wager, cannot meet all needs. I too cannot go to my parents' house to collect my share of rice," a desperate Ms. Majhi says.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Camp office :
Ram Kachchh Ashram,
Ramkot,
Ayodhya-224123 (UP)

Help Line No.
08009522111, 08009611999

Email : contact@srjbtkshetra.org
Website : www.srjbtkshetra.org

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

State Bank of India, Naya Ghat, Ayodhya

RAM JANMBHOOMI MANDIR RE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL SELF RESPECT

Kindly contribute Voluntarily for the Renovation and Reconstruction of 'Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Temple' at Ayodhya

● Your contributions are to be done in favour of the trust settled by GOI "Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra" (Regd. No-76/1683: PAN - AAZTS6197B)

● Contributions can be made through : NEFT/RTGS/IMPS/ Quick Pay/DD/Cheque/Cash deposit to any these .

● Contributions can also be given to our Karyakartas / Voluntary workers visiting your home.

● The Central Government has notified "SHRI RAM JANMBHOOMI TEERTH KSHETRA" (PAN :- AAZTS6197B) to be place of historic importance and a place of public worship of renown vide Notification No. 24/2020/F. No. 176/8/2017/ITA-I

● So voluntary Contribution to the above trust is 50% exempted from Income Tax under Section 80G(2)(b) of the IT Act 1961.

● **Punjab National Bank**, Ayodhya
Saving Account No. 3865000100139999
IFSC Code PUNB0386500

● **Bank of Baroda**, Naya Ghat, Ayodhya
Saving Account No. 05820100021211
IFSC Code BARB0AYODHY

● Online donations through website <https://srjbtkshetra.org>

Open book exam for UG, PG students at DU begins

This is the second time OBE is being conducted due to COVID-19

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Open book examinations for second and third-year undergraduate students and final-year postgraduate students of Delhi University (DU) began on Saturday.

This is the second time that DU is undertaking the OBE due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Approximately 1.3 lakh students are expected to appear for the exams this time with around 5,700 opting for physical examinations, to be conducted in respective colleges.

Earlier, university officials had said that students will only be able to upload their answer scripts on the OBE portal and unlike last time, options of emailing would not be available.

However, as an "emergent measure", the university has



DU officials said that students will only be able to upload their answer scripts on the OBE portal. ■ FILE PHOTO

given students the option of emailing their answer scripts to the nodal officers.

D.S. Rawat, Dean of Examinations, said, "We have given students an alternative of emailing their answer scripts to respective nodal officers. However, it has been specified that this mode can be used only in cases of emergency. They have to provide documen-

tary evidence, including snapshots, to prove that they had tried to upload the scripts on the portal, but were unable to. Without evidence their requests will not be accepted."

On the first day of OBE, examination of around 190 papers were conducted in the morning and around 180 in the evening session, officials said.

Delhi will see over 1.5 lakh healthcare workers being inoculated in the first phase, followed by people above 50 years of age and with co-morbidities

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Friday was a busy day at the utility block of the Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital. Sound of hammer hitting the chisel, breaking parts of the walls echoed in the building. In some areas, the floor was being redone, doors were being made bigger, and workers constantly moved in and out of the building.

Two floors of the building are being converted into a storage facility for any COVID-19 vaccine, which is expected to be approved the government.

With the possibility of a vaccine brighter than ever, the Delhi government has started its preparation to vaccinate the residents. Apart from the storage facility, the government has collected a list of more than 1.5 lakh healthcare workers to be inoculated and is also looking at data of people above 50 years of age and with co-morbidities to be inoculated next.

Different temperatures

"Right now, civil and electrical works are happening at the utility block. Some doors are being made bigger to accommodate large equipment for refrigeration. We will prepare for different temperatures as a vaccine is not yet decided," said Chhavi Gupta, spokesperson of Rajiv Gandhi Hospital.

Earlier this month,



Construction work in full swing for the COVID-19 vaccine storage unit at the Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital in Tahirpur in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY



with the vaccine, then all the frontline warriors will be down and the healthcare system will be crippled.

Shoukat Ali, vice-president of Nurses' Union of Lok Nayak Hospital, the largest Delhi government hospital for COVID-19, also had a similar opinion.

"Many healthcare workers are concerned about the vaccine. There has been multiple controversial news about the vaccine. For instance, I saw a news today about a person developing antibodies against HIV after taking the vaccine for COVID-19. There has been news also about people being paralysed. In a way the vaccine is a trial attempt," Mr. Ali said.

He said that they have raised the issue with doctors.

Suresh Kumar, medical director of Lok Nayak Hospital said that a few doctors have spoken to him about the safety of the vaccine, but there no "major concerns". "Most of the healthcare workers are happy that there will soon be a vaccine. We have sent a list of 3,900 healthcare workers from our hospital to the Delhi government for vaccination," Dr. Kumar said.

Odd semester exams have been put on hold, announces Jamia

Students had raised concerns over online proctored exam

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) on Saturday announced that the odd semester examinations have been put on hold in view of students raising concerns over the "online proctored examination" as announced by the varsity earlier.

In a notice, the JMI administration said, "The university has received several representations from the students regarding their problems or issues with online proctored examination. The university has apprised the University Grants Commission [UGC] of the concerns of the students and the decision of the universi-



ty regarding the mode of conduct of examinations. The directions or guidelines from the UGC on the matter are sought and awaited."

The administration said that the university will take a decision regarding the mode of conduct of the examination based on the directives issued by the UGC.

Earlier, the varsity had announced that the odd semester examination would commence from December 21.

The university had said that only desktops and laptops would be permitted to be used during the examination, along with a functioning webcam. The directive had led to several students raising concerns over the lack of access to devices and internet facilities.

The notice issued on Saturday added, "Meanwhile, students are advised to relax and continue with their ongoing online classes and their preparation for examination."

IN BRIEF

G.B. Nagar's COVID-19 tally crosses 24,000 mark

NOIDA
U.P.'s Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded 96 new COVID-19 cases on Saturday that pushed the district's infection tally to 24,038, official data stated. Active cases in the district came down to 893 from 899.

Training doctors

The government has also asked 47 hospitals to provide two doctors each to be trained for the vaccination process. These doctors will then conduct training programmes for others and help to make the whole training process faster.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain had said that Delhi can vaccinate the whole population in three to four weeks once the vaccine is available.

The priority is health-care and frontline workers.

After which the focus will be on senior citizens, and subsequently moving to the entire population of Delhi. The

Delhi government is fully capable of rolling out the vaccine to the entire population of the city. We are prepared with the storage facilities too. We are just waiting for it to be made available to us," the Minister had said.

New are wary

But even as the government is moving ahead, many healthcare workers are worried about the vaccine.

"We did not get enough time to check if there are any long-term side effects to this vaccine. Many nurses

are apprehensive about the vaccine, but this has not turned into a strong discussion as the government is yet to approve a vaccine," said Fameer C.K., general secretary of AIIMS Nurses' Union.

He said that ideally the vaccine should not be given to healthcare workers first as if there are any problems

ry about the vaccine.

"Many healthcare workers are concerned about the vaccine. There has been multiple controversial news about the vaccine. For instance, I saw a news today about a person developing antibodies against HIV after taking the vaccine for COVID-19. There has been news also about people being paralysed. In a way the vaccine is a trial attempt," Mr. Ali said.

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**OFFICE THE CHIEF ENGINEER PW (R&B) DEPARTMENT
JAMMU**

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
e-NIT No. 03 of 2020-21 Dated 09-12-2020 (3rd call)

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders are invited on Rs. basis from registered and reputed Consultancy Firms/ Agencies who have experience in similar nature of works/having full knowledge for such particular type of work.

S. No. **Name of Work** **Description**

- 1
- Consultancy Services for Rationalization/ Reorganization of Public Works Department (J&K)

Quantity No. **Units** **Estimated Rate** **Cost of document (in ')** **Earnest Money (in ')** **Time of completion**

- 1000/-
- Rs.
- 450000/-
- 2000/-
- 45000/-
- 90 Days

Class of Contractor **eligibility criteria**

The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, bill of quantities (B.Q.O), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website <http://jktenders.gov.in> per below schedule:

1 Date of Issue of Tender Notice	10-12-2020
2 Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 11-12-2020 to 24-12-2020, 4:00 PM

No: CE-JITS/11576-11603
Dated :- 9-12-2020
DIP/J-845/20

IN BRIEF

G.B. Nagar's COVID-19 tally crosses 24,000 mark

NOIDA
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Corrigendum

Sub: Extension for Capital overhauling of 35 MW unit II of USHP-II with allied works including Engineering, Fabrication, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of its turbine top cover, unforeseen works not covered in BOQ and essential spares as per scope of work".

Ref: E-NIT No.: USHP-II/GD/24 of 2020-21 Dated 05-11-2020

Due to poor response and representation from various firms for extension of dates, the critical dates of aforementioned E-NIT have been extended. The revised dates for the aforementioned E-NIT are given as under:

Revised Critical dates:

1. Date of issue of extension notice.	12-12-2020
2. Period of downloading of bidding documents.	12-12-2020 to 18-12-2020
3. Bid submission start date.	12-12-2020
4. Bid submission end date.	18-12-2020
5. Deadline for receiving the hard copies (CDR&EMD).	19-12-2020
6. Date & time of opening of Online tenders (techno commercial).	19-12-2020

sd/
Executive Engineer
Generation Division
USHP-II Kangan

DIPK-NB-4553/20

Government of Jammu and Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER WATER SUPPLY MASTER PLAN DIVISION SRINAGAR

Subject:- Corrigendum No. 01 to e-NIT NO. 35/WSPM OF 12/2020 DATED:- 07-12-2020 FOR THE WORK "SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING, COMMISSIONING, OPERATION, MAINTENANCE OF: Double UV-Vis Multi-path Cuvette holders Spectrophotometer, (Confirming to the schedule of requirements and technical specifications)"

As per Directions of Worthy Superintending Engineer Hydraulic Circle Srinagar/Ganderbal vide his No. DSEHS/4967-68 dated 09-12-2020 the critical dates of above subjected e-NIT is hereby rescheduled as under :-

S. No	Previous Date	Re-Scheduled Date
01	Pre Bid Meeting Date 10-12-2020 at 2.00 PM	15-12-2020 at 2.00 PM
02	Bid submission Close Date 14-12-2020 up to 1600 Hours	18-12-2020 upto 1600 Hours
03	Online Bid Opening date 15-12-2020 at 11.00 AM	19-12-2020 At 11.00 AM

All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the above e-NIT/ and tender document.

Executive Engineer
Water Supply Master Plan Division
Srinagar

DIPK-10311/20

CM YK

**राजूल आॅफ एम्सीलैंस इन पल्मोंनरी मेडिसिन
ने.सु.च०.बॉस विकिटा महाविद्यालय जबलपुर**

क्र./स्था/राजा/एसईपीएम/2020/02
दिनांक: 27 / 11 / 2020

विज्ञप्ति सूचना

मध्यप्रदेश शासन, विकास विभाग, मंत्रीलय भवान के आदेश क्रमांक एक-1-3-2018/55-2 दिनांक 26/05/2018, आदेश क्रमांक एक-1-3-2018/55-2 दिनांक 12/06-2019, एवं विकिटा विभाग मंत्रीलय भवान के आदेश क्रमांक एक-2-57-2018/55-1 दिनांक 07/04/2018 द्वारा जारी विवरण द्वारा विकिटा विभाग मंत्रीलय नियम 2018 एवं कार्यालय आवश्यक विवरण द्वारा विकिटा विभाग भवान के आपान क्रमांक 5528/स्था/राजा/एसईपीएम/2020/02 दिनांक 14/08/2018 में प्रकाशित राज्य स्वतंत्रता आवश्यक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार नेहरू चॉकेले एम्सीलैंस इन पल्मोंनरी मेडिसिन नामक नियमित विवरण द्वारा विकिटा विभाग मंत्रीलय भवान के आपान क्रमांक 5528/स्था/राजा/एसईपीएम/2020/02 दिनांक 14/08/2018 में प्रकाशित राज्य स्वतंत्रता आवश्यक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार नेहरू चॉकेले एम्सीलैंस इन पल्मोंनरी मेडिसिन नामक नियमित विवरण द्वारा विकिटा विभाग मंत्रीलय भवान के आपान क्रमांक 5528/स्था/राजा/एसईपीएम/2020/02 दिनांक 14/08/2018 में प्रकाशित राज्य स्वतंत्रता आवश्यक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार नेहरू चॉकेले एम्सीलैंस इन पल्मोंनरी मेडिसिन नामक नियमित विवरण द्वारा विकिटा विभाग मंत्रीलय भवान के आपान क्रमांक 5528/स्था/राजा/एसईपीएम/2020/02 दिनांक 14/08/2018 में प्रकाशित राज्य स्वतंत्रता आवश्यक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार नेहरू चॉकेले एम्सीलैंस इन पल्मोंनरी मेडिसिन नामक नियमित विवरण द्वारा विकिटा विभाग मंत्रीलय भवान के आपान क्रमांक 5528/स्था/राजा/एसईपीएम/2020/02 दिनांक 14/08/2018 में प्रकाश

Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, DEC. 13	
RISE 07:05	SET 17:26
RISE 05:20	SET 16:18
MONDAY, DEC. 14	
RISE 07:06	SET 17:27
RISE 06:30	SET 17:11
TUESDAY, DEC. 15	
RISE 07:07	SET 17:27
RISE 07:39	SET 18:08

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	22 14
Safdarjung	22 14
Palam	21 16

Delhi Palam Today
23°C Dense to very dense fog and obscured sky during morning. Day would remain pleasant with cool winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
23°C Widespread dense/very dense fog at morning and cool day with clear sky. Pollution level would remain severe.

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THE HINDU
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Muslim leaders come out in support

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) on Saturday extended its support to the ongoing farmers' protest against the three newly elected agriculture-related legislations, and alleged the country's farming laws are being changed to favour multinationals and corporates.

The JIH supports the ongoing protest by farmers against the new farm laws enacted by the Centre, the Islamic body's vice-president Mohammad Saleem Engineer said.

The three laws concerning contract farming and essential items were passed "hastily" without consultation, and by "by-passing" the parliamentary norm, he charged.



A langar being served at the protest site; security enhanced at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ V. V. KRISHNAN AND PTI

'Govt. is trying to dilute farmers' protest'

Farmer leaders and demonstrators take umbrage at Union Minister's 'Leftists and Maoists' remark

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The government wants to divide us and put an end to the protest at any cost, said farmer leaders and protesters at the Singhu border after Union Minister Piyush Goyal said that 'Leftists and Maoists have infiltrated our farmers protest'.

Avtar Singh Mehra, State press secretary of Krantikari Kisan Union Punjab, said that demand for public intellectuals, students, and activists who have been imprisoned for speaking 'for the greater good of the nation' has been on the list of demands since the very beginning of the protest, months ago.

'Nothing new'

"This is nothing new we are demanding in the posters that show a few imprisoned activists. They [government] are bringing it up now because their tagging us as Khalistanis didn't work," he said, adding that the jailed intellectuals and activists have only spoken for their rights and didn't indulge in any violence. Hence, their imprisonment is wrong.



Farmers protest against Centre's anti-farm laws at the Singhu border. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR

According to Mr. Avtar, calling protesters Leftists or Maoists is the government's way of dividing them. "They call Punjabis as Khalistanis, students as Urban Naxals and Maoists. The government is basically rattled right now. Instead of listening to us, they are indulging in mudslinging," he said.

Baldev Singh Zeera, State general secretary of Bharat Kisan Union Krantikari, said that the farmers started the agitation. "They called us

Khalistani and now as we are proceeding and farmers from Haryana has also joined us, their theory fell flat. Now, they've begun using words like Maoists for us".

Activists' release

He said that the demand of activists' release has been there since the beginning, but at that time, no one called them Leftists or Maoists. "They're not able to get what they want. With the protest only strengthening,

they are finding ways to crack us up. Now, they've changed our tag from Khalistani to Maoists," he said.

Harjeet Ravi, State secretary of Kisan Sangharsh Committee, said that they're all farmers and talking about farming only. "We are not asking for separate farming, separate State or separate language. All we want is for the laws to be repealed," he said.

However, a protesting farmer who identified him-

self as Harinder Singh Mann Singh from Ludhiana distanced himself from the demand for the release of imprisoned activists and said, "We are here only for the roll back of farm laws. There are so many people here and one can't control what people say," he said.

Another protester who identified himself as Devi Singh (26) from Uttar Pradesh's Shamli said that name-calling and tagging is an old trick of the government.

"If Hindus protest, they're called Communists, if Muslims protest, they're called Pakistanis," he said.

Out of work since lockdown, 4 get hired

They work at a protest site langar

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Sudhir Das, Anoop Kumar, Sunny and Adit Kumar were out of work for the entire lockdown period and thereafter, till a few days ago. However, at the protest site at the Singhu border, they've been employed.

The four labourers, from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, who reside in a rented accommodation in Narela have found work, at ₹3,000 a day, at one of the many langar services at the protest site. They come in around noon, set up a tandoor for rotis and leave around 8 p.m. It was their second day on Saturday. "We were out of work because we operate tandoors and weddings were not happening. Thankfully, we got this opportunity," said Sudhir. The four of them get ₹3,000 a day out of which they pay ₹1,000 as rent for tandoor and divide ₹500 each amongst themselves.

Money for commute
"We also get money for commute," he said.



The four labourers at the protest site at the Singhu border. ■ HEMANI BHANDARI

The langar service where the labourers have been fired is being run by Baba Amreik Singh (from Patiala) and serves hundreds of people multiple meals through the day.

"We need the tandoor because we haven't brought it with us from Punjab and we want to give people hot rotis. At night, the number of people who eat increases and tandoori rotis make less time to make," said Kuldeep Singh alias Baba Kala who is one of the managers at the service. The four labourers also eat the meals here at the service and take food home, they said.

Rain brings down maximum temperature

Cloud cover leads to a rise in minimum temperature that settled at 14.4° Celsius

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Light to moderate rains in parts of Delhi brought the maximum temperature down by a notch on Saturday, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

However, the cloud cover led to an increase in the minimum temperature that settled at 14.4 degrees Celsius, six notches above normal.

The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, recorded a maximum temperature of 21.8 degrees Celsius and 1.6 mm rainfall, the IMD said. Thunderstorms and light to moderate-intensity rains occurred over South Delhi, New Delhi, Lodhi Road, Central Delhi, North-East Delhi and East Delhi. Southwest Delhi,



Women keep themselves warm around a small bonfire on a foggy and chilly Saturday morning. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

official said, adding that the mercury is expected to drop by Monday with the wind direction changing to northwesterly.

The rains are a result of a western disturbance passing over the Himalayas, an IMD

malays towards the plains.

An increase in the moisture content in the air due to the rain is likely to result in moderate to dense fog over the next two-three days, the official said.

Air quality likely to remain in 'very poor' category today

Effect of stubble burning in neighbouring States negligible

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi and Noida deteriorated to the higher end of the 'very poor' category on Saturday and Gurugram's was close to 'very poor' category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (Central Pollution Control Board).

Air quality of the national capital is expected to deteriorate and remain in 'very poor' category on Sunday.

"As an aftermath of western disturbance, high moisture availability with higher air-holding capacity, dense fog formation is expected [mainly during early morning hours]. This can trigger heterogeneous aqueous

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	356	Gurugram	296
Ghaziabad	415	Faridabad	348
Noida	393	Greater Noida	404
Good	0-50	Satisfactory	51-100
Poor	101-200	Moderate	201-300
Very Poor	301-400	Severe	>400
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) Source: CPCB			

search (SAFAR).

The AQI of Delhi was 356 on Saturday, up from 295 on Friday, as per CPCB's 4 p.m. bulletin, which is an average of the past 24 hours. The values for Gurugram and Noida were 296 and 393 respectively.

The effect of stubble burning on the city's air quality was negligible on Saturday. However, the local surface-level winds were calm, which does not help in the dispersion of pollutants.

Also, the mixing height, which is the height from the ground level up to which pollutants can be dispersed, was low at night. This also prevents pollutants from getting dispersed easily.

IN BRIEF

Maintain vigil against plastic burning: NGT

NEW DELHI
Following a plea seeking action against industrial units operating in violation of norms laid down in the MPD-2021, the NGT has directed authorities to maintain a vigil against plastic burning and utilise the funds recovered from violators for legitimate purposes.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

College student arrested for kidnapping minor girl

18-year-old had befriended her on Facebook and subsequently lured her to marry him, say police

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

An 18-year-old college student was arrested for allegedly kidnapping a minor girl from Delhi after befriending her on Facebook, and subsequently luring her to marry him, the police said on Saturday.

DCP (West) Deepak Purohit said that the accused has been identified as Shoyab Khan, who's pursuing Bachelors in pharmacy from a college at his hometown in Rajasthan's Alwar. He was

arrested from Badarpur border on December 9 and the kidnapped girl was also rescued, he said.

The police said that a probe was initiated into the matter after the girl's father approached the police at Rajouri Garden station on October 23 stating that his 15-year-old daughter was kidnapped by an unknown person.

During investigation, call detail records and the girl's social media accounts, including Facebook, Messen-

ger and WhatsApp were scrutinised.

It was then revealed that the victim received several messages from a particular Facebook account of a person named Shoyab Khan and the location of the alleged account was found to be active in Mewat region.

Raids conducted
Raids were conducted at Mewat and a police officer also disguised himself as a local to gather whereabouts. The accused, however, was ar-

rested from near Badarpur.

The police said that Shoyab – after kidnapping the girl from Delhi – took her to various States, including Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh and Muzaffarpur in Bihar but later he left her alone in an autorickshaw and fled away.

During probe, the accused allegedly revealed that he created a Facebook account and had 4,845 friends on his list. Khan further disclosed that he sent a friend request

to the victim, which she accepted last year on July 5.

Later on, they both became good friends and started chatting frequently. Khan started forcing her to get married to him, he added.

On October 22 this year, Khan came to Delhi and forced victim to get married with him.

He took her to Muzaffarpur in Bihar where they stayed for one day at his friend's place and next day, they moved to Azamgarh, the DCP said.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

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CLASSIFIEDS

thehinduads.com

MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS/ Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

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Seeking Alliance from well qualified Elite Groom of any caste, aged between 30-35yrs, for a beautiful 165cm boy, 30 years, technically qualified professional entrepreneur, hailing from affluent Elite Intercaste family of high social status

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INVITED FM FTABLE suitable edu emploidy boy fm Blore for Chr girl 86/160 fair bf blor Tech wrking in repudt CBSE school Blore. CBN. 7975630613

DIVORCEE

BANGALORE HINDU Tamil issueless divorce 35 yrs converted decent BE Software seeks qifd, divorced 35-45 yrs who encumbrances. Email: phonein13@gmail.com

DOCTOR

KARKATHAR VELLALA avittam/kumban 26/167 fair MBBS rich affluent family in chennai seeks Doctor from mudalai & vellalar. 6382191240/ 9381028591

SAIVA PILLAI - Doctor, doing PG in Psychiatry at Chennai/Star Uthirattath, 26/18, Father Doctor having reputed Hospital, only daughter seeks Doctor Groom from Saiva Pillai / subset with good family background. Contact: 9443301151.

SLIM BEAUTIFUL, homely girl, 31/165 final Yr MD, Anesthesia Chennai. Father Keralai Nair, Mother Tamil Doctors family. Looking for smart family. MS DM MC boys from good families in Kerala & Tamil Nadu. Ct. 9840050331

Telugu Devanga, MD Paed, 28y, Chennai, Alliance from MD / MS Doctors. Phone: 9176830007

ENGINEER

SM 25' 52'/ Curude/ B Tech working private sector in Jaipur preference IIT. IMR. 9414055008

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

Kaikala Girl BDS 25 Years, 5'2" Required Dr./ Govt. Emp. Contact: 9440234675.

Tirunelveli Saini Pillai, 26/162 fair, slim BE MS Engg working at Denmark / MNC seeking groove US / overseas. CT. 9842742431.

HINDU PILLAI, Asst.Prof. ME, 29/155 Uthiram seeks Er/Dr Groom. Contact: 7418211136 / 7904983159.

HINDU BRIDE 37 Sc.Simpl Upper Middle class AnnaNgr Chennai 1st marriage needs suitable groom. 7358164190

NAIR GIRLS MBBS, MD 33 Makayiram & MBBS 28 Makam working in Delhi proposals invited from well qualified grooms employed in Delhi/other parts. Contact: 9443289192

Nair Girl Fair 27 Yrs, Makaram, Height 165 cms. Completing MBA this month from a Reputed University at Melbourne. Seeks Suitable Groom Preferably from Australia or New Zealand. Contact: 9995316083

ASST. PROFESSOR, Ezhava girl, Palakkad, Kerala, 15/20-10-1987, 6 pm, Uthram, Tamindu Govt Service, permanent in Coimbatore. Seeking alliance from well educated employee/business boys. Nair, Ezhuthasan caste also considered. Contact: 9447363644, 9447533624.

✓ NAIR GIRL Alliance invited from professionally qualified boys (IAS/IPS/IFS , Govt Jobs, Lecturer Banking etc) for 27/165 Pooram financially sound Girl MA BEd (English) PhD (doing @ Chennai) from Mavelikara, Kerala settled in T.Nagar - Chennai. 9444734238 , 9496273432 (Not B-reau)

CASTE NO BAR. Seeking Well Qualified Teetotaller Professional Bride Groom Aged 45 Unmarried Girl Who is Having Reputed Social Status. Interested Profiles Contact 9443533063

HINDU NADAR, 30/152cm, ME, MBA(USA) Divorcee Working in USA, CNB, Separated within a month, Seeks suitable well settled Groom in USA. Contact: 9443135307.

HINDU VANNIAR 198/160 kirthigai MCA Asst. Manager Govt. Bank Seeks well placed Groom CT: 9489042676

HINDU NADAR 23 BE 162 V Fair VIP Family Chennai Seeks Equal Facility Family 7550113468 9884188849

HINDU NADAR 24 MBBS MD 165 CM Rich V Fair Seeks IPS AS PG Doctor 7550113468 narijil.v.selvam@gmail.com

HINDU TAMIL yadava girl 26 ME working Non- IT Bangalore. Contact: 9446425624

HINDU 32/152, B.E. Upper Middle Class. Seeks Suitable Groom. Caste No Bar. Contact: 9489695984

YADAVA : 25/Fair, MBBS,MS,SRMC, Chennai,Elite Family,Seeks Groom - P.G.Dr,Doctor 894622400, 8925019776

IVENGAR/ MUDALIYAAR, 1993, Rathai, Tech MBA, Fair, Working in leading MNC, Chennai. Seeks suitable groom from well educated with respectable family. Ct. 8482417465

TAMIL MUSLIM, 35/164, MBBS, Father Rtd. Army Officer, Mother Housewife. Seeks Suitable groom.

RC CHRISTIAN 36yrs/167cms Software Good looking Unmarried. Seeks suitable unmarried groom. Caste Religion No Bar. 9943084508 joseph154@gmail.com

CSI TAMIL Christian Pillai Vellalar Girl M.Arch, fair 160 Cms 32 yrs affluent similar profiles welcomed. Language no bar. Ph: 98948 36842.

TAMIL VISWAKARMA Girl 27/165 fair MAA seeks unmarried groom below 31 yrs/ Same Caste/ ph: 638107817

NAIDU 24 yr old, B.Tech bride (having Rahu-Ketu Dosham, Star-Rohini) working in MNC seeking 26-31 yr old, well-educated Tamil/Ludhra groom, middle/upper middle class family from Tamillandu, working in Govt/Public/MNC sector based in Chennai/Blore. Contact: 984102261/ 701243499

YADAVA/ JAN 1972/ fair/ MCA/ govt jobs seeks suitable alliance, caste no bar, cont: 9787210340.

SC- AD- 41/ Widow issueless, Teacher/ Pt. Chennai, suitable Widower/ Divorcee with Child/Children only - 8825553678

HINDU CHETTIAR 28/170/ MDS (Denit.) Pooram Simham Chennai based seeks suitable Chennai groom. 9445795084

HINDU NADAR 28 Years Doctor M.S. Studying 160 Cms Seeks suitable Doctor Groom. Contact: 9150762929

NAIDU ISSUELESS, Divorcee 45/ 151Cms, ACS, MBA, Empl in PSU, Seeks bridgegroom,Chennai. CNB- 8778873501

91 BORN, PhD, visagam, well qualified groom wanted. Parents Inspector, Caste No Bar. Contact: 979103470

HINDU NADAR, affluent family, 26/160, Kumbar / Avittam, BA, good looking, seeking educated affluent family from same community. 9444327064 / aadhyana1911@gmail.com

HINDU PILLAIMAR, 26, B.Tech, M.S., 153 cm, studying PhD (Neuroscience) in Australia/ seeking Groom from Pillaiar (sub caste no bar) with PG or equal qualification, age up to 31 years, willing to work in abroad, from good family background. Ct: 7339179318 / 97195 6595.

HINDU DIVORCEE 30/165 Poopathi MBBS, M.Sc, Ass'tCommandant CRPF, Seeks Dr or Any Officer/CRPF preferred. Casto No Bar. 6379575718 / 9176151360

HINDU SC 28 BE Working in Govt Hospital. Abu Dhabi Mother MSc/B.Ed Suitable Groom. 9894753817

SUNNI MUSLIM Tamil bride Chin fair 24/165M Seeks profnly qualified boy from respected famly. 9597557582

HINDU VANNIAR B.E.28/165 Software Chennai. Parents Govt. Service. Suitable match same Caste- 9144527712

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HINDU NADAR 26/165 Poopathi MBBS, M.Sc, Ass'tCommandant CRPF, Seeks Dr or Any Officer/CRPF preferred. Casto No Bar. 6379575718 / 9176151360

HINDU SC AD 28 BE SWE TCS 95000/ pm, seeks suitable grooms in Chennai/Bangalore. Ct: 9952147216

25, 153 V.FAIR,M.S (U.S) Working in Bangalore seeks handsome, well settled groom. 9894935653

MUDALIAR EDUCATED parents seek grooms for their only daughter Uthiratadi/ 31/155 BE & Journalism job@Chennai 9841218331, thangaa1960@gmail.com

HINDU ADIDRAV/IDAR Congu Parayar 29 BE, Tech, Ph.D seeks Educated Profnl Groom. CT: 7558146647/ 9840535370

HINDU MUDALIAR Divorcee 41/ 168, Chennai, fair MBBS rich affluent family in chennai seeks Doctor from mudalai & vellalar. 6382191240/ 9381028591

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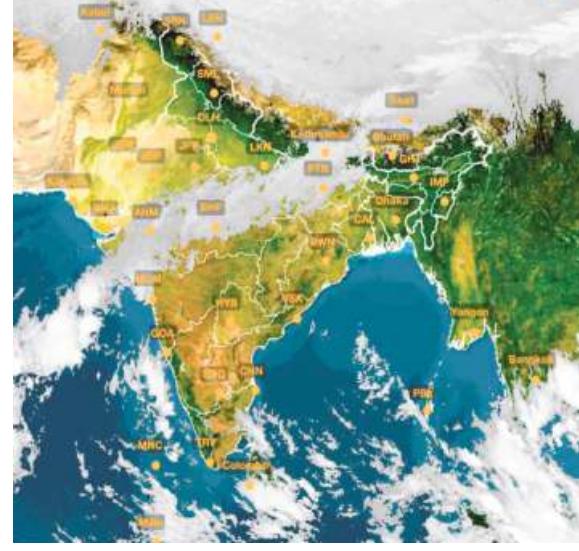
VANIYI CHETTIAR, M.Sc, 40/15, Karthigai, Govt.Officer, Chennai seeks equal Qlfn employed Boy 9486507399.

Arcot Mudaliar, Aviyam, Kethu in Lagnum - 1989, 154 cm, nonveg - B.Tech, MBA fair / freelancer, only daughter from affluent family. Father businessman, seeks suitable working / business person, handsome from well settled family within allied communities age below 35.

94432 68088, 9

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, central Maharashtra, Kerala and Mahe. Dense/very dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 23.7	16.9	10.0	Kozhikode	10 ... 33.0	24.6	10.0
Ahmedabad	... 27.4	17.8	10.0	Kurnool	... 31.1	17.2	10.0
Aizawl	... 21.3	10.7	10.0	Lucknow	... 24.2	15.5	10.0
Allahabad	... 24.8	16.7	10.0	Madurai	... 31.4	20.7	10.0
Bengaluru	... 28.0	15.4	10.0	Mangaluru	... 33.2	23.5	10.0
Bhopal	6.7	21.7	15.8	Mumbai	0.7	30.6	23.8
Bhubaneswar	... 31.6	17.8	10.0	Mysuru	... 29.9	20.5	10.0
Chandigarh	... 27.5	11.3	10.0	New Delhi	1.6	21.8	14.4
Chennai	... 30.0	22.3	10.0	Patna	... 24.6	16.0	10.0
Coimbatore	... 29.7	21.0	10.0	Port Blair	... 29.1	22.2	10.0
Dehradun	0.5	22.6	12.4	Puducherry	... 29.4	20.6	10.0
Gangtok	0.6	14.7	8.7	Pune	... 31.4	18.7	10.0
Goa	... 22.6	32.5	23.8	Raipur	... 31.4	18.0	10.0
Guwahati	... 26.2	16.6	10.0	Ranchi	... 26.1	12.8	10.0
Hubballi	... 29.0	18.0	10.0	Shillong	... 17.0	8.4	10.0
Hyderabad	... 29.4	17.0	10.0	Shimla	... 9.6	10.8	3.6
Imphal	... 22.4	6.6	10.0	Srinagar	... 8.0	0.1	10.0
Jaipur	... 24.4	16.2	10.0	Thiruvananthapuram	26.8	31.2	24.0
Kochi	0.4	31.4	24.4	Tiruchi	... 31.0	20.2	10.0
Kohima	... 17.5	6.0	10.0	Vijayawada	... 29.6	19.5	10.0
Kolkata	... 24.6	14.5	10.0	Visakhapatnam	... 29.6	18.0	10.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	18	55	27	.85	—	■
Bengaluru	15	28	44	.83	.118	■■■
Chennai	30	26	25	.110	—	■■■■■
Delhi	... 50	83	.444	.341	—	■■■■■
Hyderabad	5	103	13	.124	.125	■■■■■
Kolkata	19	25	51	.340	.221	■■■■■
Lucknow	6	76	31	.358	.332	■■■■■
Mumbai	14	44	56	.313	—	■■■■■
Pune	... 84	36	.234	.135	—	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	18	41	.47	.257	.238	■■■■■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Revoke Pathalgadi cases, urge activists

Many Adivasis still in jail in Jharkhand

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

Rights groups in Jharkhand urged the Hemant Soren government to withdraw criminal cases slapped against persons associated with the Pathalgadi movement.

The police had then filed several cases against 200 named accused and more than 10,000 unnamed people under various charges that include abetment, obstruction to public servants discharging their duty, creation of public nuisance, criminal intimidation and even sedition. The police had then filed several cases against 200 named accused and more than 10,000 unnamed people under various charges that include abetment, obstruction to public servants discharging their duty, creation of public nuisance, criminal intimidation and even sedition.

The Jharkhand Janadikar Mahasabha (JJM), a group of rights activists which organised a State-level seminar at Ranchi on Friday, alleged that people were suffering as then Raghu-

ubar Das government had indiscriminately registered criminal cases to suppress the movement.

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The ILP, based on the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, is applicable in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.

The ILP, based on the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, is applicable in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.

'Long-pending issue' "The demand for the implementation of ILP in Meghalaya is a long-pending issue which the KSU started highlighting since 1985. Due to excessive migration from outside the country and certain other States since 1971, there developed serious ramifications within the State whereby there is a contestation in all aspects between the indigenous tribal communities and the outsiders/migrant communities. Meghalaya is slowly becoming like Tripura and Assam where indigenous communities are being overwhelmed by migrant communities," KSU reminded Mr Modi.**Immigration issue** On the CAA that seeks to fast-track Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, the KSU said Meghalaya had been bearing the brunt of massive illegal immigration since the onset of the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

"Taking a cue from the State of Tripura, the citizens of Meghalaya are wary of being overwhelmed by the larger migrant communities coming from Bangladesh," the students' organisation told the Prime Minister.

The students' body said petitions submitted to the

It pointed out that ILP has helped the States in

It pointed out that ILP has helped the States in

Stage peaceful demonstration on Delhi-Jaipur highway, says Gehlot

RLP chief Hanuman Beniwal also joins agitating farmers

at the border between the two States. Mr. Beniwal earlier addressed a meeting of farmers at Kotputli, situated 110 km from Jaipur on the highway.

Mr. Gehlot said the Centre should accept the farmers' demand of repealing the agriculture sector laws "without delay". "I am pleased [to note] that the farmers' movement has been very peaceful so far. Violence has no place in democracy," he tweeted.

The Chief Minister asked the farmers to put their demands democratically before the Centre during their agitation.

on the Jaipur-Delhi highway and maintain peace. The farmers' groups have announced that a 'Dilli Chalo' march with a tractor rally would start from Rajasthan's Shahjahanpur after blocking the highway on Sunday.

The RLP, which is a constituent of National Democratic Alliance from Rajasthan, has threatened to snap its alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party if the new farm laws are not withdrawn. Mr. Beniwal said his party's strength lay with the farmers, who were agitating in the extreme cold amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ghanshyam Tiwari returns to BJP

He had left the party over differences with Vasundhara Raje

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

Veteran leader and former Minister Ghanshyam Tiwari rejoined the Bharatiya Janata Party here on Saturday, two-and-a-half years after he left the party over differences with the then Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje and the party's central leadership. Mr. Tiwari had floated a new outfit, Bharat Vahini Party, ahead of the 2018 Rajasthan Assembly election.

A six-time BJP MLA and considered a hardliner, Mr. Tiwari had extended support to the Congress after his party lost all the 63 Assembly seats it contested. He had shared dais with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at a

Ghanshyam Tiwari.
■ FILE PHOTO

function in Jaipur and said it was important to support the party "for [the] protection of democratic values".

On Saturday, the 72-year-old leader, one of the founders of the BJP in the State in 1980, told reporters at the BJP State headquarters here

that he had not joined Congress or become its primary member. "I simply shared the stage in a programme of the Congress before the 2019 Lok Sabha election," he said.

Mr. Tiwari said he was "completely committed" to the BJP's ideology and his "heart and soul" were with the Bharatiya Jan Sangh and RSS. "I did not take part in the protests organised by the Congress against the Citizenship Amendment Act and abrogation of Article 370."

BJP State president Satish Poonia said Mr. Tiwari's return to the party fold was not an exception. "Leaders like Uma Bharti, Kalyan Singh and Babulal Marandi joined back after leaving BJP."

Meghalaya group writes to PM, seeks entry restrictions, repeal of CAA

Khasi Students' Union says State is slowly becoming like Tripura, Assam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A pressure group in Meghalaya has petitioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding the implementation of inner-line permit (ILP), a British-era entry restriction, in the State and the scrapping of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The memorandum by the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) preceded the relaunch of the anti-CAA movement in the region on December 11.

Effective mechanism The KSU said the ILP would be an effective mechanism to regulate the entry of outsiders into the State that has a microscopic indigenous population.

It pointed out that ILP has helped the States in

Northeast – barring Meghalaya, Assam and Tripura – maintain their indigenous demographic structure.

The ILP, based on the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, is applicable in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.

'Long-pending issue' "The demand for the implementation of ILP in Meghalaya is a long-pending issue which the KSU started highlighting since 1985. Due to excessive migration from outside the country and certain other States since 1971, there developed serious ramifications within the State whereby there is a contestation in all aspects between the indigenous tribal communities and the outsiders/migrant communities. Meghalaya is slowly becoming like Tripura and Assam where indigenous communities are being overwhelmed by migrant communities," KSU reminded Mr Modi.**Immigration issue** On the CAA that seeks to fast-track Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, the KSU said Meghalaya had been bearing the brunt of massive illegal immigration since the onset of the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

"Taking a cue from the State of Tripura, the citizens of Meghalaya are wary of being overwhelmed by the larger migrant communities coming from Bangladesh," the students' organisation told the Prime Minister.

The students' body said petitions submitted to the

BHARATHIDASAN UNIVERSITY
Tiruchirappalli – 620 024, Tamil Nadu, INDIA

SEARCH COMMITTEE NOTIFICATION FOR

APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Government of Tamil Nadu vide G.O. (D) No. 204, Higher Education (H2) Department, dated 19.11.2020, have constituted a Search Committee to recommend a panel of three names to the Hon'ble Governor-Chancellor for appointment of the Vice-Chancellor to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.

The Search Committee invites applications for the post of the Vice-Chancellor, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, from distinguished academicians with highest levels of competence, integrity, moral and institutional commitment and possessing the required educational qualifications and work experience as notified by the Government of Tamil Nadu in their G.O.Ms.No. 187, Higher Education (K-2), Department, dated 14th July 2017 copy of which is available in the Bharathidasan University Website <http://www.bdu.ac.in>

The Vice-Chancellor shall hold the office for a period of three years or up to the age of 70 years whichever is earlier.

Interested candidates possessing the required qualifications and experience may download the prescribed application format from the Website of Bharathidasan University. The filled in application shall be sent (only in the prescribed format) by e-mail and a hard copy by post duly superscribing the envelope **"Application for the post of the Vice-Chancellor, Bharathidasan University"** so as to reach the following address on or before 05.00 p.m. of 12th January 2021.Dr.G.Rathinasabapathy, Ph.D.
Nodal Officer,
Search Committee for Selection of Vice-Chancellor,
Bharathidasan University,

Room No.1, First Floor, Central Office, Guindy Campus,

University of Madras, Chennai – 600 0

FROM PAGE ONE

Farmers picket 165 toll plazas nationwide

"At most of the toll plazas on the Chandigarh-Delhi highway, Milk-Majra toll plaza on Panchkula-Saharanpur highway and Gullarpur toll plaza on Assandh-Karnal highway, we ensured that no charges were collected from commuters," he added.

Farmers in western Uttar Pradesh picketed toll plazas for intermittently through the day. In Gautam Buddha Nagar, the Bhartiya Kisan Sangathan picketed the Luhari Toll Plaza and Eastern Peripheral Expressway and made them free for some time.

In Odisha, farmers prevented collection of toll at multiple points on the Howrah-Chennai and Bhubaneswar-Puri national highways, including at Bhubaneswar, Ganjam and Cuttack.

There were protests at 31 locations in Andhra Pradesh; while 25 toll booths were opened, police prevented opening in six locations, arresting protestors. Farmers stopped toll collection in 18 centres in Telangana. Protests were also held

at toll plazas in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Bihar, according to the AIKS. Farmer leaders pointed to the widespread participation in the toll plaza protests to refute Food Minister Piyush Goyal's statement that the agitation no longer remains a farmers' movement.

Speaking at the annual meeting of industry body FICCI, Mr. Goyal said, the movement has been "infiltrated by Leftist and Maoist elements" demanding the release of those put behind bars for "anti-national activities".

Late on Saturday evening, around 50 farmers led by Nagaur Lok Sabha MP Hanuman Beniwal and farmers' leader Rampal Jat staged a sit-in on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway at Rewari, blocking the road. The Rewari police said efforts were being made to lift the blockade and restore traffic.

(With inputs from Ashok Kumar in Gurugram, Vikas Vasudeva in Chandigarh, Priscilla Jebaraj and Anuj Kumar in New Delhi)

Committed to welfare of farmers, says PM

After these reforms are done, Mr. Modi said, farmers will get access to new markets and benefits of technology, the country's cold storage infrastructure will be modern and with this more investments will come in the agricultural sector. "And if anyone will reap its benefits, it will be the country's farmers who earn their living from small pieces of land. It will benefit them," he stressed.

He added that the number of active Internet users in rural India is more than in cities and more than half of India's start-ups are in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

Odisha's brides go missing in ration cards

Ms. Majhi and the brides of Poharhat and Nagjharai are among the many women excluded from the food security net after their marriage. Raising concerns over the "erasure" of these women, activists argue that they should not be kept out of the public distribution system (PDS) as it would adversely impact their health.

Unclear process
Kaiji Majhi, sarpanch of Talbelgaon in Kalahandi, says, "It is fact that women after their marriage find it difficult to add their names in ration card list. But in-laws of newly married women are partly responsible for the mess. They shy away from interacting with officials. Hence, there is delay in adding their names to list."

"Technically the PDS is required to be made dynamic. Addition of names of women in the ration card list [of their marital families] has to be seamless. But we come across numerous cases in which women's names

are struck off from their natal village ration cards immediately after marriage, but are not added with the same swiftness at their marital homes," says Sameet Panda, co-convenor of the Odisha Right To Food campaign.

Marriage is the primary factor for women migrating. However, the ration card management system, which the State claims is completely digitised and portable, has not been able to capture these movements and ensure food security.

"There is no mechanism or standard operating procedure to capture change of address of women from one fair price shop to another within the PDS system. It is done in a very informal way. Also rather than the system helping the beneficiaries to facilitate the transition, they are left to fend themselves," Mr. Panda says.

A major hurdle is the lack of procedural clarity on how names can be "ported" from one ration card to another.

Army veterans to lay down 25,000 medals

"I was a fauji (soldier) earlier but even before that, I was a labourer and a farmer. We are willing to sacrifice these medals in return for a repeal of the black laws. It was in that spirit that we went to the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday, but were detained," he alleged. "They kept us in detention for two whole days thinking we will go back home, but the first thing we did after being released this morning was to come back here to join the protest."

Retired Naik Kapil Dev from Haryana said farmers and ex-servicemen and the families of serving jawans

had been "hurt" by the treatment being meted out by the government to the protesters. The veterans had decided to forfeit medals symbolising the glory they had earned over decades.

"These medals were given not for entertainment but for valour, for coming face to face with death, through sweat and blood and tears, but the jawan is ready to let them go for a better future for the farmer," he said.

Retired Havaldar Suresh Kumar Dahiya from Jhajjar alleged that the Union government had been letting farmers and soldiers down.

Bringing life back to Western Ghats grasslands

Researchers find sites for restoration in the Nilgiris, Palani Hills and Anamalai, where exotic trees are erasing biodiversity

K.C. DEEPIKA
BENGALURU

Tropical montane grasslands (TMG) in the Shola Sky Islands of the Western Ghats have suffered big reductions due to invasions by exotic trees such as acacias, pines and eucalyptus, shrinking the range sizes of endemic species, including plants, birds, amphibians and mammals. Some populations are being driven to local extinction.

But researchers have now identified areas suitable for grassland restoration and conservation to reverse the decline.

Reporting on their study titled 'Opportunities and challenges in using remote sensing for invasive tree species management, and in the identification of restoration sites in tropical montane grasslands' earlier this month in *Science Direct*, M. Arasumani, V.V. Robin and

Milind Bunyan from the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Tirupati, and Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru lay out the possibilities.

They focus on identifying grassland restoration sites using satellite images with a high spatial resolution (Rapi-dEye), and have recommended careful removal of young and isolated exotic trees at the invasion front and restoring grasslands, instead of removing dense stands of mature exotic trees.

TMG are high elevation grasslands forming only 2% of all grasslands in the world. Among their functions is regulating the global carbon cycle and serving as a source of water to downstream communities. Researchers say

grasslands do not benefit from conservation and resto-



Green move: Field photographs and CNES/Airbus imagery of potential grassland restoration sites. (A) Lightly invaded grasslands and (B) sparse mature exotic tree with grass cover.

ration efforts afforded to tropical montane forests, possibly due to limited information. "In India, TMG have even been classified as wastelands in forest management plans since they are unlikely to generate revenue, contrary to the timber (even if exotic) found in forests," the study says.

Loss of grasslands due to invasive exotic trees is a "novel threat" through the establishment and expansion of exotic tree plantations. In the Western Ghats, 23% of montane grasslands were reportedly converted into invasive exotic tree cover over a period of 44 years.

Attempts to manage invasive exotic trees in montane grasslands incorporated approaches that include prevention and mechanical, chemical and biological control. "For invasive species such as *Acacia mearnsii* that grow rapidly and disperse

seeds widely, removing mature trees is often ineffective. An approach that targets the removal of young exotic trees would be more effective. Similarly, restoring grasslands where isolated but mature trees exist in grassland patches could be an easy way to restrict further dispersal," the researchers say.

"Our study identified an area of 254 sq km for grassland restoration, 362 sq km of intact montane grasslands for conservation, and 606 sq km of mature exotic tree stands in the Nilgiris, Palani Hills and Anamalai. Most of the areas suitable for montane grassland restoration were located in the Nilgiris (126 sq km), followed by the Palani Hills (73 sq km), and the Anamalai (55 sq km). The largest areas for grassland restoration were in reserve forests (87 sq km), followed by wildlife sanctuaries (60 sq

km) and national parks," the study says.

The Palani Hills and Anamalai lost grasslands due to invasive species, Mr. Bunyan told *The Hindu*. Most of these species were planted, but that programme was stopped around the 1990s, and since then, they were purely invasive, he explained. The species have a very high seed bank, about which nothing can be done, but cutting them will require multiple cycles, he added.

The study also throws light on policies for grasslands, which are seen as having no productive use, as is often alleged in the case of the Hesarghatta grasslands in Bengaluru. "Grasslands are not wastelands. Though they are not being put to use, we are benefiting in other ways - such as serving as pasture. In the Sholas, they are responsible for hydrological recharge," he said.

Violence at Wistron's Bengaluru iPhone factory

Employees ransack premises over unpaid dues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Thousands of workers at Wistron Infocomm Manufacturing (India), which is part of the Taipei-based Wistron Corporation manufacturing iPhones at its Narasapura factory on the outskirts of Bengaluru, went on a rampage and ransacked the company premises over delays in the payment of salaries and overtime wages.

A source said the protest began shortly after the workers' shift ended, but took a violent turn by 6 a.m. on Saturday.

The workers alleged that they had not been paid salary or overtime wages for three or four months. Things came to a head as violence erupted and company property, including furniture, fans, lights and television sets, was ransacked.

The workers set fire to a car parked on the factory



Workers' rage: The ransacked iPhone manufacturing unit of Wistron Corporation in Bengaluru. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

premises. A contingent of police personnel was deployed on the premises. An additional force was called to contain the situation.

About 100 people have been detained said Seemanth Kumar Singh, Inspector General of Police (Central Range), who is supervising the law and order situation.

The workers set fire to a car parked on the factory

premises. A contingent of police personnel was deployed on the rolls. The rest are contract workers. "The situation was tense, but it has been brought under control. Ten special teams have been formed to investigate the incident. We are screening CCTV footage and video clips to identify the instigators," said a senior police officer.

The company has around

15,000 employees, but only 1,400 are actually on the rolls. The rest are contract workers. "The situation was tense, but it has been brought under control. Ten special teams have been formed to investigate the incident. We are screening CCTV footage and video clips to identify the instigators," said a senior police officer.

The company has around

'Check legality of Amaravati creation'

Andhra A-G says HC should examine

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Advocate-General (A-G) S. Sriram insisted in the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Friday that it should be satisfied with the legality, *bona fides* and constitutionality of the process that led to the notification of Amaravati as capital city before adjudicating on the writ petitions that which challenged the validity of the A.P. Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions, and CRDA Repeal, Acts.

Summing up his arguments on the matter, Mr. Sriram maintained that none of the pleas of good governance, promissory *estoppel* and legitimate expectation would be fatal for the constitutionality of the Act and urged the court to not restore the state of affairs in Amaravati, as transpired in 2014, saying that it was a dis-

honest and non-*bona fide* decision-making process.

He told the court that it was not empowered to restore an illegality which vitiated the original decision of locating the capital in Amaravati city.

The A-G further said Amaravati did not have the characteristics of an inclusive city that reflects a sense of

belonging to all the people of the State. A "right to a city" at State expense is not fundamental to the petitioners and it ought to be available to people across the State.

"Amaravati is poised to be a city that is exclusive for the benefit of a few people," he asserted. He contended that a few families sought to control land and other resources in the capital city, which was inconsistent with the constitutional ideal of good governance.

not categorised as sensitive. As many as 2,175 booths have been identified as sensitive/problematic. There will be webcasting in 1,343 booths.

In Kannur, which accounts for large number of sensitive/problematic booths, nearly 10,000 security personnel have been deployed for ensuring law and order on the polling day.

Voters testing positive for COVID-19 and those being quarantined would be allowed to cast their votes with a certificate from the designated health officer between 3 p.m. on the day before the polling (Sunday) and till the time the polling ends.

The High Court has directed that adequate police personnel should be posted to rule out any incidents of violence or election malpractice, even in polling stations

IN BRIEF



Eminent Malayalam writer U.A. Khader dead

KOZHIKKODE

Eminent writer U.A. Khader, who enriched Malayalam language and literature with his unique style, died at a private hospital here on Saturday. An active participant in literary and social gatherings here for decades, the 85-year-old was under treatment for cancer for sometime, family sources said. A recipient of various honours, including the Sahitya Akademi award, he had authored hundreds of books, including novels and short stories. PTI

Telangana forms 4 panels for COVID-19 vaccination

HYDERABAD
Four committees for planning, execution, supervision and monitoring of COVID-19 vaccination programme in Telangana was formed by the State government. The committees are State Steering Committee, State Task Force, District Task Force and Mandal Task Force. Senior officials said the State government has begun preparations for possible introduction of COVID-19 vaccine.

Seven injured in chemical factory blast in Telangana

SANGAREDDY
Seven workers were seriously injured when a reactor exploded at unit one of Vindhya Organics at IDA Bollaram in Sangareddy district of Telangana on Saturday. It took more than five fire engines over three hours to bring the raging fire under control. According to sources, the explosion occurred when chemicals were being mixed in the reactor. The factory roof was blown away and walls were damaged. Exact reason for the blast is not yet known.

Campaign ends for last phase of Kerala local body polls

Voting to be held in Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode and Malappuram districts tomorrow



Wrap up: BJP workers taking out an election campaign rally at Talap in Kannur on Saturday. ■ S.K. MOHAN

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

Election campaigning in Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode and Malappuram districts drew to a close on Saturday, with political parties and fronts in the electoral battle ground sweating it out as the northern districts are going to the polls on Monday in the final phase of the local body elections in Kerala.

Despite the pandemic-related constraints on electioneering, the poll campaign was at full tilt in the four districts, where the electorate comprising 89,36,561 voters can cast their votes on Monday to elect their representa-

tives in 6,869 wards/divisions in a total of 354 local bodies, including two corporations and 31 municipalities. The electorate include 46,65,510 women, 42,70,961 men and 90 transgenders. Malappuram has the highest number of voters in the State - 33,54,000. Election machinery in the four districts has been fully geared up for the polling. There are 10,834 polling booths across the four districts.

The High Court has directed that adequate police personnel should be posted to rule out any incidents of violence or election malpractice, even in polling stations

off-limits for visitors, the proposed centre is likely to meet its expenditure using the revenue generated by the zoological park. A time frame is yet to be finalised for realising the project.

Taking cue from other States, the facility can also be utilised to rear orphaned or abandoned cubs rescued from different places.

The location of the facility will enable the department to enlist the services of veterinarians attached to the zoological park. While it will be

Two three-week-old tiger cubs that had been rescued from the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in Nilgiris were recently shifted to the Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Chennai for specialised neonatal care.

The State currently has a rescue and rehabilitation centre for captive and wild elephants at Kottoor in Thiruvananthapuram.

peak of the epidemic in the last week of October, the active cases had dropped by nearly 40% and was now fewer than 60,000. The test positivity rate has come down below 10% and was now in the 8-9% range, which was a positive indicator.

Whether the relaxation in protocol and congregation of people for the local body election campaign will lead to a resurgence and a spike in the epidemic curve will become clear in a few days, Mr. Vijayan said.

With an average of 30 deaths a day, mortality has shown a spike. However, this was expected as mortality is known to go up soon after the peak, he said.

Kerala is set to augment wildlife rehab

Dedicated facility will treat and nurture injured and orphaned large carnivores

'Impasse could end in two days'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Amid the ongoing farmers agitation, Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala of the Janayak Janta Party (JJP) on Saturday said he was hopeful that the ongoing impasse could end in the next 24 to 48 hours.

He was talking to journalists in New Delhi after meeting Union Ministers, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Piyush Goyal. In the meetings, he said he appealed to all Ministers to take steps to end the deadlock at the earliest.

"I am hopeful that the ongoing impasse could end in the next 24 to 48 hours. Both the sides are in favour of coming to an agreement and that's why there have been many rounds of talks till date. On some points, both parties have agreed. In the 24-page proposal sent by the Central government, written assurance is promised on the guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP)," he said.

Farmers are sacrificing their lives, says Rahul

He shares photos of 11 who died during 17 days of protest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

"How many more sacrifices would it take from our farmer brothers to repeal the farm laws," asked former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Twitter.

He shared photographs of 11 farmers who reportedly died in the past 17 days of the farmers' agitation.

The party also accused Cabinet Ministers of branding every opponent of the government as Maoists and traitors.

The Opposition party's allegation against Cabinet Ministers branding opponents as Maoists came after Railways, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal, in an interview, alleged that certain Leftist and Maoist elements seemed to have "taken control" of the agitation and were pursuing their own agenda instead of discussing farmers' issues.

Casting aspersions'

Former Punjab Congress head Partap Singh Bajwa said, "I am also extremely disappointed with the fact that Cabinet Ministers are at-



In a huddle: Farmers in a tent battle the cold at the Ghazipur border on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

tempting to cast unfounded aspersions on the motivations of the protesters. In a tense environment, such statements would harm any efforts to build trust between Indians and the government. The farmers have been peacefully protesting since September and have followed the highest ideals of democratic dissent."

In a series of tweets, Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala alleged that the Modi government was refusing to listen to the farmers despite so many of dying during the agitation.

He accused the govern-

ment of standing with its *dhandaaata* (funder) instead of *annadaata* (farmer) despite so many deaths.

No to autocracy

"Modi ji, autocracy has no place in democracy. The policy of you and your Ministers is to declare every opponent as Maoist and a traitor. Please apologise and accept the demands of the *annadaata* (farmer) who are sitting on dharna amidst biting cold and rain," Mr. Surjewala said in another tweet, tagging Mr. Goyal's interview.

New laws will create new landlords'

Activist Medha Patkar warns that food procurement will be affected

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

At the Delhi-Ghaziabad border, as the protesting farmers braved rain and bitter cold on Saturday, activist Medha Patkar and Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakshesh Tikait shared a makeshift stage on the Delhi-Meerut flyover to address them.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Ms. Patkar said the basic paradigm behind the three Acts was "corporatisation of agriculture".

"They will create new landlords. The laws give concessions to the agents of corporates," the veteran of the Narmada Bachao Andolan said.

On the presence of agents in the existing system, Ms. Patkar said the present system had its checks and balances but the new laws would introduce the agents of big corporates as official agents.

Referring to the recent battle between PepsiCo and potato farmers in Gujarat, Ms. Patkar said, "The freedom to stock and hoard will mean farmers will not get their due price. They will be forced to move from food crops to cash crops. So the new laws will affect not only



Lending support: Activist Medha Patkar addressing the protesting farmers in Ghazipur. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

food procurement but also food production. The mechanisation of agriculture will affect the employment of farm labourers."

Lauding the unity of purpose among the farmers across States, Ms. Patkar said different farmer groups had come together for a big cause.

"There may be differences on some issues but when it comes to the common minimum programme, we are all united. The government and a section of media are trying to divide by invoking China, Pakistan and Khalistan but they will not suc-

ceed," she said.

She said the government had reservations about talking to some groups.

"They might not be present during the meeting with the Ministers but they are very much part of the alliance," she said.

"For the bigger cause, we are protesting under one flag," said Meghraj Solanki of the Bulandshah unit of the All India Kisan Sabha. "At the Ghazipur border, where farmers from different districts of western Uttar Pradesh are assembling, we have given the command to Mr. Tikait," he said.

Mamata bets on schemes, BJP on her 'mistakes'

Events appear to be unfolding in a manner the national party would like them to

BISHWANATH GHOSH
KOLKATA

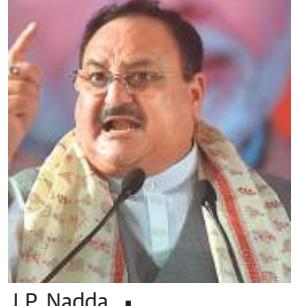
As the campaign builds up in West Bengal for what is going to be one of the fiercest electoral contests in its history, events in the State appear to be unfolding in a manner the Bharatiya Janata Party would like them to.

While the local BJP leaders have, all along, been accusing the ruling Trinamool Congress of unleashing violence on its political opponents, the attack on the convoy of its national president J.P. Nadda in South 24 Parganas on Thursday has transformed their long-standing allegation into an election issue and – according to political observers – stands to polarise the voters in this TMC-controlled district.

"[Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief] Mamata Banerjee has lost her magic with the people, her utterances are now met with ridicule. People wait for the next funny statement from



Mamata Banerjee. ■



J.P. Nadda. ■

her. She now heads a crumbling government and a disintegrating party," Jay Prakash Majumdar, vice-president of State BJP, told *The Hindu*.

"It escapes me how a seasoned and shrewd leader like her can make one mistake after another. Communal polarisation is her gift to West Bengal. Before she came to power, people here never voted on the basis of religion," Mr. Majumdar said.

"Then other mistakes, like trying to prevent national-level BJP leaders from landing in Bengal to address rallies

[after the attack on Mr. Nadda's convoy] to prove that her administration is non-partisan. The attack will also cause polarisation of voters in the area," said election analyst Biswanath Chakraborty.

The BJP appears to be just one of her problems. Recently, TMC heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari quit her government; and while it is not uncommon for members of her party to switch over to the BJP, no popular face from the BJP has joined the Trinamool. It would, however, be imprudent to underestimate Ms. Banerjee. This month she launched a two-month-long "Government at your Doorstep" outreach and also the Swasthya Sathi insurance scheme – so far the public response to both has been encouraging. Of the other outreaches launched over the last one year with great fanfare, *Didi ke Bolo* (Tell Didi) has met with some success.

Even those not aligned with any political party agree that Ms. Banerjee, 65, is under pressure this time. Unlike the fighter who frequently took to the streets to take on the government, she is herself in the government today, presiding over a cash-strapped State and facing anti-incumbency.

"There will certainly be greater pressure on her now

during the 2019 election, or refusing permission to the BJP to take out processions. All this is helping the BJP in an unprecedented way," he said.

Even those not aligned with any political party agree that Ms. Banerjee, 65, is under pressure this time. Unlike the fighter who frequently took to the streets to take on the government, she is herself in the government today, presiding over a cash-strapped State and facing anti-incumbency.

"There will certainly be greater pressure on her now

Gujjars demand Parliament session

They seek protection for quota

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Gujjars in Rajasthan, demanding reservation in jobs and education, have sought the Centre's intervention for Ninth Schedule protection to a 2019 State law which accords Most Backward Class (MBC) category for the community. The quota agitation has generated considerable political heat and disrupted public life several times in the State since 2007.

The Gujjar Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti has demanded that a special session of Parliament be convened for inclusion of the State Act in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, on the lines of the protection given to a reservation law of Tamil Nadu, and a constitutional amendment be brought to enhance the 50% ceiling on reservation.

The Assembly had passed the Rajasthan Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointments and Posts in Services under the State) Amendment Act, 2019, on February 13 last year, creating the MBC category. The four other nomadic communities given the quota benefit along with the Gujjars were Banjara, Gadaria, Raika and Gadaria.

We will be forced to launch agitation against Centre unless permanent solution is found

SHAILENDRA SINGH
General secretary, Gujjar Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti

Sangharsh Samiti general secretary Shailendra Singh, who has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said here on Saturday that Gujjars would be forced to launch an agitation against the Centre unless a permanent resolution of the quota issue was found.

No response
Mr. Singh pointed out that the State government had written several times to the Centre with the recommendation that its legislation be included in the Ninth Schedule to protect its from being challenged in the courts. "The Union government and the Parliament have not taken cognisance of the State Act despite several sessions having been convened since February 2019," he said.

Mr. Singh said Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution were amended to provide 10% reservation to the citizens belonging to the Economically Weaker Section.

Centre-Bengal clash on IPS deputation

Trinamool says Home Ministry pressuring police and officials of the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Citing a Union Home Ministry letter asking the West Bengal government to send three IPS officers on Central deputation, the Trinamool Congress on Saturday alleged that the Centre was pressuring the West Bengal police and officials.

The officers were deployed during BJP president J.P. Nadda's visit to the Diamond Harbour when his motorcade came under attack.

On Friday, the Ministry had summoned the Chief Secretary and the Director-General of Police for a meeting in Delhi on the law-and-order situation in West Bengal, but the former sought an exemption from participation.

"Now I come to another

letter dated 11 December 2020, whereby you named three IPS officers for Central deputation. All the three IPS officers were deployed by 10th December 2020 nearby at the place of occurrence. Your motive is very clear that by taking them, you want to create pressure upon the

said three police officers," a letter written by Kalyan Banerjee, MP, to Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Saturday reads.

Later in the day, the Trinamool Congress held a press conference stating that the Centre could send a request to the Union Home Secretary.

The BJP leadership said that Mr. Banerjee had no authority to write to the Union Home Secretary.

"The NC said the BJP was shocked and unnerved by the support to Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

participation "a victory for democracy".

"Our biggest achievement has been a fair, fear-free election. In Jammu, there is a great support for the BJP. There has been a positive response in Kashmir as well," Mr. Thakur said while campaigning in the Valley. The dilution of Articles 370 and 35A had opened up opportunities to young leaders

the State had the authority whether to release the officials or not. "Provisions are quite clear: IAS/IPS officers are governed by Article 312 of the Constitution. After they are selected, they are allotted States. They are made State cadre. They may go to the Centre on deputation but the Centre has to ask for names from the State government and then the State has to give them clarification... unless the State releases them, they cannot go," Trinamool Congress worker Saugata Roy said.

In his letter, Mr. Banerjee alleged political vindictiveness in the Union Home Ministry.

The BJP leadership said that Mr. Banerjee had no authority to write to the Union Home Secretary.

"Another day, another murder! Saikat Bhawal, BJP worker from Halisahar, was brutally murdered by TMC goons while six others are critically injured and fighting for their lives... *Pishi* [aunt, referring to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee] can't retain power like this!" the BJP's West Bengal unit

ship in J&K, "which was otherwise taken up by a handful of dynasties", he said.

Mr. Thakur said all those involved in the Roshni Scam, involving 3.48 lakh kanals (one kanal equals about 0.05 hectare) of land, will face action.

The NC said the BJP was shocked and unnerved by the support to Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

BJP worker killed in West Bengal

Party blames Trinamool Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

A Bharatiya Janata Party worker was killed at Halisahar in North 24 Parganas of West Bengal on Saturday evening, with the party alleging political violence and blaming Trinamool Congress workers for the murder.

Saikat Bhawal, BJP booth president of Ward 43 of the Halisahar municipality, was attacked during the *Grhya Samprak Abhiyaan* (door-to-door outreach campaign) of the party.

The Trinamool Congress leadership, including MLA Partha Bhowmick from North 24 Parganas, said that the murder had nothing to do with politics.

The leaders said that the death was a result of personal vendetta.

posted on its official Twitter handle.

Arun Singh, BJP MP from Barrackpore, said that it was a planned attack on BJP supporters. He said that seven BJP workers had been injured in the attack and one remained in a critical condition. "Saikat Bhawal has been killed by @AITCOFFICIAL goons in Bizpore [Bizpur] Assembly area but the @MahtamaOfficial's police is busy in conducting raid at my office-cum-residence Majdoor Bhawan. This is the politics of *Didi*," the BJP vice president tweeted, referring to a raid on his office.

The Trinamool Congress leadership, including MLA Partha Bhowmick from North 24 Parganas, said that the murder had nothing to do with politics.

The leaders said that the death was a result of personal vendetta.

NC, BJP spar ahead of phase 6 of DDC polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The National Conference (NC) and the BJP were engaged in a war of words on Saturday, ahead of the sixth phase of the District Development Council polling in the Union Territory.

Union Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur, the BJP's in-charge of the election, termed the voters' par-

ticipation "a victory for democracy".

"Our biggest achievement has been a fair, fear-free election. In Jammu, there is a great support for the BJP. There has been a positive response in Kashmir as well," Mr. Thakur said while campaigning in the Valley. The dilution of Articles 370 and 35A had opened up opportunities to young leaders

ship in J&K, "which was otherwise taken up by a handful of dynasties", he said.

Mr. Thakur said all those involved in the Roshni Scam, involving 3.48 lakh kanals (one kanal equals about 0.05 hectare) of land, will face action.

The NC said the BJP was shocked and unnerved by the support to Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

"Sealed Tenders are invited for supply of 24 Security Guards for Guarding purpose to the Institutions (in Chennai, Royapet, Kanchi, Vellore and Madurai) which are under the control of Dy. Exe. Officer, TTD Information Centre, Chennai for a period of two (02) years i.e., 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 or from the date of agreement which ever is earliest. Intending participants may obtain the Tender Document in person from the Office of the Dy. Exe. Officer, TTD Information Centre, Chennai, No.26, Venkatarayana Road, T.Nagar, Chennai from 14-12-2020. The Last Date for accepting of Sealed Tenders is 12.00 Noon on 28-12-2020".

Roc.No.PRA/13925/Adv.No.249/PRO/2020; Dated:12-12-2020

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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IN BRIEF



Jagannath temple likely to open this month

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) on Saturday said it had decided to recommend to the Odisha government to open the 12th-century temple from the last week of December. The temple has remained closed since March when the pandemic broke out. Once opened, devotees coming from outside Puri would have to produce a COVID-19 negative certificate for entry.

COVID officer to be deployed for Kumbh

DEHRADUN
Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Saturday asked officials to deploy a special COVID officer for the 2021 Haridwar Kumbh Mela. Reviewing preparations for the event, Mr. Rawat authorised Kumbh mela officials and the Garhwali commissioner to sanction works worth up to ₹2 crore and ₹5 crore, respectively. All shopkeepers in the mela area have been asked to keep masks and hand sanitisers, Health Secretary Amit Negi said.

Two arrested for chasing lions on motorcycle

AHMEDABAD
Two persons, one a minor, have been arrested a few days after a video of the two on motorbike chasing a pair of lions in the Gir Forest went viral. The clip showed the lions being chased by the duo, who scared them away with the vehicle noise and honking. "It was shot near Gadiya village in the Tulsiyam range of the Gir. One of the riders was identified as Yunis Pathan," a forest official said.

Manipur observes 81st year of 'women's war'

IMPHAL
Manipur observed the 81st anniversary of the "women's war" at an official function held at the "Women's War Memorial Complex" in Imphal on Saturday. It was on December 12, 1939, that the women fought against the British after some of its officials colluded with traders to export the nutritious Manipuri rice, pushing people to the point of starvation. Following their protest, the export order was revoked.

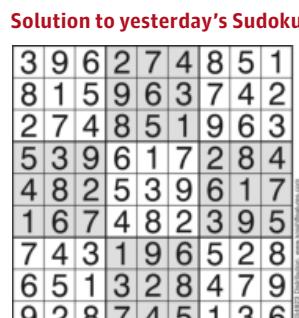
Bar licencing rules eased in Uttar Pradesh

LUCKNOW
The Uttar Pradesh government has delegated its power to grant licences to run liquor bars to Divisional Commissioners, an official statement said on Saturday. The new bar licencing rules are aimed at simplifying the complex licencing process and devolving power in line with the ease of doing business doctrine. The licencing process has been made online too.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



NFHS finds jump in vaccination

Partial data show improvement in supply of vaccine for childhood immunisation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry on Saturday released partial data from the fifth edition of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) claiming "considerable improvement" in the supply of vaccine for childhood immunisation from the fourth round in 2015-16.

A quick perusal of the data showed that in Andhra Pradesh, the percentage of fully vaccinated children (12-23 months of age) jumped to 73% from 65%. However, children with diarrhoea in the two weeks preceding the survey jumped to 7.2% from 6.6%. In West Bengal, institutional births of children increased from 75% to 91% and in Gujarat, the proportion of anaemic children sharply increased from 62.6% to 79.7%.

12 States to be covered
As other versions, the new edition has information on population, health and nutrition for India, and is based

Giving it a shot

The table lists the % of children fully vaccinated in 2019-20 and the change in % points from 2014-15 for 17 States. Only three States recorded a decrease in vaccination %. Himachal Pradesh recorded the highest vaccination % in 2019-20

States	% Vaccinated	Change	Maharashtra	73.5	+17.3
H.P.	89.3	+19.8	A.P.	73	+7.7
W.B.	87.8	+3.4	Mizoram	72.5	+21.8
Karnataka	84.1	+21.5	Bihar	71	+9.3
Goa	81.9	-6.5	Tripura	69.5	+15
Sikkim	80.6	-2.4	Manipur	68.8	+3
Telangana	79.1	+11.6	Assam	66.4	+19.3
Kerala	77.8	-4.3	Meghalaya	63.8	+2.4
Gujarat	76.3	+25.9	Nagaland	57.9	+22.5



on statistics gleaned from 6.1 lakh households. The results from 17 States and five Union Territories (Assam, Bihar, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Telangana, West Bengal, Mizoram, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu) were released on Saturday

under Phase I. Phase II, covering the remaining 12 States and two UTs, had their field work suspended because of COVID-19. This was resumed in November and is expected to be completed by May 2021.

Health indicators up
"Substantial improvement in maternal and child health indicators over NFHS-4 was recorded in the present sur-

vey. The fertility rate has further declined, and contraceptive use has increased in most Phase I States. The survey found considerable improvement in vaccination coverage among children aged 12-23 months across all States/UTs. Women's empowerment indicators (including women with bank account) also portray considerable progress," a press statement from the Health Ministry noted.

Not in favour of imposing family planning, govt. tells SC

Advocate files petition seeking population control law

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Centre told the Supreme Court on Saturday that it was against coercing couples into having a "certain number of children" in a bid to curb population explosion.

In fact, the government said the years from 2001 to 2011 witnessed the sharpest decline in decadal growth rate of Indian population in a 100 years.

"The Family Welfare Programme in India is voluntary in nature, which enables couples to decide the size of their family and adopt the family planning methods best suited to them, according to their choice, without any compulsion," the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry said in an affidavit. It said India was a signatory to the Programme of Action (POA) of the International Conference on Population

2001-2011 was the first decade in 100 years that added less population than the previous one

HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE MINISTRY

and Development, 1994, which was unequivocally against coercion in family planning. "In fact, international experience shows that any coercion to have a certain number of children is counterproductive and leads to demographic distortions," the Ministry said.

The government was responding to the court's direction to a petition filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay to introduce a population control law. Mr. Upadhyay said population explosion had been the bane of the country. Without implementing effective population control measures, Healthy India, Literate India, Prosperous India, Resource-

ful India, Strong India, Secured India, Sensitive India, Clean India and Corruption and Crime-Free India campaign won't succeed," Mr. Upadhyay said.

But the government said India had been witnessing a "constant decline" in the total fertility rate (TFR).

According to the Census statistics, "2001-2011 was the first decade in the last 100 years which had not only added lesser population as compared to the previous one, but also registered the sharpest decline in the decadal growth rate from 21.54% in 1991-2001 to 17.64% in 2001-2011".

"The wanted fertility in India as per National Family Health Survey IV is only 1.8 as against the actual fertility of 2.2 prevailing at that time, indicating that couples on an average do not want more than two children," the Ministry said.

Indigenous artillery gun trials to end in 2021

Probe under way into barrel burst

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

User trials of the indigenous Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) jointly with private industry are scheduled to be resumed later this month and proceed with winter and summer trials to be completed by mid-2021, a defence official said.

Trials which began in September were paused after the gun suffered a barrel burst. An investigation is under way to determine the cause. "The guns will move some time next week to Bangalore for initial proof firing

trials. Winter trials should happen sometime in January. We will do the summer trials by mid next year," the official said.

The ATAGS is a 155-mm, 52-calibre artillery gun jointly developed by the DRDO in partnership with Bharat Forge of the Kalyani Group and the Tata Power SEC.

In August 2018, the Defence Acquisition Council approved the purchase of 150 of these guns at an approximate ₹3,365 crore which would be split between the two companies.

After the user trials, the Army has to give the Request For Proposal and the initial lot can be supplied immediately, the official said.

2 injured as grenade goes off in Sopore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two civilians were injured when suspected militants tossed a grenade on a deployment of security forces at Sopore in Baramulla district of north Kashmir on Saturday.

A police spokesperson said around 5.55 p.m., militants hurled a grenade near the Sopore bus stand at the security personnel.

Investigation on

"The grenade missed the intended target and exploded on the road. Two civilians received minor injuries and were evacuated to a nearby hospital for treatment," the police spokesperson said. The police said that an investigation was in progress "to establish the full circumstances of this terror crime".

Paint it white



Charming as ever: Srinagar received the season's first snowfall on Saturday. Continuing snowfall across Kashmir has resulted in the closure of roads linking the Valley to the rest of the country. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Hunger continued even after lockdown: report

Many people have no jobs, says Right to Food Campaign

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Six or seven months after the lockdown, people continued to go to bed hungry, skip meals frequently, and are unable to afford nutritious diets because of loss of income,

Till the time of filing of this report, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) had won 11 of the 40 council seats followed by regional rival United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) with 10 and BJP with seven. All three parties were leading in other seats proportionately.

State Election Commission officials said counting the votes for the two-phase elections, would continue past Saturday midnight.

This is the first election in the BTC since the Centre had signed the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR)

peace accord with the All Bodoland Students' Union and some factions of extremist National Democratic Front of Bodoland in January this year.

Watch, recorded responses from marginalised and excluded communities, such as the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and minority religious communities including Muslims, 80% of whom earned less than ₹7,000 a month before the lockdown in March.

Drastic drop in intake
Over half the people surveyed said their consumption of rice and wheat had decreased and 25% said this had "decreased a lot." Similarly, 64% reported a decrease in consumption of pulses, while nearly 30% said this had "decreased a lot". On consumption of vegetables, 73% reported a drop in consumption of vegetables, while nearly 40%



Crucial support: Members of an NGO distributing dry rations free of cost in west Delhi in November. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

said there was a drastic decrease in their use. About 71% of those who were non-vegetarians could not afford eggs or meat.

Asked about their perception of drop in quantity of food as compared to pre-COVID 19, nearly 66% of people

faced discrimination and about 12% of Scheduled Tribes felt discriminated against. Similarly, sex workers, domestic workers, as well as single women faced additional difficulties as many of them had no PDS or any documents without which they were dependent entirely on charity from civil society organisations for their food requirements.

This food insecurity is a direct result of economic precariousness – 43% of those surveyed had no income immediately after the lockdown in April and May, and only 3% of them have returned to the pre-lockdown income levels. As many as 56% without any income in the beginning of the lockdown still had no income.

**Subramanian,
Ratho, Jain
made RBI EDs**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India has appointed three of its senior officials R. Subramanian, R.S. Ratho and Rohit Jain as executive directors with effect from December 11.

Mr. Subramanian, who was Chief General Manager-in-Charge, Enforcement Department, will oversee the key departments of Foreign Exchange, Financial Markets Regulation, Internal Debt Management and International, the RBI said in a release.

Mr. Ratho, who was CGM Financial Markets Operations, will look after the same department as well as External Investments and Operations, Legal and Secretarial's Department.

Mr. Jain will oversee Supervision (Risk, Analytics and Vulnerability Assessment) after having been CGM-in-charge, Supervision.

Centre working on framework for widening credit push: Kant

India's private credit-to-GDP ratio lowest among global peers: Niti Aayog CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI



Funds crunch: MSMEs play a key role in providing jobs, but their credit needs are unmet, Mr. Kant said. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

development has been partially a result of growth in its private debt," he said.

Mr. Kant also said micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in providing employment but their credit needs are largely unmet by the formal financial sector.

"The government is in the process of putting frameworks and protocols in place

for credit to be pushed to segments that have largely been untapped," he said.

Flexible regulation'

Noting that financial inclusion depended on the regulatory environment, Mr. Kant said, "While a new business model will be required to fill the current gap in achieving the necessary credit flow, there is a need to

change the regulation as and when required."

The entire process would require bringing all stakeholders such as banking and industry professionals, together, he added.

MSME needs

Mr. Kant said the MSME sector would have more credit needs going forward. So,

more innovative methods would be key. He said the sector's credit gap was estimated to be ₹25 lakh crore.

Mr. Kant said the financial sector was undergoing a massive change and there had been a dramatic change in the credit scenario also.

"Over the past few years, there has been a flood of fintech (financial technology) players, which are bringing transformational change in the way financial services are provided," he added.

SBI prefers co-origination lending to MSMEs: Khara

'Partnering fintechs will help assess risks'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI



Dinesh Kumar Khara

The State Bank of India (SBI) will prefer the co-origination model to cater to the financing needs of MSMEs and collaboration with fintechs is a good idea as it helps in assessing the risk profile of the borrower in a better manner, chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara said on Saturday.

Pointing out that the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) were constrained today in terms of cash flows, time gap in realising receivables, among others, and also the level of lenders' confidence in funding them, Mr. Khara said collaborating was a better model than lending directly to

form which is expected by any banker," he added.

Also, there was a broad spectrum of MSMEs in the country that worked in a host of areas and often the kind of financial information coming from them was not very organised, the chairman explained.

"So, for an economy like

India's, growth rate of 5% will be pretty credible even in this era where I think emerging economies in general will make some sort of a comeback."

Mr. Sharma said it was no longer feasible in the world of deglobalisation to grow at 7% as exports could not grow at 20% or 30% in a year, which was good in an era of globalisation.

"That has never happened in the history of the global economy. In the last decade, only 10 economies ... have grown 7% or more in any year," he said.

Population growth link

Mr. Sharma also argued that if the population growth of a country was slowing, then that country could not grow at the same pace as it did in the past.

He also pointed out that intra-regional trade was the lowest in South Asia compared to any sub-region of the world.

"The last decade was a lost decade for emerging economies. The only economy to have gained in the global share in the last decade was China," he noted.

Find Swadeshi alternatives to imports'

Don't compromise on quality: Gadkari

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Asserting that India was importing 'a lot of things' from China, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Saturday urged the domestic industry to come up with Swadeshi alternatives to the imports from various nations without compromising with their quality and cost.

Addressing the annual meeting of FICCI, the Minister for MSME and Road Transport highlighted the need to reduce imports and increase exports. He said this could help enhance

economic growth and boost the contribution of domestic manufacturing to the GDP to up to 30%.

Citing the example of magnets used in electric vehicles, Mr. Gadkari asked industry experts to study which parts were being imported by India.

"Now the magnet, there are a lot of things we are importing from China. I am not a businessman or a business expert, but I am seeing a huge potential for electric cars, e-bikes, electric autorickshaws and even electric trucks," the Minister said.

Addressing the FICCI AGM, Mr. Chandrasekaran noted that India's GDP

would likely grow at 11% in fiscal 2022, after a significant contraction this year. "While this rebound looks spectacu-

lar, we all recognise it is coming on the back of a real loss of output, which means we will need to not only recover, but accelerate. And I believe, given the opportunities and the trends that we see, we can definitely achieve this and much higher levels of growth."

Highlighting trends such as digital and data, rush towards renewables and decoupling of the U.S. and China, Mr. Chandrasekaran said he saw limitless opportunities for India in these trends.

INTERVIEW | ALAIN SPOHR

Alstom's India unit keeps metro trains across the globe rolling

Firm investing heavily in delivery of engineering services'

N. ANAND

Alstom recently completed the manufacture of the 500th metro train car from its facility in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh. To boost output, Alstom has doubled its production plans in India to 480 metro train cars per annum, said Alain Spohr, managing director, India & South Asia. Edited excerpts:

Tell us about your Indian journey?

■ Our manufacturing journey in India started with the Chennai Metro order in 2010. This led to the setting up of a state-of-the-art rolling stock manufacturing facility in Sri City in November 2013. Since its inception, Alstom has been catering not just to the domestic [market], but also international projects such as metro rail for Sydney and Montreal.

As of 2019, Alstom had successfully delivered 420 metro train sets to some of India's major cities such as Chennai, Lucknow and Kochi. The company employs 600 people at Sri City.

Are you back to pre-COVID levels in terms of production?

■ Yes, I'm happy to share that we are back to the pre-COVID levels of production across all our manufacturing facilities. With Unlock 1.0, our teams persevered to restart with an undeterred spirit, following all necessary permissions and keeping safety as a priority by adhering to government protocols.

Having reached the pre-COVID levels, what are your production plans?

■ Our Sri City facility is a 'factory of the future', fuelling our

metro journey. It can build at least four variants of metro train sets simultaneously. With the growing demand, we have doubled the capacity of this factory to manufacture 40 cars per month or 480 cars per annum, making it one of the largest in the country for metro train manufacturing.

Additionally, our expansion plans are also progressing as per schedule. For example, we have commenced work on building a new site for components manufacturing in Coimbatore. The current site operations will be moved into the new premises which is expected to be operational in the first quarter of next year.

Your export strategy?

■ India is a very credible market for engineering and manufacturing. Alstom, in India, not only caters to domestic needs but also delivers engineering, components and fully built train sets for various countries across the globe.

The ongoing projects are: rolling stocks for Mumbai Metro Line 3; infrastructure projects for Mumbai, Pune, Bengaluru and Jaipur; and signalling projects for Mumbai, Pune and Jaipur.

What was the feedback from Sydney Metro about the Indian-made cars?

■ Sydney Metro's Northwest line was our first export order for rolling stock manufactured at Sri City and a follow-up order from Sydney for their new lines is a testimony to the confidence that global customers have in Alstom's India manufacturing capabilities.

Having clocked more than 5.7 million kilometres until October 2020, Sydney Metro has been successfully running without any major breakdowns," she added.

FinMin okays ₹9,879-crore capex plans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Saturday said it had approved ₹9,879.61 crore worth of capital expenditure proposals of 27 States.

Of this, ₹4,939.81 crore has been released as the first instalment.

In a statement, the ministry said that all States, except Tamil Nadu, had availed benefits of the newly announced scheme for 'Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure'.

"So far, capital expenditure proposals of ₹9,879.61 crore of 27 states have been approved by the Ministry of Finance," the ministry said. "An amount of ₹4,939.81 crore has already been released to the states as the first instalment under the scheme," it added.

Pandemic accelerated digitisation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said on Saturday that the pandemic had increased the momentum of digitisation in the country.

Chief Operating Officer (COO) of NPCI Praveena Rai said that the pace of digitisation had also increased due to the regulatory framework and policies of the government and RBI. Digitisation has cut across all sections of society, Ms. Rai said at a seminar organised by XLRI.

"Digitisation has revolutionised every single aspect of life and onboarding has risen substantially. There has been gradual migration from cash to digital payments both offline and online," she added.

'5% growth as nations turn inward will be big for India'

'Partnership fintechs will help assess risks'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

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"So, for an economy like

India's, growth rate of 5% will be pretty credible even in this era where I think emerging economies in general will make some sort of a comeback."

Mr. Sharma said it was no longer feasible in the world of deglobalisation to grow at 7% as exports could not grow at 20% or 30% in a year, which was good in an era of globalisation.

"That has never happened in the history of the global economy. In the last decade, only 10 economies ... have grown 7% or more in any year," he said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Morgan Stanley Chief Global Strategist Ruchir Sharma on Saturday said if the Indian economy grows at 5% in the era of deglobalisation, then it will be a significant achievement.

Addressing the FICCI annual convention, Mr. Sharma further said India hastily passed agriculture and labour reforms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Sharma said it was no longer feasible in the world of deglobalisation to grow at 7% as exports could not grow at 20% or 30% in a year, which was good in an era of globalisation.

"So, for an economy like

India's, growth rate of 5% will be pretty credible even in this era where I think emerging economies in general will make some sort of a comeback."

Mr. Sharma pointed out that there were about 100 economies that were growing at 7% or more in 2007.

"That has never happened in the history of the global economy. In the last decade, only 10 economies ... have grown 7% or more in any year," he said.

Population growth link

Mr. Sharma also argued that if the population growth of a country was slowing, then that country could not grow at the same pace as it did in the past.

He also pointed out that intra-regional trade was the lowest in South Asia compared to any sub-region of the world.

"The last decade was a lost decade for emerging economies. The only economy to have gained in the global share in the last decade was China," he noted.



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SNAPSHOTS



Corals on fire

There is a form of inflammatory cell death - pyroptosis. This is mediated by the protein family gasdermin that form pores. A study in *Science* documented a similar gasdermin-mediated cell death in reef-building corals. This may be a result of environmental stress.



Distant yet bound

Astronomers from the University of California, Berkeley, U.S., have found a binary star system, 336 light years away, with a planet in a bound, highly eccentric orbit. Interactions with the star and other planets can "kick" it outwards, and a passing star can stabilise its orbit. Such a scenario may explain the hypothetical "Planet nine."

Can vaccines with EUA be used at the population level?

The emergency use approval has been based on safety and efficacy data from limited follow-up

R. PRASAD

Pfizer's mRNA vaccine has been approved for emergency use by the UK, Bahrain, Canada, Mexico and the U.S. The company has also applied for emergency use approval in India. The emergency use approval has been based on safety and efficacy data from limited follow-up. Vaccines tested and manufactured in India would take a little longer to reach the stage where data are available to support emergency use approval.

Meanwhile, the Indian government has spelt out four high-risk groups – health-care workers, frontline workers, those over 50 years of age and those aged below 50 years but with co-morbidities – will get the vaccine on priority. Most countries too identified the priority groups that would receive the vaccine first.

Pfizer has already indicated that it plans to file for full FDA approval in April next year; it was granted an EUA by the U.S. FDA on December 11. Moderna and AstraZeneca



Home truths: Vaccines tested and manufactured in India would take some more time to reach the stage where data are available to support emergency use approval. ■ GETTY IMAGES

searcher in global health and bioethics in an email. He feels that it is not important for COVID-19 vaccines usage permission to be restricted only to high-risk populations if there is close oversight.

Virologist Dr. Shahid Jameel, Director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University too shares the same idea that vaccines ap-

proved for emergency use should be available to all. "My understanding is that EUA is given during public health emergencies. That emergency is the same for everyone," he says in an email. "What is the point in developing vaccines while the pandemic is on and then not deploying them to control the pandemic? Seems

silly."

Safety data

Dr. Jameel then goes on to stress that safety data from limited follow-up would be sufficient even for universal vaccination. "When is safety testing enough? Data for many prior vaccines show that most adverse events take place within six weeks of im-

munisation. That is the logic for two months (US FDA) or 70 days (Europe Medicines Agency) waiting before EUA is granted," Dr. Jameel says.

Evidence-based usage

However, Dr. Giridhara Babu, epidemiologist with the Public Health Foundation of India, Bengaluru does not agree with universal vaccination based on emergency use approval. "Full approval is needed before beginning universal vaccination. Mass vaccination with any vaccine for which only partial data is available is unethical," Dr. Babu says in an email. "Evidence-based implementation is essential for mass vaccination. Therefore, vaccines that have only emergency use approval cannot be considered for mass vaccination."

Also, the DCGI has to clarify under what rule will it grant permissions for widespread usage since emergency use approval is not as such mentioned in Indian drugs/vaccines related laws and rules, says Dr. Bhan.

But no country including

India has plans for widespread vaccination based on emergency use approval. Also, the high-risk groups in India earmarked for vaccination on a priority basis once vaccines get emergency use approval works out to 300 million people. It might very well take a year to vaccinate the priority groups.

In mid-November, Serum had manufactured 40 million doses and was to soon begin making Novavax vaccine. Clinical trials of other vaccines are currently under way in India. Vaccines such as the ones tested by Pfizer and Moderna will be expensive when available in India and might not be used by the government to vaccinate high-risk groups.

Pfizer had however told the media that it would not make the vaccine available in the private market during the pandemic phase.

The question really is whether such vaccines with emergency use approval should be available in the open market for anyone to purchase and get vaccinated, says Dr. Jameel.

How to use camera traps more ethically in wildlife research

What we do for biodiversity matters, but how we do it matters even more

ASWATHI PACHA

Imagine yourself as a wildlife researcher. You set up camera traps in a forest to take pictures of your study animal. But what do you do when the cameras unintentionally capture images of people – local villagers or even suspected poachers? A new paper published by an international team of researchers notes that the privacy of people photographed needs to be respected and lays out seven basic principles, "a blend of ethical and pragmatic good practices," to be followed.

Studies of snow leopards
The study team has been conducting camera trap-based studies of snow leopards in several countries such as Mongolia, India, China and the Kyrgyz Republic. "These cameras are like quiet observers. Some of them had recorded people with guns, trespassers, and even a possible hunting party. This created ethical dilemmas, and that is when we started to explore... yes, on one hand, camera traps can



Camera traps: Some cameras had recorded people with guns, and trespassers, says Koustubh Sharma. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

be used as an important tool to detect illegal movement. But have we informed the people enough?" asks Koustubh Sharma, from the International Snow Leopard Trust, and lead author of the paper published in *Ecological Evidence and Solutions*.

He adds that it is important to put out a notice in the surrounding local communities just like how inside an ATM it says: This area is under CCTV Surveillance.

"This does two things. One,

cond thing, it also serves as a deterrent because if you know someone's watching, you are less likely to do something wrong," says Dr. Sharma.

The ethics question

He explains that it is not ethically correct to quietly sneak out using these cameras and catch the people by surprise; because ultimately it is the local people who are the partners in the forefront of the battle to conserve the habitats and the wildlife.

"Researchers also have

public responsibility. It is im-

portant we report illegal activity. At the same time, the local communities need to be empowered and well informed of these practices. It is unwise and unethical to use a stealth mode," says Charu Mishra, Executive Director of the Snow Leopard Trust and co-author.

He adds in a release: "Our article, which builds on years of hands-on experience and knowledge of practising field researchers, social scientists, and legal minds, is a step towards an ethical code of conduct for researchers and wildlife managers working with research cameras. What we do for snow leopards and biodiversity matters, but how we do it matters even more."

The team writes that there may be situations when these concepts may need to be modified and adapted. They hope that this set of basic concepts can act as an initial checklist that can be constantly updated to improve the practice of ethical camera trap-based research and also help researchers better navigate the ethical-legal tightrope.

How epigenetics alters inherited genetics' message

Epigenetics is the biochemical changes dictating expressivity of a gene in a cell



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

An exciting paper has appeared in *Nature*, authored by Lu et al titled "Reprogramming to recover youthful epigenetic information and restore vision," (*Nature* 588, pages 124-129). Lu and co-authors point that a proposed cause of ageing is the accumulation of "epigenetic noise" that disrupts gene expression patterns lending to changes in inherent DNA function. If one can put them back by restoring them using specific genes (gene therapy) sight can be restored.

The human (and mammalian) eye is a remarkable organ in the course of evolution which has allowed us to "see" the external world clearly and in colour. Earlier forms, such as microbes and plants, reacted to light in other ways (for photosynthesis). The front part of the human eye (cornea, lens and the vi-



Play of factors: Ageing leads to a progressive decline of cells in the retina. Epigenetics further modifies this. ■ GETTY IMAGES

treous humour gel) is transparent, colourless and helps focus the incoming light into the retina, helping us see colour. It is the retina that sends the message to the brain. Its main component, called the retinal ganglion cells (RGC) are the ones that help in this process of sending the message in the form of electrical signals, called neurons or nerve cells. Thus, RGCs are the ones that convert optics into electronics.

Cellular regulators
The functioning of cells and tissues in our body are controlled by thousands of proteins that regulate various cellular functions. These proteins are in turn encoded by the respective genes which are a part of our genome or the cellular DNA. Any minor or major changes to our inherited DNA (addition or mutation) can result

in altered protein production, which in turn leads to defective cellular functions. This forms the basis for many heritable genetic disorders affecting the mankind. Apart from DNA or protein sequence level alterations, there are other biochemical changes that influence and dictate if a gene should be active or inactive in a given cell type. For example, the gene that encodes for the insulin protein is present in exact form, in every cell of the body. However, it is allowed to express only in the insulin secreting beta cells of the pancreas and is kept inactive in the rest of the cells of the body. This phenomenon is tightly regulated by a combination of regulatory proteins that changes the expressivity of the gene. Also, the histone

proteins that bind the DNA and help to compactly wrap it inside the chromosomes can undergo chemical modifications such as methylation and acetylation on different lysine amino acids within the protein. These modifications both on the DNA and its associated proteins alter the chromosomal conformations and regulate gene expression. These changes can either unwind the DNA and allow gene expression or compact the DNA and render the genes in the region inactive or silent.

Such biochemical changes that dictate the expressivity of a gene in a particular cell are collectively termed "epigenetics." Unlike DNA mutations that are permanent, such epigenetic changes are reversible and are mediated

by regulatory proteins such as DNA methyl transferases (DNMTs), histone acetyl transferases (HATs), histone deacetylases (HDACs) and so on. These regulatory proteins can add or remove such modifications and can result in turning ON/OFF a specific gene in a tissue or organ specific manner. In the case of pancreatic beta cells, the insulin gene is maintained in an open or active conformation, thus allowing protein expression, while it remains silent in other cells. This normal epigenetic control on our genes can get altered during normal ageing, stress and disease conditions.

Tumour suppressors

This is well known in many cancers, where certain set of genes called tumour suppressors that regulate cell division get silenced either due to mutations or due to epigenetic alterations and result in uncontrolled proliferation of cells and tumour development. Similarly many messages or youthful genes are also turned off by epigenetic changes during our normal ageing process. RGCs help us the ability to see clearly and in colour. Ageing leads to a slow and progressive decline in this ability of RGCs to

maintain and regulate the stability and constancy to function properly. In addition, external factors such as family or hereditary history, diabetes (both type 1 and 2) and others modify this homeostasis by inducing "epigenetic" alterations as explained above.

I requested my colleagues at the Institute Indumathi Mariappan (a translational researcher in cell biology) and G. Chandrasekhar (a clinical expert with special interest in glaucoma, as well as analytical thinking) for their reaction. Dr. Mariappan points out that it is risky to consider such an approach in humans with so many unknowns and stochastic effects within each cell, it can lead to totally unpredictable events that cannot be reversed and the DNA changes are permanent. However, she says that such experiments can be tried in mice, rat and zebrafish as animal models, to study glaucoma. Dr. Chandrasekhar says that ultimately the test will be whether other labs can reproduce this reprogramming work in other organs affected by ageing (for example, heart, lungs and kidneys).

Co-author Mike Adams, Professor in Product Engineering and Manufacturing, at the University of



Fingerprint grip

What is the use of fingerprints for our body?

Monkeys, apes and we humans have evolved fingerprints or ridges on hands and feet. This region on our hands and feet also has a high density of sweat glands.

A new study has now shown that these ridges and the skin moisture due to the sweat glands helps give greater levels of grip when holding on to objects. Fingerprint ridges help increase the friction when you hold smooth surfaces and the sweat is also regulated to maximise friction.

The results were published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Co-author Mike Adams, Professor in Product Engineering and Manufacturing, at the University of

Birmingham commented: "Understanding the influence of finger pad friction will help us to develop more realistic tactile sensors – for example, applications in robotics and prosthetics and haptic feedback systems for touch screens and virtual reality environments."

Using hi-tech laser-based imaging technology, the scientists found that the moisture on the finger is regulated by a combination of sweat pore blocking and accelerated evaporation of excessive moisture from external wetting. These two functions together maintain the optimum amount of moisture in the fingerprint ridges.

"This dual-mechanism for managing moisture has provided primates with an evolutionary advantage in dry and wet conditions – giving them manipulative and locomotor abilities not available to other animals, such as bears and big cats," added Professor Adams.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in



The Facebook feud

Why are the recent accusations against the social media giant significant and what do they entail?

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN

The story so far: On Wednesday, social networking giant Facebook was sued by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the U.S. agency which seeks to protect consumers and promote competition, as well as by the attorneys general of 46 States, the territory of Guam and the district of Columbia. Their complaint against the Mark Zuckerberg-run company is that over the years, it has unlawfully maintained its monopoly in the social networking space. Among other things, they have called for a break-up of Facebook. This comes in the wake of several recent moves across the world targeting what's called the 'Big Tech' on anti-trust charges. In October, for instance, the U.S. Justice Department sued Google for alleged abuse of its dominance in the search services market.

What are the core arguments made against Facebook in the lawsuits?

The plaintiffs – the FTC and attorneys general of all U.S. States except Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and South Dakota – essentially say that Facebook has engaged in anti-competitive conduct over the years in order to maintain its monopoly in the market for social networking services, and that this has been driven by a fear of falling behind emerging competitors.

The lawsuits highlight two broad areas where such conduct has been evident. Facebook's acquisition strategy is one of the areas. The FTC lawsuit says the acquisition of photo-sharing network Instagram and messaging platform WhatsApp reflects Mr. Zuckerberg's view that "it is better to buy than compete". The plaintiffs reckon that the only reason why Facebook paid a whopping \$19 billion to buy WhatsApp, which in six

years it has not monetised, was that by doing so, it was eliminating a serious challenger to its top position in the social networking space.

The second area relates to "anti-competitive platform conduct". The lawsuit by the States says, "When Facebook opted not to purchase a firm

presenting a competitive threat, or was rebuffed, Facebook cut off access to key components of its immensely valuable network." This is what happened to Twitter's Vine, Path, Circle, and other apps, according to the lawsuit. The complaint is that Facebook closed access to its platform by potential competitors after having opened it up to enlarge its base and increase engagement with users.

Take the example of Vine, which allows users to create and share short videos that go in a loop. Its users could find friends via Facebook. But on the day of Vine's launch, Facebook made sure this feature was no longer available. By cutting off Vine, says the FTC lawsuit, Facebook prevented it from accessing APIs (application programming interfaces) that could have helped it grow.

In essence, the complaint is that Facebook either gobbled up potential competition or used its platform's power to prevent them from scaling up

threat, or was rebuffed, Facebook cut off access to key components of its immensely valuable network." This is what happened to Twitter's Vine, Path, Circle, and other apps, according to the lawsuit. The complaint is that Facebook closed access to its platform by potential competitors after having opened it up to enlarge its base and increase engagement with users.

In effect, the lawsuits seek a court order that would force Facebook to sell off Instagram and WhatsApp and prevent it from imposing anti-competitive platform conditions. There is also a reference to the Hart-Scott-Rodino Act, which "requires companies to file pre-merger notifications with the Federal Trade Commission and the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department for certain acquisitions". The lawsuit invokes this to ask for an order to make Facebook seek prior approval for its acquisitions in future.

How has Facebook reacted to this?

In its blog, Facebook has said that the acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp "were intended to provide better products for the people who use them, and they unquestionably did". Also, it has said that these acquisitions were reviewed, and "correctly allowed", by the relevant anti-trust regulators then.

It also points to one of the big remedies sought – the break-up of Facebook – to say that "this lawsuit risks sowing doubt and uncertainty about the U.S. government's own merger review process and whether acquiring businesses can actually rely on the outcomes of the legal process".

Responding to the other big complaint that it unfairly shut off promising services from accessing its platform, it has said, "Facebook told these apps that they could not use Facebook's platform to essentially replicate Facebook." According to it, "This restriction is standard in the industry. Where platforms give access to other developers – and many do not provide access at all – they usually prohibit duplication of core functions." It further said that LinkedIn, The New York Times, Pinterest, and Uber, among others, have similar policies.

Emergency use of COVID-19 vaccines

What information has the Indian regulator sought from Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech?

JACOB KOSHY

The story so far: The Pune-based Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech of Hyderabad, frontrunners among Indian vaccine makers, have been advised by India's drugs regulator – the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) – to furnish more evidence that their vaccine candidates were safe and capable of preventing COVID-19. Neither company has finished testing its vaccines, but they chose to approach the drug regulator seeking 'emergency use' provisions.

What is emergency use authorisation (EUA) for drugs and vaccines?

The conventional process to approve new drugs or vaccines is to subject them to a clinical trial process. This means that after a prospective drug has been determined safe in animals, it is progressively tested in larger groups of people – healthy ones, if it is a vaccine – or patients, in case of a new drug.

The trials in phase 1, 2 and 3 are designed to establish the drug's safety and efficacy, and promoters of the new drug or vaccine must furnish data from each phase to a country's drugs regulators to satisfy them that the results are promising enough to move to the next stage. This process and the logistics of execution and evaluation are long, and it often takes years for a new entity to be commercially approved.

However, there may be several situations when the approval process must be hastened – for instance, a potential drug may be available to treat an extremely debilitating and rare disease, but there are too few potential patients to devise appropriate clinical trials; or there is an outbreak that is putting several lives at risk and no proven drugs or vaccines are at hand; or a drug or vaccine has been properly tested in one country and known to save lives and will evidently be useful in another country which has neither the resources nor expertise to subject it to a similar evaluation. It is under such circumstances that health regulators allow accelerated approvals under EUA. The latter is terminology specific to the United States Food and Drug Administration – it has just given emergency approval to a vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech, the first vaccine to prevent COVID-19 approved in the U.S. – but several countries have similar provisions under similar names.

What is the process in India?

India does not have an explicit EUA provision. However, a section in the rules governing the use and regulation of



Vials of Covishield before they are packaged at a lab at the Serum Institute of India in Pune on November 30. ■ AFP

Depending on the severity of the disease, urgency, rarity or the lack of alternative treatments, the regulator has the right to waive local clinical trials if a drug has been approved elsewhere

in the case of a new drug, the medical benefits of the drug are evaluated based on the first two phases of the testing and the larger – usually more time-consuming and expensive – phase 3 trial can be deferred. It is under such provisions that first pharmaceutical companies, and then vaccine firms, were able to offer drugs such as hydroxychloroquine, Remdesivir and Favipiravir to COVID-19 patients, even though there was little evidence to show that they worked.

Vaccine makers such as Serum Institute of India (SII), Bharat Biotech (BB), and Zydus Cadila, too, have been allowed to rely on the efficacy of data from other countries, or limited human trials to accelerate their testing process.

Why did India's drugs regulator seek more data?

The DCGI has a Subject Expert Committee (SEC) which evaluates technical data from trials. At its meeting on Wednesday, the committee said that in the case of SII, it would need "updated" safety data from the company's ongoing combined phase-2/3 trial on 1,600 volunteers in

drugs that came into effect in 2019 – called the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019 – mentions an 'accelerated approval process'. Depending on the severity of the disease, urgency, rarity or the lack of alternative treatments, the regulator has the right to waive local clinical trials if a drug has been approved elsewhere

India. Because the SII's vaccine, 'Covishield', is a version of the Oxford-AstraZeneca ChAdOx1 vaccine candidate, whose early results from its phase 3 trials are being scrutinised by the United Kingdom's drugs regulators, the Indian committee also wanted to evaluate this data as well as wait for that country's decision on the vaccine. In the case of Bharat Biotech, the regulator wanted to see data from the company's ongoing trial on 28,500 volunteers across India.

The committee has not laid bare its reasoning, but the rules say it is free to ask for any data it terms necessary to evaluate the risk-benefit ratio of approving an untested vaccine candidate.

What lies ahead?

Drugs regulators are not enjoined to approve a drug just because there is a pandemic. However, this is a rare historic moment when drugs and vaccines anywhere, even with the slightest promise, are being given unprecedented leeway and are nudged by the government to rapidly bring an effective vaccine to market. Companies are allowed to furnish 'interim' data – they do not have to wait for trials to end before approaching the regulator. In the case of SII, the approval of the ChAdOx1 vaccine in the United Kingdom could potentially mean almost immediate approval in India.

Another factor would be the frequency of adverse events and reactions. While there have been reports of volunteers in global trials – and in India too – experiencing severe reactions, none has been definitely linked to the administration of the vaccine. Being convinced that Indians, if not significantly benefit, would not come to harm at least, will be a key factor influencing the committee's decision.

A turnaround in J&K on Roshni Act

Why does the government want the High Court, which had called the Act unconstitutional, to reconsider its ruling?

PEERZADA ASHIQ

The story so far: On December 4, the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) government filed a petition in the High Court, asking it to reconsider its October ruling on the Roshni Act. The court had declared it "unconstitutional" and the State government deemed all actions taken under the Act, originally called the J&K State Land (Vesting of Ownership Rights to the Occupants) Act, 2001, "null and void". Under the Act, all occupants of State land – lease, farm or non-lease land – could apply for regularisation if it was with the occupant up to 1990. After the HC order, the government said it would retrieve land from occupants within six months.

Why is a two decades-old law under the scanner? Enacted in 2001 during Farooq Abdullah's regime, the Roshni Act was an ambitious project to meet J&K's – then a State – chronic power crisis and raise funds to set up hydroelectricity projects to generate extra power. There was a notional calculation on the part of the government that regularising 20 lakh kanals (equivalent of 2.5 lakh acres) of State land under occupation of locals would help it raise ₹25,000 crore, to provide a stimulus to the ailing and debt-ridden power sector. The condition for regularisation made by the government was that the property owner had to pay according to market prices fixed earlier in 2001.

What were the subsequent amendments made to the Roshni Act?

Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who was Chief



Minister of J&K in 2005, effected a number of amendments to the Act. It extended the cut-off date from 1990 to 2004, which was later extended till 2007. According to the fresh amendments, further relaxation was granted to occupants on the market prices fixed earlier in 2001.

Why was the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) unhappy with the Act?

The CAG tabled a report before the J&K assembly in 2014 and pointed out irregularities. It said that land transfers under the Act between 2007 and 2013 were able to raise only ₹76 crore against the value of the land pegged at ₹317 crore. The period saw ownership rights granted for 33,000 kanals in the Kashmir valley and 3,14,000 kanals in Jammu. The CAG reported that the beneficiaries in Kashmir paid ₹54 crore against the targeted ₹123 crore, and in Jammu, they paid ₹22 crore against the targeted ₹194 crore. The CAG described the Act as a ₹25,000 crore fraud".

Who approached the court against the Act and what did it observe?

A public interest litigation (PIL) was filed by a Jammu-based activist S.K. Bhalla in 2011, alleging that politicians, bureaucrats and revenue officers were hand in glove in committing fraud under the Act. In 2014, after the CAG report, Jammu-based advocate Ankur Sharma filed another petition and demanded that the Act be declared "unconstitutional". In 2018, then governor Satya Pal Malik, as head of the State Administrative Council without any legislature, repealed the Act, saying it failed to meet its objectives.

A Division Bench of J&K High Court, comprising Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice Rajesh Bindal, declared the Act "unconstitutional" in October 2020. Acting on the HC observations, the J&K government on October 31 declared all the actions taken under the Act "null and void".

Why has the J&K government filed a review petition?

The J&K government, which had initially decided against filing any review in the case before the court, finally filed a review petition on December 4, saying "a large number of common people would suffer". Landless cultivators and individuals have been clubbed along with rich and wealthy land grabbers, who have obtained a title over State land through the provisions of the Act, it said.

Many politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen were named prior to the District Development Council polls in the Union Territory. However, it turned out that most of the beneficiaries were farmers and small landholders.

Shifting the Rohingya to Bhashan Char

What are the concerns of human rights agencies about Bangladesh relocating refugees to a flood-prone islet?

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

The story so far: On Thursday, agencies reported that a United Nations (UN) human rights investigator had requested Bangladesh to allow a safety assessment of the remote islet of Bhashan Char, where the government had shipped 1,600-odd Rohingya refugees. Reuters reported that the UN said it was not involved in the transfer of the refugees there. Thomas Andrews, the UN human rights investigator for Myanmar, told the news agency that the assessment and verification process to ensure that the refugees were not forced to go were in the "best interest of all". Other human rights agencies have also criticised the move.

Is the islet safe?

Bhashan Char is a char-land of around 13,000 acres, formed by the accumulation of silt where the river Meghna meets the Bay of Bengal carrying rich alluvial deposits. Char-lands are a common feature in Meghna and Padma rivers and literally mean "shifting landmass". As the name reveals, the char was not part of the permanent land feature of Bangladesh, but appeared recently. Bhashan Char is surrounded by a mangrove forest that has given it geographical stability. Sensing a tourism opportunity, the Bangladesh government had declared Bhashan Char as a protected forest land in 2013. It is a two-and-a-half-hours boat ride away from Cox's Bazar in Chittagong. The main argument for the char-land being unsafe is that these lands are known to be unstable and flood-prone. The other fear factor includes the



Rohingya refugees being transported to Bhashan Char from Chittagong on December 4. ■ AP

tropical cyclones that visit the area every year.

What is the arrangement for the Rohingya?

Over the past few years, Bangladesh has constructed roads and brought modern telecommunication networks to Bhashan Char. The Bangladesh government has earmarked around 1,350 acres for the Rohingya refugees, of which 432 acres is dedicated to their rehabilitation and the rest remains for future projects. The government has constructed a large number of housing units in the section designated for the Rohingya. The country sent 1,642 Rohingya refugees to the islet from their temporary camps in Kutupalong, near Cox's Bazar, on December 4. They are being housed in red-roofed residential units and most houses are built four feet above the ground to help them withstand unexpected high tidal waves.

Why is Bangladesh moving the refugees?

Rohingya refugees in Kutupalong have been living in a

large refugee camp near the forested borders with Myanmar since 2017, when they were forced to traverse the forest and the rivers that constitute the border between Bangladesh and Myanmar's Rakhine province. Ever since their arrival, the refugees, numbering 1.1 million, have been living in Kutupalong under bamboo and tarpaulin structures. The camp is located on a hilltop, which was a sanctuary for elephants and other wild animals. Kutupalong has also been in the news for its rising crime rate. Bangladesh argues that the islet will provide a safer place.

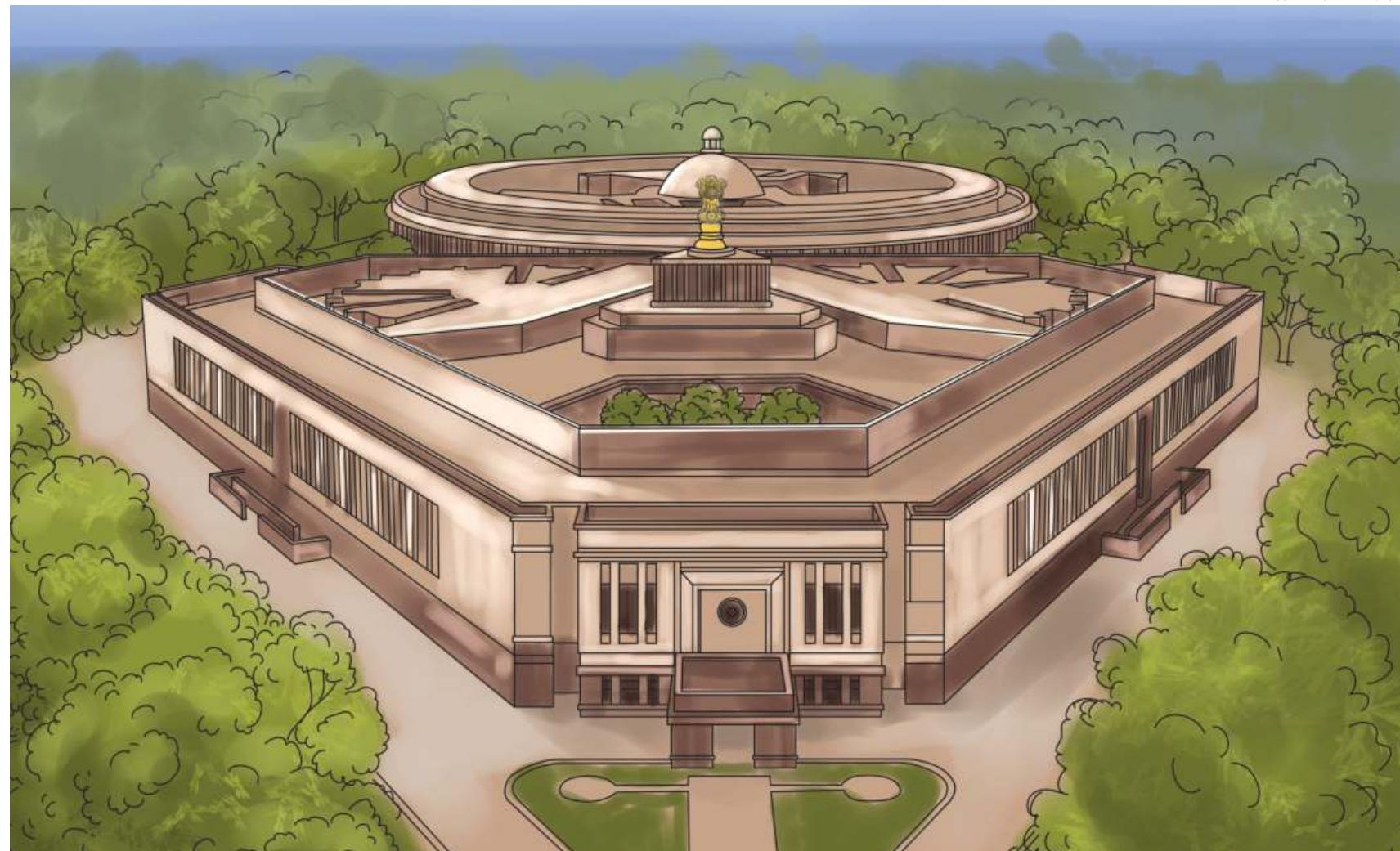
Why are human rights agencies upset?

Amnesty International said Bangladesh must "drop" its plans to shift Rohingya refugees to Bhashan Char as the char-land had not yet been declared safe for habitation by the United Nations.

Omar Waraich of Amnesty International claimed that many Rohingya who were asked to relocate said they were coerced. "Any decisions relating to the relocation of refugees must be transparent and involve the full participation of the Rohingya people. In the meantime, plans for any further relocation must be abandoned," Mr. Waraich said.

What happens next?

Diplomatic sources have confirmed that Dhaka does not plan to relocate the entire refugee settlement and only aims at reducing the congestion in Kutupalong. The country's long-term plan for Rohingya refugees is to seek their repatriation to the Rakhine province of Myanmar.



CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

The bid to remake the face of the capital

The government has set in motion a plan to redevelop the administrative centre, which can cost thousands of crores

DAMINI NATH

On December 10, a little over a year after the government announced its ambitious plan to redevelop the 3-km-long historical stretch from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate known as the Central Vista, Prime Minister Narendra Modi kicked off the first part of the project by laying the foundation stone for the new Parliament building.

While the *bhoomi pujan*, performed by Mr. Modi,

marked the beginning of the project, construction will only start after the Supreme Court disposes of all challenges to the project that are pending before it. Ever since Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri announced the project in September 2019, activists, environmentalists, architects and Opposition leaders have questioned the need for the project, the processes for obtaining approvals for it and the costs involved.

The Supreme Court on De-

cember 7 allowed the government to go ahead with the foundation stone ceremony, but only after the Centre gave an affidavit, saying there would be no construction, demolition and cutting of trees till the court gives its rulings in the cases.

The plan, as drafted by Ahmedabad-based HCP Design, Planning and Management, involves constructing a triangular shaped Parliament building adjacent to the existing one that was built in the 1920s by the Brit-

ish; demolishing the post-Independence office buildings along the Central Vista and replacing them with 10 modern multi-storey office complexes to house all Ministries; and revamping the civic infrastructure and facilities for the Republic Day parade on Rajpath.

The need for the project, according to the government's arguments in court and Mr. Puri's public statements in the past year, is that the existing Parliament House is almost 100 years old, structurally unsafe, and lacks adequate workspace for a modern legislature. Similarly, the 10 new office buildings proposed are required to bring all Central Ministries in one place, making the functioning of the government more efficient, according to the government.

Space for more MPs
Another reason touted by the government is the expected increase in number of constituencies after delimitation, which is frozen till the first Census after 2026,

which will be in 2031. The Parliament House now would not be able to accommodate additional MPs, the government has maintained.

Apart from the more practical reasons given, Mr. Modi's speech at the groundbreaking ceremony invoked symbolism of a new Parliament as a temple of democracy, built by an Independent and *Atmanirbhar* India. He asked Indians to to pledge to keep "India First".

The design of the new building will also reflect that, with the national emblem crowning the structure; the national bird, peacock; and the national flower, lotus, providing inspiration for the interiors of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha chambers, respectively; and arts and crafts from across the country being represented.

In a written statement to *The Hindu*, HCP Design, which is headed by Padma Shri-awardee Bimal Patel, said: "The proposed Parliament building will be the first purpose-designed building

for the Parliament of India. Presently, Parliament is accommodated in a building that was built as the council house for the Raj."

Spread over 64,500 sq. ft of built-up area, the new building will have a Lok Sabha chamber with the capacity to seat 1,272 and a Rajya Sabha chamber with 384 seats and a Central Constitutional Gallery that will be open to the public. Offices for all MPs will be built after demolishing the existing Shram Shakti Bhawan and connected to Parliament via an underground pathway.

The project was awarded to Tata Projects for ₹971 crore after a two-step bid process earlier this year. The construction is expected to take 22 months and is scheduled to finish in time for the Winter Session of Parliament in 2022, when India marks 75 years of Independence.

Critics of the project have questioned the timing, given that the economy is still reeling under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi was among those who urged the government to suspend the project and

construction for now. Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra told *The Hindu* that all the legal processes had been followed. He said he was hopeful that the court would give its decisions soon. The project, he said, was for all Indians, not any individual.

Preparatory works

While the CPWD waits for the court's nod, preparatory works have been on for months. The iconic statue of Mahatma Gandhi facing the entrance of Parliament is being shifted to make way for sound-proofing walls.

The other components of the plan are at the planning stage, according to government officials.

The CPWD has floated a request for proposals for the redevelopment of the Central Vista Avenue, the last date for which is December 14. The design of the 10 new Secretariat buildings is yet to be finalised; however, it is likely that construction of one of the buildings on the plot that the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) occupies may start first. The IGNCA is being shifted to the Janpath Hotel temporarily, before a new campus is developed.

The fourth part of the plan, which was not a part of the CPWD's requirements when it asked for designs from prospective consultants but was included nonetheless by the winning bidder, HCP, is the construction of a new Prime Minister's Office, PM's Residence and Vice-President's Enclave.

These buildings are expected to be located near South and North Blocks, on land that is currently housing defence offices in temporary structures called hutments. The process of relocating the defence personnel is on, with new buildings being constructed outside the Vista.

The government is yet to publicly state the cost of the entire project. However, sources say, it could cost at least ₹11,000 crore and take up to six years to complete. While it may not be clear yet how much of a dent the project will make on the exchequer, once it is completed, the skyline of Lutyens' Delhi will be changed forever.

In Focus

■ Spread over 64,500 sq. ft of built-up area, the new Parliament building will have Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha chambers and a Central Constitutional Gallery that will be open to the public

■ The construction is expected to take 22 months and is scheduled to finish in time for the Winter Session of Parliament in 2022, when India marks 75 years of Independence

■ The plan also includes building new Secretariat buildings, a Prime Minister's Office, PM's Residence and Vice-President's Enclave

MOUNT EVEREST

Higher than the Himalayas

China and Nepal reach a consensus on the peak's height, signalling closer ties

ANANTH KRISHNAN

When Nepal and China were discussing the fate of Mount Everest in their border negotiations in the early 1960s, then Prime Minister B.P. Koirala told Mao Zedong the peak lay fully in Nepal. "But you do not even have a name for it in your language, and you call it Mount Everest," Mao told him (although Nepal did, calling the mountain Sagarmatha). Koirala replied, "You do not have a name for the peak either," referring to the Tibetan name of Qomolangma, used in China. Mao retorted, "Tibet is China".

While the fate of the peak was eventually settled by the two – the border, it was decided, would pass right through, and the summit can be accessed from both Nepal and Tibet – the exchange between Koirala and Mao, recounted in the *Kathmandu Post* earlier this year, serves a reminder of the long and emotive history of the world's tallest mountain, a history that involves the complicated 20th century dynamics between British India, Nepal, Tibet and China. For China, the status of Everest, as Mao declared, was also inextricably linked to the sensitive issue of the status of Tibet.

'Peak of friendship'
Six decades on after the boundary negotiations, the story took another step towards resolution on December 8, when Nepal and Chi-



na jointly announced the new height of Mount Everest as 8,848.86 meters in a high-profile virtual ceremony – 86 cm taller than the widely accepted previous height, which was calculated by the Survey of India in 1954.

"A peak of friendship", declared China's Xi Jinping, while Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Nepal's Ambassador to Beijing, told China's official media how the Nepal-China relationship, which turned 65 this year, was "harmonious and trustworthy".

The joint height resolved a three-metre difference in how Nepal and China calculated the peak. A previous calculation by China in 2005 placed the peak at 8,844 metres, while Nepal said it was closer to 8,847 metres. The difference was attributed to China calculating the "rock height" underneath the snow and Nepal using the "snow height" which included the snowcap.

In truth, there was little

real need for a joint survey. Indeed, Nepal's media had reported that Nepal had by 2019 almost completed its two-year-long survey, so much so that some of its officials were taken aback when the government decided, during Mr. Xi's October 2019 visit, to announce a joint survey, all aimed at showing how both sides were, by coming to a consensus about their past, taking a big stride into a future of closer relations.

Sentiment about Everest remains strong in both countries. Earlier this year, China's English-language State broadcaster, China Global Television Network, caused a stir among Nepal's media by describing the peak as being "located in China's Tibet Autonomous Region".

Media suspected some new cartographic aggression, although it was, most likely, a carelessly worded tweet that ignored the joint claim to a peak that sits right

on the border. The tweet was then deleted.

Tourism value

While Nepal has been the preferred route to the summit for climbers, in part because it is much easier to access than Tibet that requires a permit for foreigners, China has increasingly been pushing hard to capitalise on the tourism value of the peak.

The joint height may help its cause, according to Ang Tsering Sherpa, former president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association, who was quoted as saying by the *Kathmandu Post* that tourism in Nepal "started to swell from 2007 when China started issuing Everest climbing certificates stating the height as 8,844.57 metres against 8,848 metres in certificates issued by Nepal for the same peak". "Now, there will be a common height which will end all debates," he said.

Tuesday's ceremony to announce the new height, where the two Presidents exchanged congratulatory letters and their Foreign Ministers were in attendance, served a reminder that as far as Everest is concerned, geopolitics has always accompanied matters of geography.

"Higher than the Himalayas" is the somewhat over-the-top phrase used by China and Pakistan to describe their strategic relationship. In the case of Everest, Nepal and China, it, at the very least, rings factually true.

LLOYD AUSTIN

From General to Secretary

Biden picks a retired high-ranking soldier to run the Pentagon, triggering criticism

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

Last week, U.S. President-elect Joe Biden nominated retired General Lloyd Austin for the crucial post of Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, the four-star General will become the first black person in the role. Gen. Austin's name was chosen over several other possible candidates, including senior Pentagon official Michele Flournoy and Obama-era Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, who is also African-American.

Explaining his pick in the *Atlantic*, Mr. Biden said the General had "met every challenge with extraordinary skill and profound personal decency" in his more than 40 years in the U.S. Army. The two have a close and tested relationship from their Obama administration years – a factor that has played into the selection process. Mr. Biden argued that Gen. Austin is the person the country needed now because his experience and intimate knowledge of the Department of Defense made him uniquely matched to the current challenges facing the country.

Immediately following his appointment, Gen. Austin will need to oversee an effort to equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccines across the country. In this context, Mr. Biden cited the General's experience in withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq (in 2011), the largest logistical operation undertaken by

the Army in six decades as per Mr. Biden.

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"He is a true and tested soldier and leader. I've spent countless hours with him, in the field and in the White House Situation Room. I've sought his advice, seen his command, and admired his calm and

his character," Mr. Biden wrote in the *Atlantic*.

The President-elect said the General would promote diversity and look after the families of soldiers – an issue close to Mr. Biden's heart, whose late son, Beau, was deployed to Iraq (and worked as staff lawyer on General Austin's team).

Instrument of last resort
"Above all, I chose Lloyd Austin as my nominee for Secretary of Defense because I know how he reacts under pressure," wrote Mr. Biden. Gen. Austin understood that force was an instrument of the last resort, Mr. Biden said. During his acceptance speech, Gen. Austin said he understood the importance of working with allies.

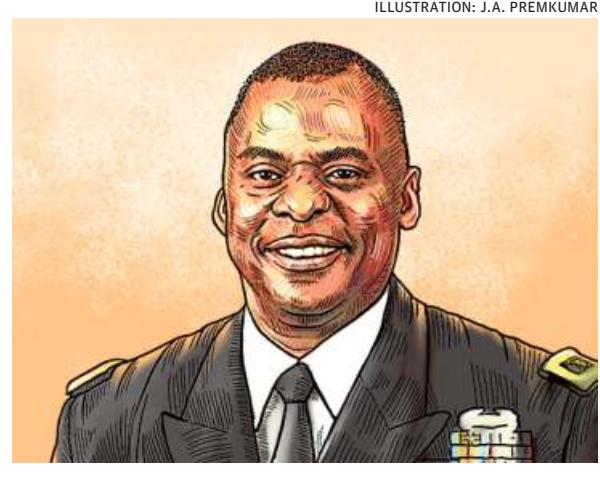
Some, especially conservatives and centrist Democrats, have argued that while there is much in favour of his candidacy, Gen. Austin is not quite the man for the moment. Critics say

that he is not best placed to deal with the challenge of China, which many on both sides of aisle in Washington feel is the most important national security issue facing the U.S. The bulk of Gen. Austin's experience has been in Afghanistan, Central and West Asia. The 2018 National Defense Strategy explicitly listed 'great power competition' with China and Russia as a primary focus – Gen. Austin does not, arguably, have adequate background experience in either region.

Post-retirement, Gen. Austin joined the board of arms manufacturer Raytheon – a position he is likely to be questioned on this during his confirmation – a process that will also require a Congressional waiver as the law requires a seven-year post-military cool-off period. Congress only recently gave President Donald Trump's former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis a waiver and it is by no means a given that Gen. Austin will get one too. Some commentators and lawmakers are concerned that having a former General (again) fill a crucial civilian position could be detrimental to the principle of civilian control of the military.

Gen. Austin said he went from being General Lloyd Austin to Lloyd Austin four years ago. "It is an important distinction and one that I make with utmost seriousness and sincerity," he said. He will need to convince Congress of this.

CM YK



Vihari, Pant stake claim with hundreds

The Indians in a strong position, reaching 386 for four in the second innings for an overall lead of 472

WARM-UP GAME

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SYDNEY
Rishabh Pant and Hanuma Vihari put themselves in the reckoning for next week's first Test with contrasting hundreds as the Indians thoroughly dominated Australia-A in the pink ball warm-up match here on Saturday.

Expensive over

Needing 19 runs to reach his century when Jack Wildermuth commenced the second evening's final over, Pant clobbered him for 4, 4, 6, 4, 4, to remain unbeaten on a blistering 103 off only 73 balls. Overall, he hit nine fours and six sixes.

At the other end, Vihari worked his way to a fine 104-run knock off 194 balls.

Shubman impresses

Also staking a claim for selection is young Shubman Gill, with an elegant 65 off 78 balls and 10 sweetly-timed boun-



Study in contrast: While Hanuma Vihari was composure personified, Rishabh Pant was all aggression on Saturday. ■ TWITTER/BCCI

daries. In the final session of play, Pant's aggressive approach paid dividends as he smashed the Australia-A bowlers to all corners of the Sydney Cricket Ground, the southpaw making a strong case to be considered for the wicketkeeper's job in Adelaide ahead of Test specialist Wriddhiman Saha.

To cite an example of his power-hitting, Pant swept one over the cow-corner for a six, leaving Nic Maddinson to search for the ball among the rows of chairs at the SCG.

At the close of play, the Indians were strongly placed at 386 for four for an overall lead by 472 runs, having bundled out the hosts for a paltry 108 in their first innings on Friday.

SCOREBOARD

Indians – 1st innings: 194.

Australia-A – 1st innings: 108.

Indians – 2nd innings: Prithvi Shaw c Swapson b Steketee 3,

Mayank Agarwal c Rowe b Wildermuth 61, Shubman Gill c Abbott b Swapson 65, Hanuma Vihari (batting) 104, Ajinkya Rahane c Carey b Steketee 38,

Rishabh Pant (batting) 103; Extras 12; Total 386.

Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-108, 3-161, 4-239.

Australia-A bowling: Abbott 7-124-0, Steketee 16-1-54-2, Sutherland 16-5-33-0, Wildermuth 15-2-79-1, Swapson 29-1-148-1, Maddinson 7-1-42-0.

tras (lb-6, w-2, nb-4); 12; Total (for four wkts. in 90 overs): 386.

Players: 1-4, 2-108, 3-161, 4-239.

Australia-A bowling: Abbott 7-124-0, Steketee 16-1-54-2, Sutherland 16-5-33-0, Wildermuth 15-2-79-1, Swapson 29-1-148-1, Maddinson 7-1-42-0.

Rohit's fitness to be reassessed in Australia

Medical staff to take call on participation

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI

Confirming that Rohit Sharma has obtained clearance from the National Cricket Academy to travel to Australia, the BCCI on Saturday said Rohit's availability for the last two Tests in Australia would be subject to reassessment by the Indian team's medical staff in Australia.



Rohit. ■ FILE PHOTO

participation in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy will be taken accordingly," the statement said.

Rohit, who suffered a left hamstring injury on October 18 during Mumbai Indians' Indian Premier League match against Kings XI Punjab, will be required to spend 14 days in his hotel room as per COVID-19 protocols in Australia and will thus join the India squad only after the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne.

"Mr. Sharma's physical fitness has been satisfactory, however, he will be required to continue work on his endurance," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a statement on Saturday.

"He has been given a detailed programme to follow for the duration of the two weeks he will be quarantined for. He will be reassessed by the Team India medical team post his quarantine to establish his fitness status and a call on his

Pucovski out, Harris in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SYDNEY

Victoria's Marcus Harris was on Saturday added to an injury-plagued Australia squad for next week's first Test against India after Will Pucovski was ruled out of the series opener along with David Warner.

Pat for Siraj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SYDNEY

India fast bowler Mohammed Siraj rushing up and attending to Cameron Green after he was hit on the head during the opening day of the warm-up game here has drawn praise from the Australian media.

"Indian cricketer Mohd Siraj has been praised for his sportsmanship in helping young all-rounder Cameron Green after he suffered a blow to the head during the match," tweeted 9News Australia.

Himmat hits unbeaten ton

NEW DELHI: Himmat Singh's unbeaten 60-ball 100 stood out in Sahgal Sports Club's four-run victory but not before Poonish Mehta (94 not out) and Robin Bisht (87) almost pulled it off for Collage Sports Club in a thrilling quarterfinals of the 30th all-India Sperry Om Nath Sood memorial cricket tournament here on Saturday.

Chasing 278 to win, Collage ended up at 273 for six wickets in the allotted 40 overs.

Man-of-the-Match Himmat, a regular member of the Delhi Ranji Trophy team, smashed his second 50 runs off just 15 deliveries as 94 runs came off the final five overs of the innings.

The scores: Sahgal Club 277/6 in 40 overs (Himmat Singh 100 n.o., Anmol Sharma 52, Ayush Badoni 47, Ekansh Dobal 45) bt Collage Sports Club 273/6 in 40 overs (Poonish Mehta 94 n.o., Robin Bisht 87, Anchit Yadav 59).

Devender shines

Services Ranji Trophy player Devender Lohchab (89) and Kapil Rao (74) did most of the scoring for Haryana Academy in its 96-run win over Golden Hawks in the first Tripathi Premier League tournament here.

The scores: Haryana Academy 228/8 in 40 overs (Devender Lohchab 89, Kapil Rao 74, Panday Raj 3/40) bt Golden Hawks 132/3 in 33 overs (Adarsh Srivastav 45, Vaibhav Sharma 28, Harman Singh 4/36, Sonu Chikara 3/23).

It's Lakshay vs Divijay
GURUGRAM: Lakshay Gupta defeated Chirag Duhani 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 to set up a title clash against Divijay Pratap Singh in the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament here on Saturday.

The results (semifinals): Lakshay Gupta bt Chirag Duhani 2-6, 6-3, 6-2; Divijay Pratap Singh bt N.B. Kumaran 7-5, 7-5.

Antwi stars for Gokulam FC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Dennis Antwi struck four for Gokulam Kerala FC, helping it thrash BSS Sporting Club 7-2 in its concluding Group D league match of the I23rd IFA Shield football here on Saturday.

Gokulam will now take on Mohammedan Sporting in the quarterfinals.

The results: Group A: Mohammedan Sporting 1 (Firoz Ali 50) bt Kalighat MS 0 at Kalyani Stadium.

Group B: Peerless SC 1 (Uttam Rai 92) drew with Aryan Club 1 (Sumit Ghosh 94).

Group C: George Telegraph SC 2 (Krishanu Naskar 60, Tamay Ghosh 63) bt Southern Samity 1 (Yad Rudy Abidde 83).

Group D: Gokulam Kerala FC 7 (Dennis Antwi 8, 12, 19, 47, Muhammed Shibil 66, M.S. Jithini 72, Saiful Guindo 85) bt BSS Sporting Club 2 (Pritam Roy 67, Asif Ali Moula 74).

Jamieson's five-for has Windies on the ropes

Blackwood puts up lone resistance

WINDIES IN NZ

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WELLINGTON



Kyle Jamieson. ■ AP

Kyle Jamieson bagged five wickets in a masterclass of swing bowling as New Zealand had the West Indies on the ropes on day two of the second Test in Wellington on Saturday.

The tourists ended the day on the brink of another follow-on as they struggled to 124 for eight, still 336 behind New Zealand's 460. Only Jermaine Blackwood provided any serious resistance but he fell late in the day for 29.

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand – 1st innings: T. Latham c da Silva b C. Holder 27, T. Blundell b Gabriel 14, W. Young c J. Holder b Gabriel 43, R. Taylor c da Silva b Gabriel 9, H. Nicholls c Brathwaite b Chase 174, B.-J. Watling b Joseph 30, D. Mitchell lbw b C. Holder 42, J. Jamieson c J. Holder b Joseph 20, T. Southee b Joseph 11, N. Wagner (not out) 66, T. Boult c Brooks b Chase 6; Extras (b-2, lb-7, w-9): 18. Total (in 114 overs): 460.

Fall of wickets: 1-31, 2-63, 3-78, 4-148, 5-203, 6-286, 7-336, 8-359, 9-454.

West bowling: Gabriel 26-7, 93-3, J. Holder 27-6-85-0, Joseph 22-2-109-3, C. Holder

26-1-110-2, Chase 13-1-54-2.

West Indies – 1st innings: K. Brathwaite c Taylor b Southee 0, J. Campbell c Latham b Jamieson 14, D. Bravo c & b Southee 7, S. Brooks b Jamieson 14, R. Chase b Jamieson 0, J. Blackwood c Latham b Southee 69, J. Holder c Boult b Jamieson 9, J. da Silva (batting) 2, A. Joseph c Watling b Jamieson 0, C. Holder (batting) 5; Extras (b-3, w-1): 4. Total (for eight wkts. in 52 overs): 124.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-22, 3-29, 4-29, 5-97, 6-111, 7-117, 8-117.

New Zealand bowling: Southee 16-6-29-3, Boult 12-4-32-0, Wagner 11-5-26-0, Jamieson 13-4-34-5.

Angulo scores winner

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU

Igor Angulo scored his sixth goal of the season as FC Goa beat Odisha FC by a solitary goal in the Indian Super League at the Bambolim Stadium, Goa, on Saturday.

Goa jumps to fourth

With its second successive victory from five matches, Goa with eight points jumped to fourth position from seventh, while Odisha's winless streak continues from as many encounters and it remains 10th with a solitary point.

Towards the end of the

first half, Alexander Romario's wonderful cross from the left found Angulo, who pushed it forward before unleashing a left-footer from close range.

It was a day when Odisha was lucky to lose by a one-goal margin, thanks to its custodian Arshdeep Singh who made a string of saves.

The result: FC Goa 1 (Igor Antu 45) bt Odisha FC 0.

SUNDAY'S MATCHES

NEUFCHÂTEL VS Chennaiyin FC

5.00 P.M.

Bengaluru FC VS Kerala Blasters

7.30 P.M.

STAR SPORTS 2 (SD & HD) AND 3

Stuttgart hammers Dortmund

Aston Villa snatches a late winner against Wolves

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS

DORTMUND

Promoted VfB Stuttgart scored three times in 10 minutes to crush host Borussia Dortmund 5-1 in the Bundesliga on Saturday and maintain its unbeaten run on the road this season. Dortmund, which has now gone three league games without a win, slips to fifth place on 19 points, while Stuttgart moves up to sixth on 17.

Aston Villa snatched a 1-0 win at Wolverhampton Wanderers in the Premier League on Saturday after substitute Anwar El Ghazi drilled in a stoppage-time penalty as both sides finished the game with 10 men.

The result lifted Villa up to eighth on 18 points from 10 games.

The results: Premier League: Wolves 0 lost to Aston Villa 1 (El Ghazi 90+pen).



Two-goal hero: Silas Wamangituka fires in Stuttgart's second against Dortmund. ■ REUTERS

LaLiga: Valencia 2 (Carlos Soler 26-pen, Manu Vallejo 83) drew with Athletic Club 2 (Villalibre 4, Raúl García 79+pen). Yeong 90+2) bt Arminia 0; Mainz 0 lost to Cologne 1 (Rehbein 55).

Serie A: Crotone 4 (Messias 7, 90+6, Reca 49, Eduardo Henrique 56) bt Spezia 1 (Farias 18).

Bundesliga: Borussia Dortmund 1 (Reyna 39) lost to Stuttgart 5 (Wamangituka 26-pen, Foerster 60, Coulibally 63, Gonzalez 90+1); RB Leipzig 2 (Sabitzer 26-pen, Olmo 41) bt Werder Bremen 0; Borussia M'gladbach 1 (Embozo 70) drew

with Hertha BSC 1 (Guendouzi 47); Freiburg 2 (Grifo 79-pen, Yeong 90+2) bt Arminia 0; Mainz 0 lost to Cologne 1 (Rehbein 55).

Friday: Premier League