



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



SEPARATION OF POWER

P6



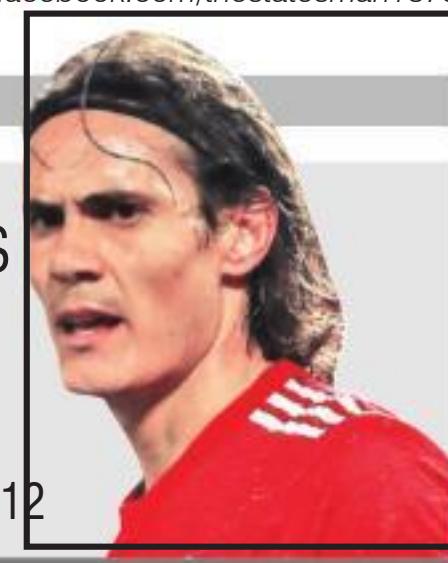
PAK COURT ORDERS
RELEASE OF PEARL
MURDER ACCUSED

P9



TRUMP PARDONS
FORMER AIDES

P10



CAVANI MUSCLES
MAN-U INTO
SEMIS

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Moderate to dense fog in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 23 and 05 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 97% Min: 45%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 23.1°C (+2) Min: 4.5°C (-3)
SUN RISES 07:12 hrs SUN SETS 17:32 hrs
MOON RISES 14:16 hrs MOON SETS 03:363 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Children at Bow Barracks on Christmas-eve.
In Kolkata on Thursday.

ANAGHA BANIK

Fresh sentence for Saeed: Mumbai terror attack mastermind and chief of the banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) Hafiz Saeed was on Thursday sentenced to 15 and a half years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan in one more terror financing case. The Anti-Terrorism Court of Lahore also imposed a 200,000 Pakistani rupees fine on Saeed. The 70-year-old radical cleric has already been convicted for 21 years imprisonment in four terror financing cases of late. Saeed will have to undergo collective imprisonment of over 36 years in five terror financing cases at the Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore.

P9

BCCI AGM ratifies 10-team IPL from 2022



AHMEDABAD, 24 DECEMBER

The BCCI's governing body on Thursday ratified the entry of two new franchises in the IPL to make it a 10-team affair from 2022 and also decided to back the ICC's push for cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Olympics, during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) here. "Two new teams will be introduced in the 2022 IPL," a BCCI source said.

It is learnt that time at hand is too short for even a nine-team IPL next year as an elaborate tender-floating process, increase of matches and ensuring that all foreign player' international calenders are adjusted, would prove to be a herculean task.

T20 cricket in Olympics: In another major development, the Board, in principle, decided to back the ICC's bid for inclusion of cricket, in the T20 format, in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics "after getting some clarifications from the International Olympic Committee". "Look, the BCCI is an autonomous body and it would like to maintain its autonomy. Our legal team is looking to get a few clarifications. Obviously, cricket in Olympics is great for the game," the member, who attended the AGM, said.

BCCI likely to lose \$123m in revenue: "We have told the ICC that we will approach our government for tax rebate but if we don't get that exemption, the amount, which is around \$123 million, will be deducted from our annual revenue, so we will get around \$267 million. But India is hosting the 2021 T20 World Cup," the source said.

Details on Page 12

UK, EU clinch post Brexit free trade deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 24 DECEMBER

The deal is done, Downing Street in London and European Union (EU) officials in Brussels confirmed on Thursday as both sides managed to thrash out a post-Brexit free trade agreement (FTA) just days before the 31 December deadline.

Thousands of pages of legal text accompanies the deal, with details of the agreement set to emerge in the course of the next few days, including the final ratification of the FTA by Parliaments on both sides.

"We have got Brexit done and we can now take full advantage of the fantastic opportunities available to us as an independent trading

nation, striking trade deals with other partners around the world," Downing Street said in a statement.

"We have signed the first free trade agreement based on zero tariffs and zero quotas that has ever been achieved with the EU. The deal is the biggest bilateral trade deal signed by either side, covering trade worth GBP 668 billion in 2019," it said, adding that the UK has taken back control of its "money, borders, laws, trade and our fishing waters".

"The deal also guarantees that we are no longer in the lunar pull of the EU and all of our red lines about returning sovereignty have been achieved," Downing Street declared.

Details on Page 10

UK Covid strain: States put in place fresh protocols

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD,
24 DECEMBER

As states put in place fresh protocols in view of a new Covid-19 strain spreading in the UK, a coronavirus positive woman allegedly managed to give the slip to authorities in New Delhi after her arrival from London and reached Andhra Pradesh by train only to be picked up by authorities and admitted to a hospital.

The 47-year-old woman had landed in Delhi from the UK on the night of 21 December and her 22-year-old son had gone to receive her. The mother had tested positive both at the airport and at Safdarjung Hospital. The hospital authorities had advised home isolation. The pair quietly left the hospital and boarded AP Special

Express on 22 December to reach Rajahmundry on 23 December midnight. The pair were picked up by police at Rajahmundry and sent to a hospital. Her swab samples have been sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune to determine whether she had contracted the new strain of Covid-19.

The Centre has suspended all flights connecting India and the UK from 23 December till 31 December after the discovery of the new strain of the deadly virus and has directed rigorous testing of those who arrived from England recently.

In Meghalaya, entry of individuals from the UK into the state has been barred. The state government has also urged people who have recently returned from Britain or transited through the coun-

try to stay in isolation and inform it about their travel history. As many as 216 people who arrived in Amritsar from the UK in a 22 December flight will be institutionally quar-

antine as they might have come in contact with seven of their fellow passengers and a crew member who tested Covid-19 positive on arrival, health officials said.



Gurudev's vision essence of Atmanirbhar mission: Modi at VBU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SANTINIKETAN, 24 DECEMBER

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's vision is the essence of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Atmanirbhar Bharat is the path to India's development for the development of the world. It's a campaign for India's empowerment and prosperity, and through it, the prosperity of the world," he told the gathering through video conferencing from New Delhi.

He said Tagore and the institution he founded not only strengthened the spirit of nationalism but also promoted inclusiveness that strengthened "vishva bandhuwa" (universal brotherhood). The Prime Minister, who addressed the centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati and Mysore Uni-

tance by an Act of Parliament in 1951.

"Gurudev's vision for Visva-Bharati is the essence of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Atmanirbhar Bharat is the path to India's development for the development of the world. It's a campaign for India's empowerment and prosperity, and through it, the prosperity of the world," he told the gathering through video conferencing from New Delhi.

He said Tagore and the institution he founded not only strengthened the spirit of nationalism but also promoted inclusiveness that strengthened "vishva bandhuwa" (universal brotherhood). The Prime Minister, who addressed the centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati and Mysore Uni-



Prime Minister Modi addressing at the centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan, through video conference, in New Delhi on Thursday.



Mamata not invited: Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today denied receiving an invitation to the centenary year celebrations of Visva-Bharati University even as varsity authorities claimed that the invitation was sent 20 days in advance.

At a presser today, Miss Banerjee hit out at the BJP saying: "They did not invite me for today's convocation." See Page 4

world should benefit from it, and India should learn from the good things they have. Now look at the very name of your university - Visva-

Bharati... coordination and cooperation of India with the world," he said.

The Prime Minister said Visva-Bharati was the embodiment of the Tagore's vision and a "venerable source of constant energy to the country."

He said, today, India was spreading Visva-Bharati's message to the world.

"India is today leading the world in the field of environment protection through the International Solar Alliance and is the only country moving at a rapid pace to achieve the goals of the Paris Accord," he asserted.

Educational institutions and universities like Visva-Bharati and others gave a new direction to the freedom movement."

Praising the institution for its remarkable achievements in varied fields like art and literature, and science and innovation, the Prime Minister urged its students to reach out to the artisans in the region to explore ways to find national and international markets for their produce.

"That will make them self-reliant. Atmanirbhar Bharat is the initiative for India's prosperity which will aid in global prosperity," he said.

Modi also spoke about the inclusive culture that was inherent in India's ethos. It came at a time when Bengal is witnessing political violence in the run-up to the Assembly polls and chief minister Mamata Banerjee has often dubbed his BJP a "party of outsiders".

Details on Page 12



Visva Bharati University turns 100. This temple of learning was Rabindranath Tagore's greatest experiment on creating the ideal human being. We must preserve the vision and philosophy of this great visionary

MAMATA BANERJEE
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

Delhi govt fully prepared for Covid vaccine rollout: CM

Kejriwal says in the first phase the vaccine will be given to 51 lakh priority categories persons including healthcare & frontline workers, and people aged above 50 or below 50 but with co-morbidities

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 DECEMBER

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said his government is fully prepared for the Covid-19 vaccine rollout in the city and that it has made all the necessary arrangements to receive the vaccine from the central government, its storage and administering it to people.

The CM said in the first phase the Covid vaccine will be given to 51 lakh priority categories persons in Delhi—as earmarked by the central government in the priority list—including three lakh healthcare workers, six lakh frontline workers and 42 lakh people either above 50 years of age or below 50 but with co-morbidities.

Addressing an online press conference, Kejriwal said that one person would get two doses each, which meant that 1,02,00,000 doses would be required to be administered to 51 lakh people.

The Delhi government has the cold storage capacity for 74 lakh doses, but this will increase to 1,15,00,000 doses in next five-seven days, he said. The vaccine will be administered to only those people whose registration has



been done. These people will be contacted through the SMS and will be given full information regarding the vaccine rollout.

Kejriwal said the human resource and the number of teams required for the administration of the vaccine such as officers and workers have been marked and trained for this mass vaccination drive. Each team will have five members. The Delhi government has made proper arrange-

ments for the treatment of people, such as the arrangement of doctors and adequate treatment methods, in case there are some post-vaccination side-effects.

Kejriwal said, "There has been a significant decrease in daily deaths due to Covid-19, and we have to reduce it further. The recovery rate has also considerably increased and people who got infected are getting recovered and going back home. But now, everyone has

his eyes fixed on the vaccine. The Delhi government has made all arrangements for the administration of the vaccine to the Delhiites. The government is fully prepared to receive the vaccine from the Central government, its storage, and administering it."

The CM said: "The central government has prepared three types of priority lists for the people who will be administered the vaccine because the production of the vaccine and

the capacity will not be so much as to dispense the vaccine to the whole country quickly. There are three priority areas: the first is healthcare workers such as doctors, nurses and the paramedical staff. There are around 3 lakh healthcare workers in Delhi. The second priority area comprises frontline workers such as police officials, civil defense volunteers and municipal workers. There are around 6 lakh frontline workers in Delhi. The third category is of the people who are either above 50 years of age or are below 50 years and have some kind of co-morbidities such as diabetes or heart-related issues. There are around 42 lakh people in Delhi with co-morbidities. This means that around 51 lakh people come in our priority categories as defined by the central government."

The registration process for the vaccination drive has started, and the vaccine will be administered to only those people whose registration has been done.

Earlier in the day, Kejriwal chaired a meeting on the rolling out and administering of the Covid vaccine in Delhi, with the health department officials giving a presentation on their preparedness in this regard.

DJB VC Raghav Chadha accuses BJP of vandalising his office, attacking staff; party denies

PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 DECEMBER

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice chairman and AAP MLA Raghav Chadha on Thursday claimed that BJP workers vandalised his office and attacked staff members at the board's headquarters at Jhandewalan here.

However, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) denied the allegations saying the attack was orchestrated by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

According to Chadha, the vandals said that the attack should serve as a warning to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and AAP MLAs for supporting the ongoing farmers' protest.

"The vandals told us that Kejriwal is coming out in support of farmers that is why we are warning him with this attack and if the party does not stop supporting the farmers movement then they will target every AAP MLA," Chadha said.

Kejriwal called the attack "shameful" and said the AAP would not be cowed down by such a cowardice act.

"It is so shameful. The BJP should understand that the Aam Aadmi Party and my government are fully with the farmers till our last breath. We are not afraid of such cowardice attacks. I appeal to all the party



workers not to be provoked by such attacks of BJP and express restraint and continue their support to the farmers," Kejriwal tweeted.

Some of the staff members have suffered injuries, Chadha claimed.

"Around 250 people barged into my office and broke the glasses, doors and pots. They threatened my staff and attacked them," Chadha claimed.

He further claimed that the attack took place with the support of Delhi Police.

"Otherwise how could the goons attack such a high security area. It is a pre-meditated attack by the BJP with the help of Delhi police and it's aim is clear to threaten Arvind

Kejriwal and all of us that we should not support farmers," Chadha told reporters.

The BJP workers had come to the DJB headquarters to protest and the police allowed them to enter the premises, he claimed.

Chadha also tweeted a video clip purportedly showing broken doors, glass, pots, furniture and blood stains on the floor.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP spokesman Virendra Babar alleged that the AAP had itself orchestrated the attack and was now blaming the saffron party.

The Delhi Police has detained party unit chief Adesh Gupta and many workers, but we are not afraid of these tactics, he said.

Delhi Police cracks down on cybercrimes

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 DECEMBER

The number of cybercrime complaints in Delhi has come down by November this year due to the city police's "sustained efforts" to arrest people involved in cybercrimes, Delhi Police claimed today in a statement.

Online financial fraud incidents are the highest number of cases were reported than social media related online harassment, hacking, identity theft, data theft etc, according to the statement.

The online financial fraud cases outnumber other incidents by a "big margin" and a major factor behind this is "lack of due diligence or

carelessness on the part of the victims", it said.

Besides arresting 214 cyber offenders, Delhi Police is carrying out many awareness drives through posters, radio jingles, videos etc. in a bid to bring down the number of cybercrime incidents, it stated.

One should not share their personal information or credentials with unknown people out of some temptation or for monetary benefits, Delhi Police's CyPAD (Cyber Crime Prevention, Awareness & Detection Unit) said in the statement.

Capital logs 1,063 new corona cases; recovery rate 97.05 pc

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 DECEMBER

The national capital today reported 1,063 fresh cases of Covid-19, which took the cumulative count of its Covid tally to 6,20,681.

According to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin, as many as 89,920 tests were conducted to identify these

cases. The positivity rate rose to 1.18 per cent from yesterday's 0.99 per cent. Delhi recorded 37 fresh Covid fatalities, which pushed its toll to 10,384 so far.

The number of Covid patients who recovered during the past 24 hours was 1,120, which raised the tally of the city's cumulative recoveries to 6,02,388 till date. The recovery rate inched upwards to 97.05 percent.

There were 7,909 active coronavirus cases in the city now whereas the figure was 8,003 yesterday. The city had 3,938 Covid patients recovering under home isolation currently and those remaining hospitalised numbered 2,908.

Delhi had a total of 5,152 containment zones now, the bulletin added.

There were 15,966 vacant

hospital beds out of the 18,779 beds available for Covid-19 patients in the national capital. The dedicated Covid care centres had 7,448 vacant beds out of the 7,792 beds meant for the deadly virus patients.

The national capital had yesterday recorded 871 coronavirus cases detected from 87,861 tests. It had then logged 18 Covid deaths. The recovery

rate was 97.03 per cent.

The city had on 22 December identified 939 coronavirus infections detected out of 82,386 tests. Its Covid positivity rate had then come down to 1.14 per cent from the 21 December figure, 1.29 per cent, when the positive cases reported were 803. The city had then recorded 25 Covid fatalities. The recovery rate was 96.91 per cent.

there was a significant increase with the number of complaints reaching around 4,500 in April, May, June and July, according to the state- ment.

Online financial fraud incidents are the highest number of cases were reported than social media related online harassment, hacking, identity theft, data theft etc, according to the state- ment.

The online financial fraud cases outnumber other incidents by a "big margin" and a major factor behind this is "lack of due diligence or

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF SH. LALIT KUMAR Additional District Judge-04 (South-East) Court No. 210 Saket Courts, New Delhi PC-21/2020

— Petitioners Versus

1. The State, Through SDM, Kalkaji, New Delhi.

2. Sh. Arvind Nath Pathak, s/o Late Sh. Komal Nath Pathak, r/o M-64, FF, Facing Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019.

3. Sh. Mahendra Pathak, s/o Late Sh. Komal Nath Pathak, r/o M-14, 2nd Floor, Facing Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019.

4. Sh. Amar Nath Pathak, s/o Late Sh. Prem Pathak, r/o M-64, 2nd Floor, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019.

5. Smt. Neelima Sharma, d/o Late Sh. Ravinder Nath Pathak, r/o Flat No. 1202, Laxmi Tower, Sector-14, Noida, Noida-110076.

7. Smt. Veena Sharma, d/o Late Sh. Atul Nath Pathak, Address M/X/188, E-7, Extension Area Colony, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh-462016.

9. Sh. Abhay Pathak, d/o Late Sh. Atul Nath Pathak, Address M/X/188, E-7, Extension Area Colony, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh-462016.

10. Ms. Seema Pathak, d/o Late Sh. Atul Nath Pathak, Address M/X/188, E-7, Extension Area Colony, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh-462016.

11. Smt. Komal Nath Pathak, d/o Captain Raavi Gauri, flat No. 53, Tower No. 06, A-11, First Main Road, Dillor Colony, RMV, Second Stage, Sanjay Nagar, Post, Bangalore-560094.

— Defendants

Whereas the abovenamed

plaintiffs have instituted a

Suit against you U/S substitute service Under Order V Rule 20 (1) of Code of Civil Procedure 1908 in respect of Defendant No. 1, and legal heirs of

deceased No. 2, (Copy of plaint may be collected from the office of this Court on any working day during the office hours).

And whereas earlier summons sent to you at your last available address have returned to the court with endorsement that no such person as said address.

And whereas the Plaintiff

has prayed for substituted

service by Publication in New

Delhi and in the State of Goa,

local daily having good cir-

culation in the state, and this

Court is satisfied that this is a

fit case ordering such a ser-

vice.

Now therefore, notice is

hereby given to you Under

Order V Rule 20 of C.P.C., to

appear before this Court on

28-01-2021 at 10:00 a.m., either

in person or by a pleader duly

instructed if any and able to

answer all material questions

and you are directed to pro-

duce on the day all the docu-

ments upon which you intend

to rely in support of your

defence and to file your writ-

ten statement.

Take notice that, in default

of your appearance on the

day before mentioned, the

case will be heard and deter-

mined in your absence.

Given under my hand and

the Seal of this Court on this

22nd day of December, 2020.

Additional District Judge-04 (South-East) Saket Courts, New Delhi Seal of the Court

SUMMON FOR SETTLEMENT OF ISSUES

(O.V. Rule 20 (1-A) of C.P.C.)

In the Court of the Civil Judge Senior Division

A-Court, Mapusa-Goa.

Special Civil Suit No. 13/2016/A

Mr. Ashok Lakhani

— Plaintiff

Versus

Mr. Aqua Beach Resorts & 7 Ors.

— Defendants

To,

The Defendants

1. Aqua Beach Resorts, Through its Partners Defendants No. 2 to 8, with Registration No. M-2 (PP), Greater Kalash-I, New Delhi-110048 and presently operating from D-25, Aansh Villaage, Satbari Farm, New Delhi-110030.

(b) Mr. Nitin Handa, son of Late Ashwinkumar Handa, major in age.

(c) Ms. Ritika Handa, daughter of Late Ashwinkumar Handa, major in age, business, All a, b and c are above residents of D-25, Ansah Villaage



*The farmers would not return till these laws are taken back.
The government should convene a joint session of Parliament
and repeal these laws*

RAHUL GANDHI
CONGRESS LEADER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER 2020

03

New Haryana policy aims to generate 5 lakh jobs in 5 yrs

Haryana Enterprises & Employment Policy 2020, released by deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala, also aims to attract over Rs one lakh crore investment to the state over next 5 years

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 24 DECEMBER

Ten per cent area of industrial estates will now be reserved as residential area for labour housing and Panchayati land will be made available on lease with the consent of villagers to promote industrialisation in rural areas.

According to the Haryana Enterprises and Employment Policy 2020, released today by Haryana deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala at a Press conference here, the state government aims to generate five lakh jobs and attract over Rs one lakh crore investment over the next five years.

Giving details, Chautala, who also holds the portfolio of industries and commerce department, said this new policy will encourage exports under which a target of exports



of Rs two lakh crore has been set.

Describing the new policy as "important" for regional development and for generating maximum employment, the deputy CM said that this policy will make Haryana

"the preferred investment destination in the country".

Chautala said that this new policy emphasises on strengthening the ecosystem according to ease of doing business. Under this policy, mega and ultra-mega

projects will be exempted from the purview of all labour laws in Haryana, except the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, for a period of three years, subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions.

He said that the limit of the number of workers for exemption from coverage under the Factories Act, 1948 has been increased from 20 to 40 for the energy related industries. The deputy CM said that the IT,ITES, electronics, auto and textile industry have been declared as public utilities under the Industrial Disputes Act 1947 in the new policy.

Apart from this, the floor area ratio (FAR) has been increased from the general level of 50 per cent to 150 per cent i.e. up to 200 per cent in case of general industries whereas the FAR in case of warehousing has been increased from general level

of 75 per cent to 150 per cent, he added.

The deputy CM said that the requirement for provision of basement parking will be removed in case of Data Centre Units being surface parking sufficient. He said that where a project is in force and payment of arrears of the HSIIDC has been paid, automatic provision for transfer of plots has been approved.

To encourage micro and small scale industries, the FAR has been increased up to 250 per cent of the plots with an area of at least 2000 square metres or more for flat-topped factories, Chautala said. Five per cent of the area of industrial estates will be reserved for warehousing activities, he added.

He also said that the new policy envisages providing 36 other services of various departments related to industrial clearances on a portal.

HP CM warns officials of action for delay in executing projects

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Thursday said any delay in completion of various projects being executed in the state would be viewed seriously and action would be taken against the erring officers responsible for the delay.

After reviewing progress of projects under the 'Nai Raahain Nai Manzilain' scheme, Thakur said the scheme was announced in the very first budget of the state government which was aimed at developing lesser known tourist places in Himachal from tourism point of view.

"The officers of various departments must work with better coordination so that work on different projects under the scheme could be completed at the earliest," he added.

Thakur said that the state government had released over Rs 18 crore for upgradation of trekking routes, resting places, viewpoints and installation of tents besides maintenance and upgradation of forest rest houses.

The Chief Minister said



under Janjehli Eco Tourism Project.

He further stated that efforts must be made to ensure completion of this project by December next year.

"Larji Dam is also being developed as water sports activities centre by spending over Rs 3.3 crore and this would not only provide best wayside amenities to the tourists but also prove a best spot for adventure lovers," he said.

that Rs 6.6 crore has been sanctioned for developing Pong Dam as a water sports hub and under this project interpretation centre and eco tourism sites would be constructed at Pong Dam Area besides purchasing speed boats and floating jetties etc.

"Bir Billing area in Kangra district is also being developed from eco tourism point of view. Apart from this, an amount of Rs 5.31 crore have been released till date for developing Chanshal for upgradation of log huts, restoration of natural water body at Kharashali, developing camping sites and upgradation of forest rest houses," he added.

He added that this would ensure that Chanshal area come up as eco tourism and skiing destination in the state and the project would be completed by end of August next year. Chief Secretary Anil Khachi, Additional Chief Secretary RD Dhiman, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister J C Sharma, Secretary Tourism Devesh Kumar, Director Tourism Yunus were also present in the meeting.

Snow leopard caught on mobile cameras in Gangotri Park

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 24 DECEMBER

The Gangotri National Park management in Uttarkashi district in Uttarakhand usually depends on camera traps or hidden cameras for getting photographs and videos of snow leopards. In an unprecedented case recently though, its forest patrol team members managed to take a photo and make a video clip of the endangered snow leopard through their mobile phones.

Filming and taking photographs of snow leopards in any terrain is difficult. Snow leopards' fur patterns cam-



A snow leopard photo taken by the Gangotri National Park staff through a smartphone.

oufage their bodies in a terrain making it hard for onlook-

ers to spot them. And after spotting humans they run to disappear from the site to give little time for filming and photography.

This season patrol teams of the Gangotri National Park were successful in taking a photograph and shooting a 35 second video clip of a snow leopard with their smartphones.

The Gangotri National Park missed the usual tourists' buzz this time due to Covid-19 lockdown and aftermath of the pandemic. Only in October and November the movement of tourists was registered in the park. This year 2,161

tourists visited the Gangotri Park.

Last year the number of visitors was over 16,000.

The Gangotri Park's ranger Pratap Panwar says, "During patrol our teams have encountered many brown bears this time. We were successful in taking a photograph of a snow leopard and shooting a video clip of a snow leopard this season. This was the first ever such instance in the park."

The 35 second clip shows the snow leopard moving swiftly on a vertical cliff.

The Gangotri National Park was established in 1989. The 1,553 square kilometres area

of the park is home to many endangered species including blue sheep, black bear, brown bear, musk deer and snow leopard among others. The Gangotri Park is thrown open for tourists annually from 1 April to 30 November.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown, low visitors' attendance was registered at the Gangotri National Park this year.

The low crowd movement gave wildlife more open space. The park's patrol staff thus saw many animals — which they used to see far away from the trek route — on the Gangotri-Gaumukh trek route.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

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- WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
- JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

INTERNATIONAL GITA MAHOTSAV
17-25 December, 2020
Kurukshestra, Haryana

CLOSING CEREMONY
Maha Aarti & Deepotsav
Friday, 25 December, 2020 (5:00 PM)
Purushottampura Bagh, Brahma Sarovar

Chief Guest
Sh. Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana

State Haryana a place of rich culture, heritage, and the origin of Bhagavad Gita. The Gita not only inspires people to serve humanity but also guides the mankind to show courage at difficult times. The Gita teaches us to fearlessly face challenges of life and serve the humanity on the path of truth.
- Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

Keep yourself safe from Novel Coronavirus and Enjoy the Festival at Home

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Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana www.prharyana.gov.in

Govt. of Haryana



Now Bengal will destroy Mamata's arrogance and give the BJP a chance of making 'sonar Bangla'.

BJP PRESIDENT J P NADD

ACCUSING MAMATA BANERJEE OF 'BOYCOTTING' CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF VISVA-BHARATI

India

Agro industrial park to be set up at Singur: Mamata

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA 24 DECEMBER

Ahead of the Assembly elections, chief minister Mamata Banerjee announced an agro industrial park in Singur, a place where her anti-land acquisition movement had catapulted her to power in 2011.

"There is a good prospect for the agro industry in Singur. The place has a good harvest and an agro industrial park will ensure that the production will have a good market," she said at a Press conference in Nabanna.

The Left Front government had approved a Tata car factory at Singur which became embroiled in controversy over allegedly coercive acquisition of land from farmers.

Miss Banerjee had launched a massive campaign in support of the farmers and against the Tata plant and the erstwhile Left Front government.

Miss Banerjee today clarified that no land would be acquired for the project. "The state government is against any land acquisition. The park would be set up on 11 acre of land that is in the possession of West Bengal Small Scale Industrial Development Corporation. The plot is located on NH-2 and near Singur railway station. A boundary wall is being constructed around the spot. Industrialists can apply for 10 to 30 plots of land in the park."

An industrial park would be set up at Hasimara while the industrial park at Panagarh would be set up on 38 acres of land. The parks would boost employment generation, she added.

In September, the state Cabinet had extended the incentive scheme for industrial parks for another five years. State government had announced setting up 100 industrial parks across Bengal.

K'taka withdraws night curfew order

Decision to impose night curfew for nine days starting from Thursday was taken amid concerns over a new Covid-19 variant spreading in UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU, 24 DECEMBER

In a U-turn, the Karnataka government on Thursday withdrew its night curfew order, hours before it was to come into effect.

The decision to impose night curfew for nine days from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. starting from Thursday was taken on Wednesday in line with the Centre's advice, amid concerns over a new Covid-19 vari-

ant spreading in the UK.

In a statement, CM B S Yediyurappa said: "In view of the public opinion that there was no need for night curfew, the decision was reviewed and after consulting with Cabinet colleagues and senior officials it has been decided to withdraw the night curfew."

Yediyurappa had initially announced yesterday that the night curfew will be imposed from 23 December till 2 January between 10 p.m. and 6

a.m. Changes in night curfew dates and timing were announced later with Yediyurappa tweeting, it will be from 24 December till 1 January, 2021, between 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.

The CM today appealed to the people to exercise self-restraint by wearing face-masks, hand hygiene and social distancing to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

The decision to impose night curfew had drawn flak from the ruling as well as the opposition parties.

Terming the night curfew as a measure to 'cover up' wrongdoings of the BJP government by diverting public attention, Congress state chief D K Shivakumar said, "This is a government which is not accountable. It tries to divert public attention through various means."

How does the night curfew help containing the coronavirus?" Shivakumar asked. BJP MLCA HVishwanath,

who is aspiring to become a minister, criticised the government's decision to impose night curfew.

"I request the government to reconsider its decision to impose night curfew. Some of the decisions should be taken after much deliberation because it's a government for the people," Vishwanath told media in Mysuru.

Another senior BJP leader and Vijayapura MLA, Basanagouda Patil Yatnal too

urged the government to reconsider its decision on the restrictions.

Earlier in the day, Kar-

nataka Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar defended the government's move to impose night curfew saying it was done on the advice of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for Covid-19.

Reacting to criticism of the government's move, Sudhakar sought to know what important economic activities take place at night. "When all the essential services, health-care facilities and transport are well in place, I would like to know whom the night curfew is going to affect?" he asked.

Labour codes: Central trade unions boycott Ministry's conference

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 DECEMBER



Ten major national trade unions today boycotted the labour Ministry's video-conference meeting on framing of rules for the recently enacted four Labour Codes, demanding separate meetings in person for each of the Codes.

The 10 unions which included INTUC, AITUC, HMS and CITU maintained that a single meeting on the legislations which replace over 40 earlier laws comprehensively, would be a mockery."

The unions had informed Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar in a letter that "No fruitful purpose can be served in this kind of virtual meeting as it can only create record for the government that the consultation has been done."

The unions said the Labour Codes were enacted "in the absence of whole Opposition and without any discussion in Parliament, which itself speaks for the attitude of the government on such a serious matter for the workers and employees."

"Your Government has been bypassing all democra-

tic processes in such a serious manner which concerns the working conditions, wages, workplace safety, collective bargaining and future security of not less than 50 crores of workers and employees of formal and informal economy," the unions said in their joint letter to the Minister.

"Now fixation of this meeting for the rule-framing for all the four Codes in one single day for few hours in which twelve central trade unions and much bigger number of employers organisations are supposed to speak their mind" would be not only "great injustice to the working class but

denial to all the procedures necessary in framing of legislations and undermining the basic human rights," the unions said.

"Let us not make a mockery of the consultation process. Already we know that the Indian labour conference has been denied for the last five years violating international commitments of tripartism," the unions said.

The RSS-affiliate Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) which attended the Labour Ministry meeting demanded that definition of wage "limiting allowances to 50 percent of total salary should not be freezed,

since it is the mandate of the Supreme Court in Vivekananda Vidyalaya case of 2019."

BMS General Secretary Binoy Kumar Sinha said BMS representatives opposed the 12 hour working day and said family should consist of six units for the purpose of calculating minimum wages.

The BMS opposed divisions like metro, non-metro and rural rates for wages as it would promote regional inequalities, leading to migration of workers to metros for higher wages. A national minimum wage prevalent in half the world should be implemented in India also, BMS said.

Gold smuggling ED files charge sheet against M Sivasankar

T'PURUR, 24 DECEMBER

M Sivasankar, former principal secretary to Kerala chief minister, was the main brain behind the gold smuggling case and he had amassed wealth through it, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) probing the money trail of the shady deals says in its additional chargesheet, filed at the special court in Kochi on Thurs-

day. The ED in its charge sheet has stated that Sivasankar is directly involved with the proceeds of the crime. The ED said that Sivasankar has involved with the gold smuggling gang after knowing their operations.

The charge sheet also said that the 1 kg gold and Rs 1 crore which was seized from the locker belonging to the gold smuggling accused Swapna, in fact belongs to Sivasankar.

The charge sheet also explains that this was the corruption amount given by Santhosh Eappen, MD of contracting firm Unisact to Sivasankar after he intervened to get the Life Mission contract to the former.

Mayhem in Chh'garh Assembly over soaring crime graph

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
RAIPUR, 24 DECEMBER

in Kondagon had to attempt suicide after he failed to get justice to his traumatised daughter, Kaushik accused.

Bhatpara MLA Shrivrat Sharma said people are being slaughtered like a fish is cut. Cases of murders in broad day light have become common and such heinous acts are being filmed, he claimed.

Criticising the Congress government for its poor handling of law and order, Sharma added that posting of SPs has become a 'payment seat' in the current regime.

Recounting open outburst of Shailesh Pandey, a Congress MLA of Bilaspur, Sharma further claimed that the allegation of 'payment posting' has come from a member of ruling party. He also came down heavily on the Congress dispensation for its failure in curbing the burgeoning drug rackets.

BJP veteran Brijmohan Agrawal alleged that rape and murders have become a new norm in Chhattisgarh with assassinations being carried out at 'Jaistambh Chowk' in the heart of capital Raipur.

TENDER

e-Tenders are hereby invited from the bona fide contractors by the Block Development Officer, Rajganj Development Block, Rajganj, Jalpaiguri, under Tourism & IMDP Fund for e-NIT WBPS / 09 / BDO / RAJ / 2020-2021 Memo No.: 2925 / 1(13) / Raj. Date: 24-12-2020. Last date of submission bids: 08-01-2021.

Other details can be seen from the office Notice Board or the office of the undersigned in any working day and working hours also as well as in www.wbtenders.gov.in

Norbhu Chewang Sherpa
W.B.C.S. (Exe.)
Block Development Officer
Rajganj Block
Rajganj, Jalpaiguri

BJP-UPPL-GSP alliance wins BTC floor test

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, 24 DECEMBER

The Opposition forces led by Bodoland People's Front (BPF) got only 16 votes.

by Bodoland People's Front (BPF) got only 16 votes.

In the recently concluded BTC polls, Hagrama Mohilyari led BPF 17 seats, where Pramod Boru led UPPL succeeded in 12 constituencies. BJP nominated candidates emerged successful in nine constituencies and the Congress and GSP won one seat each.

The Opposition forces led

Tiger translocated from Corbett to Rajaji

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 24 DECEMBER



After a long delay the tiger translocation operation has finally started at the Rajaji Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand. A tigress was moved from Corbett Tiger Reserve to Rajaji Tiger Reserve by road on a special vehicle Thursday. A total of two female and three male tigers will be shifted to boost the population of big cats in the western side of Rajaji.

In a special operation a tigress was tranquilized from Biranizone, near Rammagar in district Nainital, and later shifted in a cage to move by road

to Motichur (Haridwar). This is the first tiger translocation in the history of Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand Forest's Chief

Conservator of Forests Parag Dhakate says, "Historical moment in tiger conservation initiatives of India, Uttarakhand's first tiger translocation, an adult tigress was shifted from Corbett Tiger Reserve to Rajaji Tiger Reserve Dehradun.

Big cat was chemically immobilised & radio collared before being shifted to the cage."

Rajaji Tiger Reserve's western side is famous for its two tigresses, living in isolation. In 2017 the Ministry of Environment and Forest gave approval to translocate five tigers to the western part of Rajaji Tiger Reserve. According to the Rajaji Tiger Reserve staff the translocated tigress is presently kept inside an enclosure and will be released in the wild soon. The forest department staff will be tracking the movement of the shifted tigress through the radio collar.

TRIPURA UNIVERSITY

(A Central University)
Suryamaninagar
Tripura West-799022

No. F.TU/FIN/ICT/402/2020
Date: 24/12/2020

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

On behalf of Tripura University, Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from the bonafide manufacturers/ dealers/suppliers for setting up of Interactive Flat Panel (IFP) based ICT smart classroom system of Tripura University. The said Tenders can be sent by post or dropped or by post in the Tender Box available in the office of the Finance Officer, Tripura University, Suryamaninagar-799022 or by post address to the Finance Officer, Tripura University or before 21-01-2021 up to 2.00 p.m. Sealed cover of the Tender should be marked on the top of the envelope as 'Setting up of Interactive Flat Panel (IFP) based ICT smart classroom system of Tripura University'. Details can be seen and downloaded from Tripura University website: www.tripura.ac.in

Sdr/- [Pranay Pal]
Assistant Registrar (Finance)

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer (E&M)
Disaster Management Centre, Ghazipur, Delhi-96
NIT No. EE-E&M/EDMC/ENGG/2020-21/20
Dated: 23.12.2020

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer (E&M) on behalf of Commissioner, EDMC invites tenders in e-tendering in two stage system i.e. Stage - 1. Documents related to eligibility criteria and Stage - 2. Financial bid for Name of Work : (1) Hiring of Back-ho Loaders required for operation of 5 nos Trommels at SLF Ghazipur, Head of Account : DPCC EDMC, SMM ESCROW. Tender Amount : Item Rate, Earnest Money : Rs. 3,07,150. Tender Cost : Rs. 2,000/-, Time of Completion : 12 months. Rate shall hold good for : 120 days. Tender No : 319453 (2) Hiring of chain mounted hydraulic Excavators of 1 CUM bucket required for operation of 5 Nos. Trommels and other allied works at Sanitary Land Fill Ghazipur. Head of Account : DPCC EDMC, SMM ESCROW, Tender Amount : Item Rate, Earnest Money : Rs. 8,89,000/-, Tender Cost : Rs. 2,000/-, Time of Completion : 12 months. Rate shall hold good for : 120 days. Tender No : 319454 (3) Hiring of five hydraulic Excavator of 1 CUM bucket for leveling, dressing, stepped path ways and preparation the side slope to cover the same with earth/mud etc. of Municipal Solid Waste at Sanitary Land Fill Ghazipur & Singhola Silt Site. Head of Account : DPCC EDMC, SMM ESCROW, Tender Amount : Item Rate, Earnest Money : Rs. 5,55,650/-, Tender Cost : Rs. 2,000/-, Time of Completion : 12 months. Rate shall hold good for : 120 days. Tender No : 319455 (4) Hiring of Tipper Trucks required for operation of 5 nos Trommels at SLF Ghazipur. Head of Account : DPCC EDMC, SMM ESCROW, Tender Amount : Item Rate, Earnest Money : Rs. 4,57,500/-, Tender Cost : Rs. 2,000/-, Time of Completion : 12 months. Rate shall hold good for : 120 days. The last date of re-encrytion of online bid is 11.01.2021 up to 1500 Hrs. Non EDMC registered contractors opting for e-tendering will have to register in the e-tendering system of EDMC. Other details/information can be seen on website www.mcdtenders.com

RO NO - 76/DPI/EAST/2020-21
EDMC's Citizens Helpline No. 155303

Ex. Engineer (E&M)



I will prove how the Congress always ignored farmers' interests and how Modi empowered them. Farmers always demanded remunerative price for their produce but the Congress never did so.

ACCUSING THE CONGRESS OF IGNORING FARMERS' INTERESTS AND KEEPING THEM POOR TO ENSURE CHEAP GRAIN PRICES

UNION MINISTER PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER 2020

There's no democracy in India, it is only in imagination: Rahul

Gandhi says anyone standing against PM, be it farmers, labourers will be dubbed a terrorist



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 DECEMBER

There is "no democracy in India" and it exists "only in imagination", Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged after meeting President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday and demanded a joint session of Parliament to repeal the three new agrilaws. He said anyone standing

Modi govt suppressing voice of farmers, elected representatives: Preneet Kaur

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PATIALA/CHANDIGARH,
24 DECEMBER

Member Parliament (MP) from Patiala and former Union minister of state for external affairs, Preneet Kaur on Thursday condemned the Union government for suppressing the voice of farmers as well as elected representatives, calling it as a sheer insult of farmers of the country.

However, she said in an unprecedented action they were stopped by the Delhi Police outside the Congress

station, Patiala MP Kaur said today Congress Raja Sabha and Lok Sabha members and Central Working Committee members and Youth Congress leaders led by Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, had scheduled march to the Rashtrapati Bhawan to submit a petition signed by over two crore farmers to the President for repeal of the anti-farmers laws.

Kaur said after allowing the three Congress leaders to file the petition, the demand of the rest of the delegation to march up to the gate of Rashtrapati Bhawan, was also denied, which was the brutal murder of democracy.

She said this indifferent attitude of the Central government towards farmers of the country would go down in the annals of history as the most barbaric and condemnable action in the country.

However, she said in an unprecedent action they were stopped by the Delhi Police outside the Congress

against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, be it farmers, labourers or even RSS chief Mohan

Bhagwat, will be dubbed a terrorist.

If the Prime Minister does

not repeal the contentious farm laws, the country will suffer, Gandhi said.

"India is now an imaginary democracy," the Congress leader tweeted after he met Kovind and said he took the voice of farmers to the President. Gandhi along with Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad and Leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury met President Kovind and handed over to him a memorandum signed by two crore farmers seeking withdrawal of the three legislations.

Gandhi said he told the President that the new agri laws are anti-farmer and that the farmers and labourers will suffer due to them.

"The government said these laws are in favour of the farmers, but the country is seeing that it is the farmers who are against these legislations. The farmers (camping at Delhi borders) will not return till these laws are repealed. The government

should convene a joint session of Parliament and repeal these laws," he told reporters after meeting the President.

"If you destroy the agri system... There will be massive destruction. The way the agri laws were passed in the Monsoon session of Parliament in September, without any discussion and consultation, they need to be withdrawn," he said, noting that his party also wants reforms in the agriculture sector but not by destroying the prevalent system.

The farmers are in pain and also dying and the prime minister will have to listen to them, the Congress leader said and asserted that all opposition parties are standing in solidarity with the farmers.

Launching a scathing attack on PM Modi, the former Congress president alleged that

anyone "trying to take power from him will be dubbed as terrorist and anti-national".

"PM Modi's only aim is to benefit three to four crony capitalists and anyone standing in this way will be dubbed as anti-national, terrorist or criminal. If farmers are standing against him, they are dubbed as terrorists. If labourers stand, they will also be dubbed terrorists. One day, if Mohan Bhagwat stands, then he will also be dubbed as a terrorist," he said.

"He (PM) will make sure the wealth of poor people is transferred to crony capitalists. He will call people anti-nationalists, terrorists. He will construct whatever narrative he wants to make sure that wealth transfer takes place. He will do whatever he has to do to transfer this wealth of these people, the backbone of the country, to those 3-4 people," Gandhi

alleged.

About Congress MPs and leaders not allowed to stage a protest march to Rashtrapati Bhawan, he said, "It is an assault on the idea of India. The government is stopping our MPs from moving out of our office.

The PM needs to realise that there is a limit to this... There is no democracy in India, it is only in imagination, not in reality."

Claiming that the country was "moving on a dangerous path" and "it will suffer", Gandhi further asked, "China is sitting at the border and has snatched our land. But why does the PM not speak up on it?"

Reminding that he had earlier warned about the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, he said, "I say things in advance. Again, I say no power can stand before the farmers and labourers".

India expects senior commanders' meeting with China soon: MEA

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 DECEMBER

'In the meeting disengagement and de-escalation of troops in eastern Ladakh to restore peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) will be discussed'

India today hoped senior military commanders of India and China would hold their next meeting soon to discuss disengagement and de-escalation of troops in eastern Ladakh to restore peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"India and China continue to maintain communication through diplomatic and military channels. Discussions have helped both sides to enhance understanding of each other's position. Meeting of the WMCC (Working Mechanism for Consultations and Coordination) on India-China border affairs took place on 18th December. We hope the 9th meeting of senior commanders will take place at an early date," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at a media briefing.

Responding to another question, the spokesperson noted that Indian bulk cargo vessel MV Jagannad has been on anchorage near Jingtang port in Hebei province of China since 13 with 23 Indian nationals as crew on board.

Another vessel, MV Anastasia, which has 16 Indian nationals as its crew, has been on anchorage near Caofeidian port in China since 20 September, waiting for discharge of the cargo.

"There is a considerable amount of stress on the crew members on account of this unprecedented situation. Our

Embassy in Beijing has been in constant touch with provincial and central government authorities in China, requesting that the ships be allowed to dock and/or the crew be allowed to be changed," he said.

The spokesperson said China has conveyed to India that on account of various Covid-19 related restrictions imposed by the local authorities, crew change was not being permitted from these ports.

"We also understand, however, that some other ships, which arrived after the Indian ship had arrived, have actually managed to discharge cargo and leave. The reasons for this are not clear," he said, adding New Delhi hoped the issue would be resolved at the earliest to ameliorate the sufferings of the crew.

On whether all events to commemorate 70 years of diplomatic relations between India and China have been put on hold, the spokesperson said 70 events were indeed planned. "However, activities have not yet been launched," he added.

APPOINTMENT

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT & SESSIONS JUDGE, FATEHABAD
EMPLOYMENT ADVERTISEMENT

Applications are invited for filing up one post of Driver (General category) on adhoc/contractual basis for a period of six months or till regular appointment is made by the Hon'ble High Court of Punjab & Haryana, Chandigarh, whichever is earlier, on consolidated salary of Rs. 16,670/- per month (Prevailing D.C. Rate of District Fatehabad). The number of vacancies may increase or decrease due to creation/withdrawal of Courts or otherwise.

The selection for the aforesaid post shall be strictly in accordance with amended Rule 7 of the Haryana Subordinate Courts Establishment (Recruitment and General Conditions of Service) Rules, 1997.

- QUALIFICATION**
 - (a) The candidate should be at least middle pass with Punjabi/Hindi as one of the subjects.
 - (b) The candidate should possess a valid license for L.T.V.
 - (c) The candidate should not have been convicted of any offence for negligent driving and should have a minimum of two years experience of driving a car.
- AGE LIMIT:** No person shall be recruited to the service if he/she is less than 18 years of age or more than 42 years of age as on 1st January, 2021.
- LAST DATE:** The last date for receipt of the applications shall be 06.01.2021 upto 05:00 PM. Applications received thereafter shall not be entertained in any case. Delay on the part of postal authorities shall not be a ground for entertaining the applications received after due date.
- The applications, on plain paper with recent photograph of candidate affixed thereon containing full particulars i.e. name, father's/husband name, date of birth, sex, educational qualification, category, permanent address, present postal address, experience, if any, alongwith self attested copies of the relevant certificates should reach this office either by registered post or by hand well before the closing date i.e. **06.01.2021 by 05:00 P.M.**
- The incomplete applications and filed without photographs, envelopes, copy of L.T.V licence and attested copies of the relevant certificates shall be straightway rejected without any information to the candidate.
- No correspondence whatsoever shall be entertained in respect of incomplete applications or those which are received in this office after due date.
- No TA/DA is admissible to any candidate appearing in the test for the posts mentioned above.

NOTE:

- 1. The date of driving test/interview shall be published in these very newspaper(s). Written test may also be conducted.

District & Sessions Judge, Fatehabad

Haryana Remembers

The Great Freedom Fighter

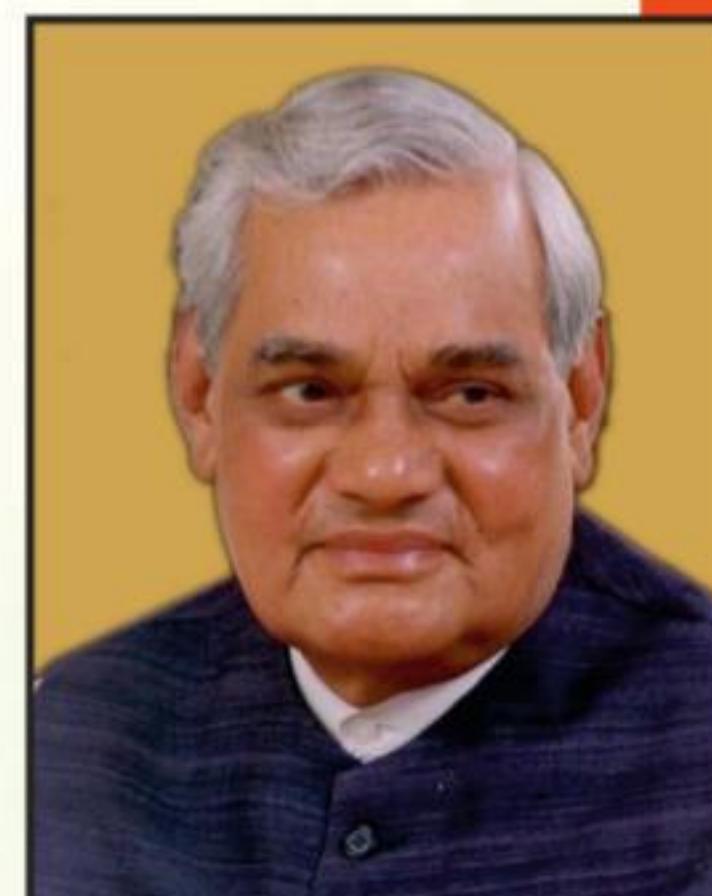
**Mahamana Pandit
Madan Mohan Malviya**

and

Bharat Ratna & Former Prime Minister

Sh. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

On Their Birth Anniversaries



State Level Programme
will be organized at
Haryana Niwas, Chandigarh

Chief Guest

Sh. Manohar Lal

Chief Minister, Haryana

Programme will be conducted at
District, Tehsil & Block level

"The significant aspects of Good Governance are development and accountability. Through e-Services, our Government has encouraged accountability in the State so that the benefits of all Government Schemes reach the last person in the queue."

- Manohar Lal
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Separation of Power

The power to decide whether there is constitutional breakdown in any State that calls for imposition of President's rule rests entirely in the executive under Article 356 of the Constitution. The Andhra Pradesh High Court, functioning as a handmaiden of the ousted Telugu Desam government of Chandrababu Naidu, passed an interim order on 1 October, calling on the senior counsel appearing for the State to come prepared to assist the court as to whether in circumstances prevailing in the State the court can record a finding that there is constitutional breakdown in Andhra Pradesh. The order was passed in 14 habeas corpus petitions. The Supreme Court found the High Court order, a prelude to getting the Andhra Pradesh government of YSR Jaganmohan Reddy dismissed, 'disturbing'. Heading a three-judge Bench, Chief Justice of India SA Bobde on 18 December stayed the AP High Court order saying, as the apex court, "we find this order disturbing." The High Court's order violates the Basic Structure doctrine of the Constitution and seemed to have reversed the judgment of the nine-judge apex court Bench in the SR Bommai case laying down the scope of Article 356. There is no denying the fact the AP High Court has been constantly meddling with the decisions of the Jaganmohan Reddy government which have affected its functioning. The court was responsible for causing the Supreme Court to direct the Union government to establish 12 Special Courts to try exclusively various cases pending against serving legislators. Special Courts should be offence-centric and not offender-centric and could not be established on the basis of executive orders. A clutch of criminal cases has been pending against Jaganmohan Reddy which he is facing bravely. An exasperated Chief Minister filed a complaint against the judiciary, including allegations of malfeasance against the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court, NV Ramana, with the CJI. The Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association wants the Chief Minister to be hauled up for contempt of court. Contempt proceedings against Jaganmohan Reddy would be counterproductive as his complaint alleges judicial impropriety and corruption. He had alleged that Justice NV Ramana's daughters were involved in questionable land deals in Amaravati because of which the judge was interfering in the working of the AP High Court. Lawyers practising in the SC must seek to determine whether the allegations carry merit and not jump to conclusions. The SC had evolved an in-house procedure to inquire into serious charges against judges. The code of conduct requires an inquiry by three sitting judges of the SC. Since the complaint involves the senior-most judge of the SC, judges junior to him are unlikely to conduct a credible inquiry as it happened in the sexual harassment complaint against previous CJI Ranjan Gogoi. CJI Bobde could enlist the services of retired judges of impeccable reputation. As long as the allegations remain uninvestigated, suspicions about the judiciary will linger. The decision to hold such an inquiry rests with the CJI. Such a course will enhance the image of the apex court.

Funds for tablets

The West Bengal Chief Minister's pledge to provide a largely indeterminate number of Madhyamik and Higher Secondary candidates with tablets and laptops is well taken. There is arguably time enough for a rather different mode of preparation as both exams are now scheduled to be held next June, going by the education minister Partha Chatterjee's announcement on Wednesday. However, the seemingly benevolent plan may have hit the reefs in the immediate aftermath of Mamata Banerjee's announcement. Apparently, the scheme wasn't worked out incisively with the companies concerned. These have now expressed their inability to supply so huge an order on time. It would be deeply unfortunate if one segment of government schools is taken care of and many of the non-government or state-aided institutions ignored. Two reasons have been proffered by the computer industry. One, increase in production is not possible given the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. Second, not all companies are engaged in the production of tablets on a large scale because they are never too sure of the general demand. Some of the companies have informed the government that each of them could supply 15,000 tablets a month. There is, therefore, a stark disconnect between demand and supply. Hence the decision to provide Rs 10,000 each to students to enable them to buy digital devices though it must be admitted that many of the private schools are functioning as thriving corporate enterprises that boast air-conditioned school buses and classrooms. Academic excellence is quite a different matter. To begin with, only Class 12 students will be the beneficiaries of the state's (revised) decision to transfer Rs 10,000 each to the accounts of 9.5 lakh students who will appear for the Higher Secondary exam after six months. On 3 December, the Chief Minister had announced that tablets would be provided to Class 12 students in the 14,000-odd government or government-aided schools and an estimated 636 madrasas. The second facet of the announcement lends no scope for an election-eve communal spin. The state has been informed by the companies concerned that they are in a position to supply a maximum of 1.5 lakh tablets. To that must be added the Centre's contention not to avail of Chinese products. Hence the prompt decision to provide Rs 10,000 to every Class 12 student. A matching promptitude ought to mark the transfer of money, quite obviously a fair amount in terms of non-budgetary expenditure in the education sector. No less critical is to put in place a mechanism to ensure that the funds transferred for students' welfare is not misused. The deepest tragedy will be a possible misuse of public money in the season of exams.

China versus India ~ I

All along, China has been deceiving India by indefinitely delaying a border settlement, by repeating that the issue be kept on the backburner while the two countries concentrate on economic growth



It is an unequal fight. An expansionist autocracy is confronting a peace-loving democracy. The battleground, so to say, is the highest mountainous terrain in the world where "not a blade of grass grows", in the famous, or infamous words of the late Prime Minister of India. The democracy is subjected to rude jolts from time to time by way of periodic incursions from across the 'line of actual control'. The latest intrusion from across the border and the resultant stand-off has been provoked by the autocracy, as always, without any cause.

The current stand-off between India and China has been engineered by the latter at a time when India is fighting another battle - the worst pandemic in modern history, apparently exported by the Chinese. Besides, India had been facing its lowest economic growth in the last decade, where a creeping economic slow-down had blighted several sectors. From India's standpoint, the timing could not have been worse. Adding to our woes, the neighbour to the west had been intensifying its proxy war in Kashmir. The timing of the Chinese intrusion into Indian territory and the killing of our unarmed soldiers can be fathomed from the history of independent India. The last time China attacked India and fought a brief border war was in 1962. It was entirely unprovoked, and had something to do with its internal problems. Mao tse Tung, the founder (1949) of the Chinese Communist party was in power, and his promised Utopia had turned into an indescribable tragedy. In an ancient agrarian-settled civilization, agriculture had in just a decade turned upside down under Communist rule. Between 1959 and 1961, an estimated 27 to 30 million Chinese had starved to death.

India, in contrast had nurtured and strengthened its young democracy and attained a steady though modest economic growth. It was a 'founding father' of the global Non-aligned Movement and came to be viewed as some kind of a role model for newly-independent nations of Asia and Africa, emerging from decades of colonial bondage. As both India and China had become full-fledged nations in the late 1940s, a comparison was inevitable.

Two giant Asian powers had appeared on the scene, but with sharply contrasting political systems - functioning democracy and faltering communism. It was, apparently, too demeaning for the Chinese Communists to stomach, having promised to deliver a workers' paradise. For 2,000 years, the Chinese have viewed themselves as the Middle Kingdom in Asia, with smaller countries on the periphery 'paying court', literally and figuratively to ruling Chinese Emperors. Mao, who for the first time in its history knit together a modern China by eliminating traditional-

ly fractious warlords and potentates, fancied himself in such a role - 'Chairman for life' - a modern day 'Emperor' of sorts. In a move apparently designed to divert attention of his starving millions, he launched an unprovoked war with India over a boundary dispute. An essentially pacifist democracy and the 'leader' of the Non-aligned Movement was humiliated in the battlefield before the whole world.

In the intervening decades, the Chinese have consistently refused to settle the boundary dispute with India. Consequently, India had to divert huge resources away from its development effort and modernize its armed forces. Today, it is maintaining one of the largest standing armies in the world. To rapidly modernize its armed forces and equip them with the latest weapons in case it has to again defend itself against the wayward Chinese communists, India

has become the world's largest importer of military hardware. After the 1960s, India could manage what has been termed as a "Hindu rate of economic growth" - just 3-4 per cent. China, a centrally controlled command economy meanwhile leaptfrogged to a growth rate of 8-9 per

cent, outpacing India, and overtaking it. It did enter into a number of 'peace agreements' with India to ease tensions, but deliberately kept the border pot simmering, by refusing to demarcate the boundary and sign a peace treaty. The historically unmarked border has been unilaterally defined by them as 'line of actual control' - whatever that means - which has the potential for dispute any time it may choose. All along, it has been deceiving India by indefinitely delaying a border settlement, by repeating that the issue be kept on the backburner while the two countries concentrate on economic growth.

In the second decade of the present century, India turned the tables on China. It outpaced it in terms of economic growth, thereby threatening its growing economic hegemony in Asia. In the recent World Economic Summit at Davos, India was lauded as the "fastest growing democracy in the world." This surely could not have been music to China's ears. Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State and an astute strategist had foreseen that smaller nations of Asia would seek a counterweight to an increasingly hegemonic China. In China's reckoning, a counterweight had emerged on the scene.

To go back to history, the timing of the present stand-off appears to be a rewind of 1962. Coupled with their receding rate of economic growth are the multiple internal troubles being faced by the Chinese communists. Recent severe floods have affected large areas in China, Taiwan has openly repudiated the 'one China policy', there is widespread disaffection in Xinjiang, Hong Kong is on the boil, unrest is spreading in Inner Mongolia, Tibet is far from "pacified" and treatment of Uighur Muslims is giving it a bad name. Mao may be dead, but Maoism is alive and kicking, literally and figuratively. Xi Jinping has, in the manner of Napoleon crowned himself a veritable Emperor of China, a successor to Mao.

No one should have any doubt that China poses an existential threat to a prospering India. According to Dr Kissinger again, China fancies itself as the dominant economic and military power in Asia. A robust counter-weight like India is anathema to the Chinese way of thinking. For 2000 years, it has positioned itself as the Middle Kingdom. In this respect, it is different from the earlier Soviet communist regime which was equally expansionist and autocratic. But Russia has been a European power throughout history and was a part of Europe where a 'balance of power' was maintained throughout the 19th and most of the 20th century.

Kissinger says: "Theorists of the balance of power often leave the impression that it is the natural form of international relations. In fact, balance-of-power systems have existed only rarely in human history. The Western Hemisphere has never known one, nor has the territory of contemporary China for over 2000 years. Empires have no need for a balance of power." Historically, the concept of 'balance of power' is alien to the Chinese way of thinking. "Before the nineteenth century, China never had a neighbour contesting its pre-eminence and never imagined that such a state could arise. The notion of sovereign equality of states did not exist in China."

The question arises, what is to be done? Ironically, the solution comes from Sun Tzu, the sixth century BC Chinese thinker. 'Know thyself and know thy enemy, and thou shall win a hundred battles undefeated.' The first imperative, therefore, is to evaluate ourselves objectively, and do honest introspection about our actions and policies since 1962. Both diplomatic and military efforts are needed to ensure that 1962 is never repeated. Only then can we survive the Dragon's fire.

Today, our military is strong but diplomacy continues to be defensive and weak. In the 1962 war, as also during the recent Galwan clash, our troops displayed such battlefield valour that it can be said that they are second to none in the world. But diplomatically, we have been shy of standing up to Chinese bully-

nists. Take the case of Taiwan. A time has come when we must act in concert with leaders of the most friendly and like-minded democracies which openly share our concern about the growing Chinese threat to Asia, and to Asia-Pacific. Fortunately, Trump in US, Morrison in Australia, Abe in Japan and Macron in France can be brought on board to stand up together and recognize Taiwan. It is time to junk the 'one China policy.'

New Zealand is another like-minded liberal democracy, so far outside our strategic vision where we have not reached out fully. It was earlier a part of a military alliance - ANZUS, with US and Australia. Formed after Second World War as a military alliance against Imperial Japan, it soon transformed into an anti-Communist alliance to meet the fresh challenge of aggressive Soviet communism. Unfortunately, the Alliance fell into disuse over a technical dispute.

We should take the initiative to revive ANZUS, this time with India as the fourth partner. QUAD-II is waiting to be born, this time in the Pacific. That China is fast expanding its footprint, or shall we say naval 'bootprint' in the Asia-Pacific. The Chinese could threaten the northern flank of both New Zealand and Australia, in the event of a naval confrontation.

A most glaring failure of our

diplomacy is to present to the world at large the sordid facts about Chinese perfidy in annexation of East Turkestan, the historic land of Uighur Muslims. It is being widely reported today that this "minority" is being maltreated by the Chinese communists, and around one million are incarcerated. The term "minority" is a misnomer, as East Turkestan was never a part of Imperial China but conquered by them in the last century. By definition alone, a minority is a part of the whole group. It is a doubtful proposition in international law if the Turk population of an annexed country can be described by the Han Chinese as a "minority", deceptively implying thereby that it is an "internal" issue.

India, and indeed the free world owe a debt of gratitude to eminent scholar and MP, Prafull Goradia for bringing forth the sly manner in which China gobbled up the country of Uighur soon after Mao came to power in 1949. It was a case of classic communist perfidy, the way Stalin annexed Poland after World War II. Mao invited the leaders of Turkestan government to Beijing to 'discuss a confederation' between the two countries. Two communist members of the Uighur government stayed back. The other non-communist members of the Government were flying back from Beijing when the plane conveniently "crashed". The two communist members back home promptly "voted" for "union" with Communist China!

(To be concluded)

A MEMBER OF THE



ASIAN VOICES

Killer cop

The killings that occurred at 5:10 p.m. on Dec. 20 in Paniqui, Tarlac, ushered in Christmas week - a distressingly apt illustration of what life has become in these parts. Even if Nuezca's child deletes her own video of the killings, perhaps in a shocked (or maybe not) reaction to the turn of events, others have spread far and wide through social media, recording the dark deed for all time. There is simply no way Nuezca, 46, can get away with murder.

Or can he? A culture of impunity has so permeated the police force that the phrase is now bromide, used ever so constantly to protest police crimes and misdemeanors but generally denied or ignored by an administration that coddles killer cops. Among other cases, the killing by police in November 2016 of Mayor Rolando Espinosa of Albay, Leyte, then in jail and awaiting trial on drug charges, is unforgettable: The National Bureau of Investigation called it a rubout and not a shootout as claimed by the 19-member police team that killed Espinosa and another inmate while supposedly serving a warrant in the dead of night. Nonetheless, President Duterte said he would not let the officers go to jail, pointing out that the NBI and the Department of Justice (DOJ) were under him. The DOJ forthwith downgraded the charges from murder to homicide and allowed bail for them. In July 2017, then Philippine National Police chief Bato dela Rosa announced that the officers had been reinstated and the administrative case against

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

them resolved - even qualifying them for promotion.

A resident of Paniqui and assigned to the Parañaque City Police Crime Laboratory, Nuezca fled the scene on a motorcycle and surrendered himself and his firearm more than an hour later to police in Rosales, Pangasinan. The Paniqui police now have him in custody; he has since been charged with two counts of murder. Expectedly - the citizenry still to be fully inured to murder - outrage over the killings has erupted, exacerbated by reports that Nuezca holds a record of grave misconduct (homicide) and serious neglect of duty cases that have since been dropped or dismissed, as well as 31 days of suspension meted out for refusing to undergo a drug test and leaving the testing area without official clearance. Hardly a pristine record on which to raise a daughter, for her to take profound pride in. Malacañang mouthpiece Harry Roque blithely says Nuezca is just some rotten guy - "isang bugok" - in the police force. But of such stuff are many PNP members apparently made these days, and highly paid, too, earning higher than the medical front-liners who risk their lives in the service of other Filipinos afflicted by COVID-19, and who have to beg for their measly hazard pay. We mean those who kidnapped Korean businessman Jee Ick-joo, executed him, burned his corpse, flushed his ashes down the toilet - and still demanded ransom from his widow. Those who accused teenager Kian delos Santos of pushing drugs, then shooting him dead as he pleaded that he still had an exam the next day to study for. Those who, per the NBI, murdered mentally disturbed ex-soldier Winston Ragos and planted a gun in his bag after an argument over supposed violation of quarantine rules. The recently arrested Taguig cop who extorted P15,000 from a small businessman purportedly listed as a drug offender and marked for "neutralization." The killers of thousands of petty pushers/users under the aegis of the war on drugs. Ad nauseam. The argument between Nuezca and the Gregorios was said to stem from a private matter: the use of a "boga" (makeshift cannon) as well as right-of-way issues.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Welcome message from Kashmir

SIR, This refers to your report 'DDC polls: Gupkar Alliance leads in Kashmir valley', (*The Statesman*, 23 December). The celebrations that broke out in J&K, particularly in Kashmir valley, over results of District Development Councils (DDC) polls were a far cry from past elections which were marked by allegations of rigging or criticism that they reflected the minority opinion due to abysmal turnouts. For a change, hailing of the victories by even BJP's rivals was not grudging by the Centre which saw it as a reaffirmation of the voters and candidates in the fairness of the eight-phase polls. There was a time when India's defeat in a cri-

cket match against Pakistan would see celebrations in the streets of Kashmir.

But the fact that DDC polls not only witnessed good participation of the people in the valley but



also that results were welcomed by the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) constituents, independents and other parties shows that they all want grassroots democracy that will bring them the benefits of development. The good show by independents reflects the emergence of new and young leadership at the grassroots. The participation of the Gupkar Alliance was itself a gain in the post-Article 370 scene. What is most significant about the DDC polls is that elected local representatives from J&K will, for the first time, be swearing allegiance to the Constitution of India and not to the J&K constitution and will thus establish the finality

MASS BASE

SIR, This refers to your report 'Suvendu's defection will not affect us in 2021 polls; TMC' (21 Dec). Why then was more than one meeting held between Suvendu and TMC veteran Saugata Roy? Why did Abhishek Banerjee and psephologist Prashant Kishore meet Suvendu to sort out differences if the latter's exit from the party does not affect TMC's poll prospects? Why did the top leadership of the Trinamul try hard and soul to retain Suvendu within the party? Because Suvendu is a leader with a mass base and his inclusion in the Saffron brigade can upset Trinamul's apple cart in a number of constituencies especially in the Junglemahal belt. Besides Miss Banerjee, few leaders of her outfit can boast of a mass base. Miss Banerjee is a seasoned leader. Having seen the present pathetic predicament of the Grand Old Party for sticking to dynastic politics, Miss Banerjee should have learnt a lesson early.

Yours, etc., Aranya Sanyal, Siliguri, 23 December.

of the Centre's move to nullify article 370 in J&K. The successful conduct and good voter participation are bound to pave the way for

assembly elections in the state as early as possible.

Yours, etc., N Sudhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru, 23 December.



Focus on 'Vocal for Local' and manufacturing of value-added products can create job opportunities for the youth

PIYUSH GOYAL

UNION COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

THUMBNAILS

Flipkart board rejig: Flipkart has rejigged its board with the addition of Flipkart Group CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy and HDFC vice-chairman and CEO Keki Mistry, among others, as the Walmart-owned company prepares to go public in the coming years. In an email to employees, Krishnamurthy said the new year will see some changes to its board as four of its current directors will be stepping down after steering the company through the first two years after Walmart's investment. **PTI**

Central Bank's exit: Central Bank of India will exit housing finance joint venture by selling its entire stake of over 64 per cent to Centrum Housing Finance for Rs 160 crore. "This is to inform that the bank has entered into a binding agreement to divest its entire equity stake of 64.40 per cent i.e. 1,61,00,000 shares of face value of Rs 10 each in Cent Bank Home Finance Ltd (CBHFL), to Centrum Housing Finance, subject to approvals from regulatory authorities," Central Bank of India said. **PTI**

Privilege wellness card: Technology-led health startup delivering at-home diagnostics, Healthains recently announced that nearly 1 million individuals across India have opted for 'Privilege Wellness Card'. Healthains launched the card to avail its users a host of medical and lifestyle benefits for their entire family. Healthains expects a further one million enrollments for the cards by March 2021, according to a Press release statement. **SNS**

Survey findings: Antara, a part of the \$3 billion Max Group, released the findings of its survey titled 'State of Seniors'. The survey indicates fear of Covid-19 infection, social isolation major concerns for senior citizens during the lockdown. The survey was conducted in urban India focusing north (Delhi-NCR), west (Mumbai & Pune), and south (Chennai, Bangalore & Hyderabad), covering over 2,000 people aged 55 years and above. The research was conducted in collaboration with Access Media International, said a Press release. **SNS**

Realme smart watches: Smartphone maker Realme has introduced versatile and stylish smart watches. "Watch S series along with the Realme Buds Air Pro Master edition. Priced at Rs 9,999, Realme Watch S Pro will have the first flash sale on 29 December from 12:00 PM on realme.com and Flipkart, according to a Press release from the company. **SNS**

Mi smart TV: Mi India has expanded its smart TV portfolio with the launch of Mi QLED TV 4K. Commenting on the launch, Eshwar Nilakantan, category lead - Mi TVs, Mi India, said: "The newly launched Mi QLED TV 4K is a perfect blend of premium design offering best cinematic experience." **SNS**

Govt challenges Vodafone arbitration ruling in court

International arbitration tribunal overturned its demand for ₹22,100 cr in back taxes from Vodafone

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 DECEMBER

India has challenged in a Singapore court a verdict of an international arbitration tribunal that overturned its demand for ₹22,100 crore in back taxes from Vodafone Group Plc, sources said today.

An international arbitration court had on 25 September rejected tax authorities' demand for ₹22,100 crore in back taxes and penalties relating to the British telecom giant's 2007 acquisition of an Indian operator.

Two sources privy to the development said India had 90 days to file an appeal against the tribunal award, and the same was done in a Singapore court earlier this week.

TAX TROUBLE

► Two sources privy to the development said India had 90 days to file an appeal against the tribunal award, and the same was done in a Singapore court earlier this week.

► This appeal also sets the stage for the government to challenge the order of a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that asked India to return \$1.4 billion to British oil and gas company Cairn Energy plc.



► The government had used a 2012 law, that gave tax authorities the power to reopen past cases, to seek taxes from Vodafone and Cairn over alleged capital gains made several years ago.

The government had used a 2012 law, that gave tax authorities the power to reopen past cases, to seek taxes from Vodafone and Cairn over alleged capital gains made several years ago.

Both Vodafone and Cairn had challenged the tax demands under bilateral

investment protection treaties and initiated the arbitration.

Sources said the government believes that taxation is not covered under investment protection treaties with various countries and the law on taxation is sovereign right of the country.

While the treaties are pri-

marily aimed at protection of investments, the tax is levied on "returns" earned by entities.

Vodafone Group declined to comment on the issue.

Vodafone had challenged before the arbitration tribunal the demand for ₹7,990 crore in capital gains taxes (₹22,100 crore after including interest and penalty) under the Netherlands-India Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT).

The demand pertained to Vodafone's \$11-billion acquisition of 67 per cent stake in the mobile phone business owned by Hutchison Whampoa in 2007.

In September, an international arbitration court ruled that the Indian government seeking ₹22,100 crore in taxes from Vodafone using retrospective legislation was in "breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment" guaranteed under the bilateral investment protection pact between India and the Netherlands.

India had 90 days or till 24

December to challenge the Vodafone award before a court in Singapore – which was the seat of the arbitration.

As per the award, the government has to reimburse Vodafone 60 per cent of its legal costs and half of the 6,000 euros cost borne by Vodafone for appointing an arbitrator on the panel.

Sources said the Government of India's liability came to Rs 85 crore in legal cost.

In the separate case of Cairn, India has been asked to pay with interest the value of shares it sold, the dividend it seized, and tax refunds it withheld to recover part of tax demand from the British firm.

The government, the sources said, is expected to challenge this ruling too given the size of the award.

Cairn Energy, which gave the country its biggest oil discovery, was in March 2015 slapped with a demand for ₹10,247 crore tax on alleged capital gains it made when it in 2006 reorganised its India business before listing of the local unit.

fourth quarter to print in 0.3 per cent growth as against the earlier expectation of positive numbers only in July-September 2021-22.

Accordingly, it expects 7.8 per cent contraction in 2020-21 as against (-) 11.8 per cent earlier, and GDP to grow by 9.6 per cent in 2021-22, mainly due to the weak base of 2020-21, India Ratings chief economist Devendra Patnaik said in a report.

The better-than-expected Q2 numbers came in from manufacturing/electricity and other utilities with positive growth numbers, while mining and construction saw significant reduction in contraction.

But the same is not true for the contact-intensive services sectors like trade, hotel, realty, and tourism and they are likely to remain subdued for some more time due to social distancing norms and risk aversion, the agency said.

Agriculture has been a bright spot even through the lockdown and continues to be so, riding on the back of good monsoons.

AI pilots warn of 'industrial action' over salary cut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 DECEMBER

Disinvestment-bound Air India's pilot unions have rejected the paltry five per cent rollback in their salary cuts and warned of "industrial action" if there is no "substantial" reversal in their paycuts.

In a joint letter to Air India chairman and managing director Rajiv Bansal today, the Indian Pilots' Guild (IPG) and the Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) said: "(The) pittance in the form of a five per cent decrease in the current wage cut is an outright insult, its sting magnified in light of our unwavering support and trust in this company."

They said this "generosity" amounts to a reduction of about 3 per cent in the cur-

"If we do not see a timely substantial reduction in this disproportionate payout, we will be forced to seek justice through harsher means including "industrial action", the two unions said.

rent gross pay cut for pilots.

In April, Air India had reduced its pilots' salary by up to 70 per cent to partially offset the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on its finances.

"We have given the management every benefit of doubt as well as ample time to redress the issue of dis-

proportionate payout for pilots of Air India and its subsidiaries so there is no point left in mincing words.

"If we do not see a timely substantial reduction in this disproportionate payout, we will be forced to seek justice through harsher means including "industrial action", the two unions said.

In the letter, the unions said: "We do not accept this paltry five per cent rollback in illegal payout and you may advise the concerned to donate this five per cent towards funds for building the Parliament or PM-CARES Fund."

Right now, the "disproportionate unilateral" payout imposed on pilots in the name of Covid-19 amounts to a gross reduction of the pilots' rightful wages from April, the letter said.

proportionate payout for pilots of Air India and its subsidiaries so there is no point left in mincing words.

historic 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year. The contraction narrowed down to 7.5 per cent in the second quarter.

Quoting reports, the article said: "Real GDP growth is expected to break out into positive territory in Q3 – albeit, to a slender 0.1 per cent."

Two important forces are conspiring to bless this turning of the page on the virus, the article said.

"First, India is bending the Covid infection curve: since mid-September, barring localised surges, infections are slanting fashion to support investment and consumption demand," it said. "The fiscal measures have been sequenced in a designed shift in focus from consumption expenditure in Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package

ther said that contractions forecast by various agencies for the year as a whole are already being trimmed, and if the current momentum is maintained, the bounce back expected in the last quarter of the year may be stronger than postulated under baseline assumptions.

"At the same time, efforts need to be redoubled to exorcise the "worm in the apple" inflation before it hurts the impulses of growth that are taking root," they said. Efficient, effective and timely supply management, including checking runaway retailer margins and reducing the incidence of indirect taxes on consumers, can break the back of the inflation pressures before they incipiently broaden and work against the intent of fiscal and monetary stimuli.

Dalmia Cement ramps up Bengal unit capacity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, 24 DECEMBER

Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd today announced a capacity addition of 2.3 million tons (MT) at its plant in West Bengal with a capital expenditure of Rs 360 crore.

This addition at the plant in Paschim Medinipur district increases its capacity to 4 MT per annum, and the announcement came at a time when the cement sector is witnessing a weak price trend in the market in this part of the country due to an oversupply situation, a company official said.

The expansion of the West Bengal unit takes the company's overall capacity to 29 MT, and the cement maker plans to increase it further to 34 MT by the third quarter of the financial year 2021-22, he said.

"We have increased West Bengal plant's capacity to 4 MT from 1.7 MT. We will add 2 MT by the first quarter of FY22 through a brownfield expansion of our Odisha unit and another 3 MT capacity would be added with Murli acquisition," Dalmia Bharat ED Indrajit Chatterjee said.

With its latest expansion, the company will be able to cater across West Bengal and neighbouring state like Bihar where demand for the construction material is increasing.

The initial investment of the group has gone up to Rs 600 crore so far, the official said.

The eastern market has seen a sharp decline in cement prices in December due to an oversupply situation, he said. Dalmia Cement COO Ujjwal Batria said prices remain weak in some parts of the country and the sector is facing input cost pressure.

The forging industry today urged the government to ban steel and iron ore exports, as domestic steel prices shot up 25-30 per cent in the last three months due to increased exports and squeezed supply in the local market.

Forging steel manufacturers have hiked prices by 10 per cent over the last six months and now looking for a further 15 per cent increase.

The initial increase was impossible to sustain, and the further hike in prices will prove to be disastrous, Association of Indian Forging Industry (AIFI) said in a release.

As much as 80 per cent of the Rs 34,000-crore domestic forging industry comes from the automobile industry.

Forging industry requests govt to ban steel, iron ore exports



try. Steel prices have increased by 25 to 30 per cent in the last three months, putting the forging industry at serious risk, particularly when we are still recovering from Covid-inflicted business losses and the resultant pressure on cash flow, and cash reserves," AIFI president Vikas Bajaj said.

Steel typically constitutes

60 to 65 per cent of the ex-factory value of forgings.

"The industry is still going through a very difficult time and is not in a position to absorb losses. I believe that rising demand for steel, low steel production for the domestic market due to increased steel exports are the prime reasons for price hikes."

"The forging association requests the government to consider a ban on steel and iron ore exports so that demand for steel within the country can be met in a cost/price-effective manner," he said.

Stating that steel prices at the moment are at unprecedented highs, the association said increased demand amid low allocation of production for the domestic market coupled with minimal imports due to import restrictions

imposed by the Central government, have helped domestic steel manufacturers to increase the prices twice in the current quarter for forging quality steel and three times in the current month for other types of steel.

The benchmark hot-rolled coil prices in the wholesale market (ex-Mumbai) have increased 43 per to Rs 52,000 per ton from Rs 36,500 per ton in July, which indicates that the prices of forging quality steel will be further revised upwards in the immediate future in line with the increases in the prices of hot-rolled coil prices, it said.

The price increases of steel in the domestic market are due to the increase in exports to neighbouring countries and the resultant reduction in supply within the domestic market, AIFI said.

"The sellers have intimated (on) 24 December 2020 that Government of Odisha...have exercised their RoR to purchase (49 per cent) shareholding in OPGC. According to the sellers have transferred the AES Shareholding in OPGC to the agency authorised by the Government of Odisha. As a result of this development, the SSPA has ceased to be effective," Adani Power said in a BSE filing on Thursday. OPGC operates 1,740 MW thermal power plant at Banarpalli in Jharsuguda district, Odisha. This plant is the mainstay of Odisha for base load power supply and amongst the lowest cost power generators in the state.

The supercritical capacity of 1,320 MW is a recently commissioned modern plant with low carbon footprint. The plant has a long-term power purchase agreement valid for 25 years with GRIDCO and sources fuel from a nearby captive mine. **PTI**

Sensex soars 529 points as RIL, HDFC twins shine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 DECEMBER

Industries (RIL), HDFC, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance and Kotak Bank.

Index heavyweights RIL, HDFC and HDFC Bank accounted for over half of

► Equity benchmarks marched higher for the third session on the trot on Thursday, propelled by Reliance Industries and financial stocks, amid a positive trend in global markets on prospects of a Brexit trade deal.

► Index heavyweights RIL, HDFC and HDFC Bank accounted for over half of

the Sensex's gains.

► A sharp jump in the rupee and persistent foreign fund inflows added to the momentum here, traders said.

deal ahead of the Christmas weekend, cheering participants.

"This has been a short but

in the last three days. Monthly expiry has also contributed to the higher volatility. Nifty's closing near the previous week high indicates strong rollovers on the back of healthy FII flows seen this month.

IT stocks have again come into limelight because of the large mega deals announced by Infosys and Wipro this week. This week has seen moderation in flows from both FIIs and DILs. We can expect muted FII activity in the next week also due to year end phenomenon but expect activity to pick up sharply from the first week of January," said Rusmik Oza, executive VP and head of fundamental research at Kotak Securities.

Sector-wise, BSE energy,

bankex, finance, oil and gas, metal and telecom indices rose up to 2.29 per cent, while IT, realty and teck closed in the red. Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices advanced up to 0.59 per cent.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Seoul, Hong Kong and Tokyo ended on a positive note, while Shanghai finished with losses.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading with gains in early deals.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude futures slipped 0.48 per cent to \$51.04 per barrel.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) purchased shares worth a net Rs 536.13 crore on Wednesday, according to provisional exchange data.

Meanwhile, climbing for the second straight session, the rupee darted up 21 paise to end at 73.55 against the US dollar today amid sustained foreign fund inflows and positive domestic equities.

A weak greenback overseas and expectations of the UK and EU reaching a Brexit deal



The evolving global security situation demands greater cooperation between Pakistan and China

PAKISTAN AIR CHIEF MARSHAL MUJAHID ANWAR KHAN

AT THE ANNUAL JOINT EXERCISE OF THEIR AIR FORCES

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER 2020

09

Pearl murder: Pak court orders Sheikh's release

Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the key suspect was acquitted earlier this year

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KARACHI, 24 DECEMBER



A provincial court in Pakistan on Thursday ordered the release of a British-born Pakistani man charged in the 2005 murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl.

The Sindh High Court's release order overturns government detention orders that Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the key suspect in Pearl's slaying, should remain in custody. Sheikh was acquitted earlier this year of murdering Pearl, but has been held while Pearl's family appeals the acquittal.

"The detention order is struck down," said Faisal Siddiqi, the family's lawyer. He said Sheikh would be freed until the appeal is completed, but would return to prison if the family is successful in

overturning the acquittal.

However, Siddiqi said the Sindh provincial government is appealing the order to release Sheikh.

Sheikh's lawyer Mehmood A. Sheikh, with whom he is not related, called for his client's immediate release.

The court order, a copy of which was obtained by *The Associated Press*, said the provincial government's detention orders were illegal and that neither the provincial nor the federal government had cause to keep Sheikh or three others, also charged in Pearl's mur-

der, behind bars.

Sheikh was sentenced to death and the others to life in prison for their role in the plot. But in April, the Sindh High Court acquitted them, a move that stunned the US government, Pearl's family and journalism advocacy groups.

The acquittal is now being appealed separately by both the Pakistani government and Pearl's family. The government has opposed Sheikh's release, saying it would endanger the public. The Supreme Court will resume its hearing on January 5.

Siddiqi, the Pearl family lawyer, said he expects the appeal to be decided by the Supreme Court by the end of January. Sheikh was convicted of helping lure Pearl to a meeting in the southern Pakistani port city of Karachi, in which he was kidnapped. Pearl had been investigating

the link between Pakistani militants and Richard C. Reid, dubbed the "Shoe Bomber" after trying to blow up a flight from Paris to Miami with explosives hidden in his shoes.

A gruesome video of Pearl's beheading was sent to the US consulate. The 38-year-old Wall Street Journal reporter from Encino, California was abducted January 23, 2002.

In Sheikh's original trial, emails between Sheikh and Pearl presented in court showed Sheikh gained Pearl's confidence sharing their experiences as both waited for the birth of their first child. Pearl's wife Marianne Pearl gave birth to a son, Adam, in May 2002. Evidence entered into court accused Sheikh of luring Pearl to his death, giving the American journalist a false sense of security as he was promised to introduce him to a cleric with militant links.

Court sentences Saeed to over 15 yrs in jail in terror financing case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAHORE, 24 DECEMBER



Mumbai terror attack mastermind and banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed was on Thursday sentenced to 15 and a half years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan in one more terror financing case.

The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Lahore also imposed a 200,000 Pakistani rupees (PKR) fine on Saeed.

The 70-year-old radical cleric has already been convicted for 21 years imprisonment in four terror financing cases of late.

The other four JuD leaders convicted by the court on Thursday are Hafiz Abdus Salam, Zafar Iqbal, JuD spokesperson Yahya Mujahid and Muhammad Ashraf.

Each convicted person has also been fined a PKR 200,000.

The ATC also handed down six-month imprisonment to Saeed's brother-in-law Abdul Rehman Makki in this case and imposed a fine of PKR 200,000 on him, the official said.

Judge Ijaz Ahmed of ATC Court No 3 heard the case no 32/19 filed by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in which the verdict has been announced after the statements of witnesses were cross-examined by Saeed and others' counsels - Naseeruddin Nayyar and Mohammad Imran Fazal Gul Advocate, the official said.

Now, Saeed will have to undergo collective imprisonment of over 36 years in five terror financing cases at the Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore. His punishment will run concurrently in these cases. There are reports that he is given 'VIP protocol' in jail.

Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist on whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror financing cases.

He was sentenced to 11 years in jail by an anti-ter-

Dozens detained in Armenia during anti-govt protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YEREVAN, 24 DECEMBER

Police in the Armenian capital detained dozens of people on Thursday during protests against the country's prime minister, who is being pressured to resign over his handling of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan.

Opposition politicians and their supporters have been demanding for weeks that Nikol Pashinyan step down over the Nov. 10 peace deal that saw Azerbaijan reclaim

control over large parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas. The Russia-brokered agreement ended 44 days of fierce fighting in which the Azerbaijani army routed Armenian forces.

Police detained 77 people following clashes when thousands of protesters converged on center of the capital Yerevan and surrounded the heavily guarded government building.

Pashinyan and other cabinet members were able to get into the building despite the unrest.

Now our goal is that they don't get out until Nikol Pashinyan resigns," Ishkhan Saghatelian, a leading member of the opposition Dashnaktsutyun party, was quoted as saying by the Russian state *Tass* news agency.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but was under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. That war left Nagorno-Karabakh itself and substantial surrounding territory in Armenian hands.

'Mom, we need food': Thousands in South Sudan near famine

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LEUKANGOLE, 24 DECEMBER

After nearly a week of hiding from conflict, Kallayn Keneng watched two of her young children die. They cried and cried and said, "Mom, we need food," she said. But she had nothing to give. Too frail to bury her 5-year-old and 7-year-old after days without eating, she covered their bodies with grass and left them in the forest.

Now the mourning 40-year-old awaits food aid, one of more than 30,000 people said to be in likely famine in South Sudan's Pibor county.

The new finding by international food security experts

means this could be the first part of the world in famine since one was declared in 2017 in another part of the country then deep in civil war.

South Sudan is one of four countries with areas that could slip into famine, the United Nations has warned, along with Yemen, Burkina Faso and northeastern Nigeria.

Pibor county this year has seen deadly local violence because of insufficient data.

and unprecedented flooding that have hurt aid efforts. On a visit to the town of Lekuangole this month, seven families told The Associated Press that 13 of their children starved to death between February and November.

The head of Lekuangole's government, Peter Goli, said he received unprecedented reports from community leaders that 17 children had died from hunger there and in surrounding villages between September and December.

The Famine Review Committee's report, released this month by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, stops short of declaring famine

But famine is thought to be occurring, meaning at least 20% of households face extreme food gaps and at least 30% of children are acutely malnourished.

But South Sudan's government is not endorsing the report's findings. If a famine were occurring it would be seen as a failure, it says.

They are making assumptions.

We are here dealing with facts, they are not on the ground, said John Pangech, the chair of South Sudan's food security committee.

The government says 11,000 people across the country are on the brink of starvation far less than the

105,000 estimated by the new report by food security experts.

The government also expects that 60% of the country's population, or some 7 million people, could face extreme hunger next year, with the hardest hit areas in Warrap, Jonglei and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states.

South Sudan has been struggling to recover from a five-year civil war. Food security experts say the magnitude of the hunger crisis has been mostly created by the fighting. That includes bouts of violence this year between communities with alleged support from the government and opposition.

The government is not

20 migrants found dead off Tunisian coast, more missing

TUNIS, 24 DECEMBER

About 20 African migrants were found dead Thursday after their smuggling boat sank in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to reach Europe, Tunisian authorities said. Five survivors were rescued and the Tunisian navy is searching for up to 20 others still believed missing.

Tunisian coast guard boats and local fishermen found and retrieved the bodies in the waters off the coastal city of Sfax in central Tunisia, Defense Ministry spokesman Mohamed Ben Zekri told The Associated Press.

According to survivors, the migrant smuggling boat was carrying about 40 or 50 people heading toward Italy, Ben Zekri said.

The boat was overloaded and in poor condition, and faced strong winds Thursday morning that may have contributed to the sinking, said National Guard spokesman Ali Ayari. It was carrying migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, he told.

Tunisian navy units were searching for any more survivors.

Tunisian authorities say they have intercepted several migrant smuggling boats recently but that the number of attempts has been growing, notably between the Sfax region and the Italian island of Lampedusa.

More than 1,100 migrants have died or disappeared in the Mediterranean this year, according to estimates from the International Organization for Migration.

Migrant smuggling boats frequently leave from the coast of Tunisia and neighboring Libya carrying people from across Africa.

AP

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Observe (3)
- 3 Fed up (5)
- 7 Custodian (8)
- 8 Shrub (4)
- 9 Simple (10)
- 11 Spiny plant (6)
- 13 Power point (6)
- 15 Harshly critical (10)
- 19 Renown (4)
- 20 Place of business (8)
- 21 Ganging (5)
- 22 Point of a pen (3)
- 23 Close (4)
- 24 Heartfelt (7)
- 25 Crazy (Informal) (7)
- 26 Refute (5)
- 27 Careful and prudent (8)
- 28 Quote (4)
- 29 American sport (8)
- 30 Obstreperous (Informal)
- 31 Power (7)
- 32 Protect from impact (7)
- 33 Lustre (5)
- 34 Comply with (4)
- 35 Pavement edge (4)

- 1 Close (4)
- 2 Heartfelt (7)
- 3 Crazy (Informal) (7)
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- 5 Careful and prudent (8)
- 6 Quote (4)
- 7 American sport (8)
- 8 Obstreperous (Informal)
- 9 Power (7)
- 10 Protect from impact (7)
- 11 Lustre (5)
- 12 Agents, gentry, etc. (10)
- 13 Power point (6)
- 14 Close (4)
- 15 Renown (4)
- 16 Lustre (5)
- 17 Lynx (4)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

DOWN

- 1 Dope (5)
- 2 Sling, etc. (10)
- 3 Dolt, simpleton (8)
- 4 Agents, gentry, etc. (10)
- 5 Termites (4)
- 6 Gentry (4)
- 7 Agents, gentry, etc. (10)
- 8 Agents, gentry, etc. (10)
- 9 Crux (4)
- 10 Landed gentry (10)
- 11 Parent (4)
- 12 Caesar (5)
- 13 Prissy (7)
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- 11 Parent (



Boris will be seen as the man that finished the job. Perhaps not perfectly but, yes, he's done what he said

BRITISH POLITICIAN NIGEL FARAGE

SIGNALLING THAT HE WILL ACCEPT THE BREXIT TRADE DEAL STRUCK BY BORIS JOHNSON

WEATHER

CITY	MAX (°C)	MIN (°C)
SINGAPORE	30	24 H
HONG KONG	23	17 H
TOKYO	13	5 CL
LONDON	8	4 H
DUBAI	24	17 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	15	7 H
NEW YORK	15	4 H
MOSCOW	-5	-10 H

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

THUMBNAILS



Health worker Maria Ramirez is the first to get vaccinated for Covid-19 at the General Hospital in Mexico City on Thursday.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 24 DECEMBER

The deal is done, Downing Street in London and European Union (EU) officials in Brussels confirmed on Thursday as both sides managed to thrash out a post-Brexit free trade agreement (FTA) just days before the December 31 deadline.

Thousands of pages of legal text accompanies the deal, with details of the agreement set to emerge in the course of the next few days, including the final ratification of the FTA by Parliaments on both sides.

"We have got Brexit done and we can now take full advantage of the fantastic opportunities available to us as an independent trading nation, striking trade deals with other partners around the world," Downing Street said in a statement.



"We have signed the first free trade agreement based on zero tariffs and zero quotas that has ever been achieved with the EU. The deal is the biggest bilateral trade deal signed by either side, covering trade worth GBP 668 billion in 2019," it said, adding that the UK has

taken back control of its "money, borders, laws, trade and our fishing waters".

"The deal also guarantees that we are no longer in the lunar pull of the EU, we are not bound by EU rules, there is no role for the European Court of Justice and all of our key red

lines about returning sovereignty have been achieved. It means that we will have full political and economic independence on 1st January 2021," Downing Street declared.

On the other side, the EU said it has a good deal to show for the "long and winding road".

"We have finally got a deal, a fair and responsible deal," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said at a press conference from Brussels.

"The EU rules and standards will be respected... the United Kingdom is a long-standing partner," she said, adding that while "parting was such sweet sorrow" it was time to look to the future as the UK is now classified as a "third country" in relation to the economic bloc.

Earlier, it had emerged that crunch talks overnight meant

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson summoned his Cabinet for a late Wednesday night conference call to indicate that a post-Brexit trade agreement is ready to be signed off soon.

Johnson and Von Der Leyen have been in close contact over the past few days as the December 31 transition period cut-off loomed over the negotiations, which have missed repeated deadlines as they failed to agree on key areas of fishing rights in each other's waters and competition rules that would apply to the UK as a non-member of the 27-member economic bloc.

According to early reports, both sides have come to a base agreement which would ensure most of the current tariff-free, quota-free arrangement but unlikely to mean entirely frictionless trade as businesses had hoped.

The UK Parliament needs to ratify the deal and as it has already risen for Christmas break, the likelihood is that MPs will be recalled to the House of Commons next week for urgent business. Johnson's comfortable majority in the Commons means the deal is likely to be signed off in time.

On the EU side, the European Parliament would then ratify the agreement, which is expected in the New Year and with all the member-countries briefed on it, they are unlikely to exercise their veto powers.

It has now been four and half years since Britain voted to exit the EU in a referendum in June 2016. It officially left at the end of January this year and entered into an 11-month transition period, or a phase of status quo, to hammer out a new free trade agreement.

However, the last few

months and weeks have proved particularly tense on the path to such an agreement, with the UK concerned about the EU's insistence to close alignment to its rules even after Brexit and the EU accusing the UK of expecting unfair advantages.

The main sticking points were fishing rights and the so-called "level playing field" measures to prevent what is seen as unfair competition through the lowering of standards or the use of state subsidies.

While the Johnson-led government insisted that it would make the most of a no-deal Brexit too, there were widespread concerns that leaving without a deal and consequently having to trade on World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms from January 1, 2021, would cause major hurdles for business and push up prices for consumers.

Mueller probe: Trump pardons ex-aides

Prominent among those pardoned on Wednesday include Roger Stone and Paul Manafort, his son-in-law's father Charles Kushner

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 24 DECEMBER

President Donald Trump pardoned more than two dozen people, including former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in-law, in the latest wave of clemency to benefit longtime associates and supporters.

The actions, in Trump's waning time at the White House, bring to nearly 50 the number of people whom the president has granted clemency in the last week. The list from the last two days includes not only multiple people convicted in the investigation into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia but also allies from Congress and other felons whose causes were championed by friends.

The pardons Wednesday of Manafort and Roger Stone, whom months earlier had his sentence commuted by Trump, were particularly notable, underscoring the president's desire to chip away at the results and legacy of special

counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. He has now pardoned five people convicted in that investigation, four of them associates like former national security adviser Michael Flynn and campaign adviser George Papadopoulos, both of whom pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI.

Manafort, who led Trump's campaign during a pivotal period in 2016 before being ousted over his ties to Ukraine, was among the first people charged as part of Mueller's investigation into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia. He was later sentenced to more than seven years in prison for financial crimes related to his political consulting work in Ukraine, but was released to home confinement last spring because of coronavirus concerns in the federal prison system.

Though the charges against Manafort did not concern the central thrust of Mueller's mandate - whether the Trump campaign and Russia colluded to tip the election - he was nonetheless a pivotal figure in the investigation. Both were also con-

victed in the Mueller probe.

Kushner is the father of Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and a wealthy real estate executive who pleaded guilty years ago to tax evasion and making illegal campaign donations. Trump and the elder Kushner knew each other from real estate circles and their children were married in 2009.

Trump vetoed defence Bill: President Donald Trump has vetoed the \$740.5 billion annual defence Bill, saying that certain provisions in it posed risks to the national security even as the House geared up to override the veto with bipartisan support. The US Congress last week passed the National Defense Authorisation Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2021.

It was passed in the US House of Representatives by a vote of 335-78-1 and in the Senate by a vote of 84-13.

Your failure to terminate the very dangerous national security risk of Section 230 [of the Communications Decency Act] will make our intelligence virtually impossible to conduct without everyone knowing

Anger after pardons in killings of Iraqi civilians

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 24 DECEMBER

The courtroom monitors carried the image of a smiling 9-year-old boy as his father pleaded for the punishment of four US government contractors convicted in shootings that killed that child and more than a dozen other Iraqi civilians.

"What's the difference?" Mohammad Kinani al-Razzaz asked a Washington judge at an emotional 2015 sentencing hearing, "between these criminals and terrorists?" The shootings of civilians by Blackwater employees at a crowded Baghdad traffic circle in September 2007 prompted an international outcry, left a reputational black eye on US operations at the height of the Iraq war and put the govern-

ment on the defensive over its use of private contractors in military zones. The resulting criminal prosecutions spanned years in Washington but came to an abrupt end Tuesday when President Donald Trump pardoned the convicted contractors, an act that human rights activists and some Iraqis decried as a miscarriage of justice.

The news comes at a delicate moment for the Iraqi leadership, which is trying to balance growing calls by some Iraqis for a complete US troop withdrawal from Iraq with what they see as the need for a more gradual drawdown.

The infamous Blackwater company killed Iraqi citizens at Nisoor Square. Today we heard they were released upon personal order by Pres-

ident Trump, as if they don't care for the spilled Iraqi blood, said Saleh Abed, a Baghdad resident walking in the square.

The United Nations Human Rights office said Wednesday that it was deeply concerned by the pardons, which it said contributes to impunity and has the effect of emboldening others to commit such crimes in the future.

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry said the pardons did not take into account the seriousness of the crime committed, and that it would urge the US to reconsider.

The 2007 killings in the Baghdad traffic circle were among many attacks, large and small, hitting civilians that served to turn even some initial Iraqi supporters of Saddam Hussein's overthrow against Americans.

a reckless decision. Next week, December 28, the House will take up the veto override with bipartisan support, Pelosi said.

HOLY NIGHT



A woman, wearing a face mask, carries a baby Jesus statue, line up during a procession for a Christmas mass service at a church in Bali, Indonesia on Thursday.

New virus variant appears to emerge in Nigeria, raises alarm

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NAIROBI, 24 DECEMBER

Another new variant of the coronavirus appears to have emerged in Nigeria, Africa's top public health official said Thursday, but he added that further investigation was needed.

The discovery could add to new alarm in the pandemic after similar variants were announced in Britain and South Africa, leading to the swift return of international travel restrictions and other measures just as the world enters a major holiday season.

Its a separate lineage from the UK and South Africa, the head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, John Nkengasong, told reporters. He said the Nigeria CDC and the African Center of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases in that country Africa's most populous will be

analysing more samples. Give us some time... its still very early, he said.

The alert about the apparent new variant was based on two or three genetic sequences, he said, but that and South Africa's alert late last week were enough to prompt an emergency meeting of the Africa CDC this week.

The variant was found in two patient samples collected on Aug. 3 and on Oct. 9 in Nigeria's Osun state, according to a working research paper seen by The Associated Press.

Unlike the variant seen in the UK, we haven't observed

such rapid rise of the lineage in Nigeria and do not have evidence to indicate that the P681H variant is contributing to increased transmission of the virus in Nigeria. However, the relative difference in scale of genomic surveillance in Nigeria vs the U.K. may imply a reduced power to detect such changes," the paper says.

The news comes as infections surge again in parts of the African continent.

The new variant in South Africa is now the predominant one there, Nkengasong said, as confirmed infections in the country approach 1 million. While the variant transmits quickly and viral loads are higher, it is not yet clear whether it leads to a more severe disease, he said.

We believe this mutation will not have an effect on the deployment of Covid-19 vaccines to the continent, he said of the South Africa variant.

► Pak reports 111 deaths in one day: Pakistan has reported 111 new deaths due to coronavirus in the last 24 hours, the highest during the second wave of the pandemic which hit the nation in November.

► Macron leaving isolation after week: French President Emmanuel Macron no longer has virus symptoms and was leaving isolation Thursday after a week with Covid-19, but is urging the French public to limit their contacts and remain vigilant during the Christmas holidays.

► China to suspend flights to and from the UK: China will suspend flights to and from the UK, joining a growing list of countries who have instituted travel bans, in light of a new variant of the coronavirus, its Foreign Ministry announced Thursday.

Coronavirus dampens Christmas joy across globe

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BETHLEHEM, 24 DECEMBER

effect in Italy.

Celebrations elsewhere in Europe were cancelled or greatly scaled back as virus infections surge across the continent and a new variant that may be more contagious has been detected.

Thousands of truck drivers and travellers were trapped in mass gridlock at Britain's Dover port on Christmas Eve, held up from crossing to France by the slow delivery of coronavirus tests demanded by French authorities.

In Bethlehem, officials tried to make the most out of a bad situation.

Christmas is a holiday that renews hope in the souls, said Mayor Anton Salman. Despite all the obstacles and challenges due to corona and due to the lack of tourism, the city of Bethlehem is still looking forward to the future with

optimism and will celebrate Christmas in all its human and religious meanings.

Raw, rainy weather added to the gloomy atmosphere, as dozens of people gathered in the central Manger Square to greet the Latin Patriarch, the top Catholic clergyman in the Holy Land. Youth marching bands playing Christmas car-

ols on bagpipes, accompanied by pounding drummers, led a procession ahead of the patriarch's arrival early in the afternoon. Thousands of foreign pilgrims usually flock to Bethlehem for the celebrations. But the closure of Israel's international airport to foreign visitors kept tourists away this year.



The Palestinian Authority last week banned intercity travel in the areas it administers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, keeping even Palestinian visitors away.

The restrictions limited attendance to dozens of residents and a small entourage of religious officials. Evening celebrations, when pilgrims normally congregate around the Christmas tree, were cancelled, and Midnight Mass celebrations were limited to clergy.

The 85-year-old Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, who usually attends the solemn occasion, said he would not participate.

The coronavirus has dealt a heavy blow to Bethlehem's tourism sector, the lifeblood of the local economy. Restaurants, hotels and gift shops have been shuttered.

No Christmas Eve joy for truckers stuck in UK

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CALAIS (FRANCE), 24 DECEMBER

Trucks inched slowly past checkpoints in Dover and headed across the Channel to Calais on Thursday after France partially reopened its borders following a scare over a rapidly spreading new virus variant - but most drivers remained trapped in mass gridlock on Christmas Eve.

One by one, trucks passed toward ferries and trains that link Britain with France, as authorities checked that drivers had the negative virus tests now required to cross.

On the French side, powerful winds buffeted the coast before dawn broke, and the vast Calais port - which normally takes in up to 4,000 trucks a day - remained quieter than usual amid testing challenges on the UK side.

Officials warned the backlog could take days to clear. One UK road haulage expert estimated there could be 8,000 to 10,000 trucks caught up in the chaos near Dover in England, waiting to enter France.



With growing concern over stress and mental issues at workplaces, there is an immediate need to introduce effective employee assistance programmes

PRAKRITI PODDAR

According to a Wall Street Journal report, millennial Indians spend more than 52 hours at work in a week on average. The number is staggeringly high as compared to counterparts from 25 other countries. Long hours of work coupled with performance pressures, family priorities, office politics and financial worries are exposing employees to stressors affecting their mental health adversely. As a result, four out of 10 working professionals in the country suffer from depression or anxiety.

Mental illness has a serious impact on workplace productivity. According to World Health Organisation, loss of productivity due to mental illness costs the global economy \$1 trillion loss annually. With growing concern over stress and mental issues at the workplace, there is an immediate need to act on these concerns and introduce effective Employee Assistance Programs

(EAPs) to maximise support to employees.

Need for urgent attention to employees' mental health conditions

Over the last two to three decades, there has been a rapid growth of the private sector in India, with various multinational corporations setting up their operations in India. However, along with the growth of employment opportunities several stress-related challenges have also cropped up at workplaces. Research says that a finance/banking company with 500 employees on average suffers a loss of Rs 100 crores in productivity because of stress-related issues. The study also pointed out that an ITES/IT company with 10,000 employees on average suffers Rs 50 crore loss owing to stress among employees.

When the stress-related issues combine with the daily strain of our complex society, companies experience a significant fall in employee-

engagement along with increase in absenteeism and employee turnover. With clinical depression rising at a steady rate over the past few years, it has also led to an increase of different ailments such as cardiac disorders, hypertension, diabetes and obesity. All these can significantly contribute to productivity loss and direct medical costs.

How Employee Assistance Programs can be the game changer

It is quite inevitable that in today's fast-paced world where everyone of us are falling short of time to meet deadlines, achieve goals, and targets, stress is bound to take over. An EAP can be the first step to support the psychological and mental well-being of employees in an organisation. Though EAPs have been rapidly adopted worldwide by several organisations and are usually a critical component of employee benefit programmes, in India their adoption

rate has been sluggish. The good news is with mental health gradually grabbing public attention, corporates are now realising the preventive role of EAPs in mitigating the effects of stress and anxiety among employees.

A well-designed EAP addresses all issues from different aspects of life that ultimately give rise to mental health issues. Devised to help employees deal with personal and professional problems that may affect their performance, an EAP offers workplace assessments to identify practises and behaviours that are contributing to mental health problems. Other than that, EAP teams also assist employees with personal concerns related to family, marital, finance, conflict, grief and substance use.

Stress-related issues like decreased performance, absenteeism and health problems not only affect an employee but also the overall workforce. In addition to that, employees experiencing high levels of stress may become more argumentative, less communicative and defensive at work. Investing in EAPs can open the doors to support such employees to discuss their issues and improve their well-being. Studies have shown that when EAP is introduced, employee productivity increases, healthcare costs are reduced and return on investments increase.

The most valuable resource available to a company is the human mind. Other than productivity, companies rely on employees to drive sustainable success and deliver their mission. Futureproofing and safeguarding this resource is the best way forward for companies to realise their goals and thrive in this competitive market. Employee Assistance Programs introduced by organisations should adopt a holistic approach to employee wellness by taking into consideration different aspects of their life that can trigger mental stresses.

The writer is global head for mental health, Poddar Foundation

ANKIT ADITYA PRADHAN

Having taken the disrupting whip throughout 2020, businesses are acutely striving to take the bulls by the thorns in an attempt to formulate an accurate work environment around the changing conditions. Against the alarming rise of Covid-19 cases, companies were forced to rapidly adopt the remote working culture, perceiving the lethal effects of the virus.

Initially, employees were staggering to cope up with the virtual model of working. Soon they reclined to be comfortable to work from the vicinity of their living room or with the flexibility to attend meetings from the kitchen.

But with each passing day, all the excitement attached to work from home eventually faded away. Many complained about virtual fatigue while some were immensely faced with the pangs of isolation.

Consequently, all enthusiasm, especially among younger workers, hits a low as they struggle to keep their motivation elevated. Keeping their focus intact was another task altogether. The worst affected were the parents who had to relentlessly juggle between household chores and office work.

Soon the realisation that there were bleak chances of working without interruption made work from home a challenging endeavour.

According to a study conducted by AlphaBeta consultancy, one out of four businesses saw a fall in productivity while working from home. Where 25 per cent showed an improvement, the remaining half of the business remained unaltered in terms of efficiency.

Having taken productivity into account, virtual working can even decide the fate of the business. Where big businesses have the resource to provide their employees with the entire set-up to comfortably work from home, businesses at small scale and particularly start-ups lack the



Socialising being at the heart of humankind disposition, it can be difficult to stay away from offices for a long time

funds required to give their employees even the basic equipment and facilities required for remote working.

Judiciously looking at the situation, it is evident that though remote working can offer temporary solutions ensuring employee safety and aid companies in reducing operational charges like fixed cost, infrastructural cost, but due to its limiting scope, the remote working model will have difficulty in making its way permanently to office structure.

Incidentally, there might be reformatory changes in workspaces but returning to the office cannot be ruled out. Though the pandemic may come with various health implications, a major lesson it taught the employers is the importance of quali-

ty workspaces.

Companies realised the need for spacious working places that will facilitate comfortable functioning and also practice social distancing not just for the Covid-19 purpose but to ensure the overall general hygiene.

Therefore, post-pandemic big companies will be in the lookout for large offices that promotes social distancing, providing individuals with space for better well-being, productivity and collaboration. Likewise, smaller companies and start-ups will show a keen interest in co-working spaces as it will hugely cut down on the infrastructure cost and fixed costs of entering into an agreement.

Co-working space will also save the hassle of entering into a term lock

which limits the chances of expanding to different locations. The cost advantages along with the flexibility for companies to explore offices in different locations will highly contribute to the rising demand for co-working spaces.

Moreover, industries which require public dealings like sales, business development need to organise meetings at the physical level where the business plan can be discussed and formulated, intensive brainstorming can be done.

Where Google intimated its employees of plans to come up with new offices in areas with minimal risk of Covid-19 virus show that coming back to offices is there in the list with the news of vaccines making rounds

in the media.

In addition to this, the tech giant has shown interest in booking collaborative places where employees can work in a quiet place that falls beyond the reach of commotion in homes that is ideal for team gatherings.

Though the remote working culture has been adopted with agility across the globe, socialising being at the heart of humankind disposition, it will be difficult to stay away from offices for a long time. Looking at the collapsing state of affairs it will be necessary more than ever to break free from the monotony and chaos at home.

The writer is founder and CEO, Realty Assistant

PLUS POINTS

Revamping the campus



JD Birla Institute (JDBI) took up the initiative to spruce up their deserted campus and is ready to receive the students soon post the lockdown. Over the last couple of months, the satellite campus of JDBI, which houses its prestigious and highly acclaimed department of management has undergone a makeover of sorts. The principal Prof Deepali Singhee and her team meticulously beautified the campus mainly utilising and recycling already available materials. The walls have been decorated with motivating quotes from well known personalities. A wall has been dedicated to former students, who have been successful achievers, and their photographs constitute the "Hall of Fame". It is a sure motivator to current students to aspire for entry into the hallowed group. The students have been gifted with an adda zone and a well decorated but comfy students' council room. The fiction section was inaugurated by Brig VN Chaturvedi, secretary general, Vidya Mandir Society recently and the event was shared live online.

Interactive session



Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) recently organised an interactive web session with Anupam Kher, actor, producer, director. Another stalwart Suhel Seth, a columnist, actor, keynote speaker and a theatre lover was also present. Kher was welcomed by Mayank Jalan, president, ICC.

At the session, Kher spoke about his recent book "Your Best Day is Today", which he wrote during the raging pandemic. His mother had tested positive for Covid 19 and he had to leave her in the emergency room of the hospital and could not accompany her. It made him realise the pain that millions of families are going through. This is when he realised that the best day is today and we need to love our families and friends today, for life is not forever.

Developing talent



WiproGE (WGE) Healthcare Private Limited announced a fellowship partnership with Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM), Chennai to provide increased opportunities for research scholars to improve the innovation ecosystem. Under this programme, Wipro GE Healthcare will also provide financial aid and industrial expertise to chosen masters (MS) in research scholars at IITM. Research scholars would be offered nine-month long internship opportunities at WGE. The partnership will provide a rich experience to research scholars, who would get a chance to work on diverse healthcare projects and get mentored by industry experts from Wipro GE Healthcare. For details, visit: <https://www.iitm.ac.in/>

Strengthening skills



The National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) has consistently worked towards an array of initiatives to promote the growth of art and culture in India. Since 2009, in partnership with Citibank, NCPA has been offering scholarships to the young promising students who seek advanced training in the field of Hindustani music (vocal and instrumental). This year scholarships are being offered for vocal- khayal / dhruvapad and percussion- tabla / pakhawaj. The entries are limited to the age group of 18-35 years and applications will be accepted till 15 January 2021. Candidate's bio-data will be considered as his/her application for this scholarship. For details visit: ncpascholarships@gmail.com



'SALAH HAPPY AT LIVERPOOL'

Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp has said that Mohamed Salah (photo, left) is in a "good moment" and is happy at Liverpool, dismissing media speculation the Egyptian wants to leave the club.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Ban overturned: The World Anti-Doping Agency says a Swiss court has overturned an eight-year doping ban against Chinese swimmer Sun Yang and ordered the case back to the Court of Arbitration for Sport for a second time but with a different chairman of the judges.

Lanka tour: English cricket authorities are confident the national men's side's upcoming tour of Sri Lanka will go ahead as scheduled despite the Asian team currently being in South Africa, where fresh travel restrictions have been imposed amid the pandemic.



Warne's prediction: Spin legend Shane Warne believes Australia will "blow away" India in the Boxing Day Test as the visitors are still a "bit shocked" by the Adelaide humiliation. Australia had bundled out India for their lowest-ever Test score of 36 in the opening Test which the hosts won by eight wickets.

Tokyo Games sponsors: Tokyo Olympic officials said Thursday they have reached a "basic agreement" with all 68 domestic sponsors to extend their contracts into next year to support the postponed Games. The president of the organizing committee, said that the new contributions "will exceed" 22 billion yen to patch up holes in the growing budget.

Calcutta Tennis C'ship: The qualifier duo of Wyatt O'Brien and Arya Bhattacharya shocked 2nd seeded Md Fardean and Akshat Agarwal in the opening round of the Men's Open Doubles at the ongoing Calcutta Hard Court Tennis Championship, being held at the Calcutta South Club Ltd.

BCCI approves 10 teams for 2020 IPL, backs ICC's bid for cricket in Olympics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD, 24 DECEMBER

The BCCI's governing body on Thursday ratified the entry of two new franchises in the IPL to make it a 10-team affair from 2022 and also decided to back the ICC's push for cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Olympics, during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) here.

"Two new teams will be introduced in the 2022 IPL," a Board source told PTI.

It is learnt that time at hand is too short for even a nine-team IPL next year as an elaborate tender-floating process increase of matches and ensuring that all foreign player international calenders are adjusted, would be prove to be a herculean task.

T20 cricket in Olympics

In another major development, the Board, in principle, decided to back the ICC's bid for inclusion of cricket, in the T20 format, in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics "after getting some clarifications from the International Olympic Com-



mittee".

"Look, the BCCI is an autonomous body and it would like to maintain its autonomy. Our legal team is looking to get a few clarifications. Obviously, cricket in Olympics is great for the game. Let's hope we can move in the right direction," the member, who attended the AGM, said.

The Board, however, did not reveal the nature of its queries with regards to the matter.

BCCI likely to lose \$ 123 million in ICC revenue if no tax exemption

The BCCI has decided that if its does not get full tax exemp-

Compensation for domestic players

Also, it was decided that all first-class players, both men and women, will be suitably compensated for the curtailed domestic season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BCCI plans to get the domestic season underway after several months' delay, in January with the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 championship.

Asked about the money to be set aside for this, the Board source said: "The BCCI will give a lump-sum compensation amount to the state units.

Now they will draw up their own list and accordingly compensate their male and female players."

Junior and women's cricket during IPL

The BCCI has decided that women's tournaments (senior and junior) along with age-group tournaments (U-23, U-19, U-16) will be held simultaneously at the time of IPL-14, which, in all likelihood, will be held in India despite the pandemic-related concerns.

"We will have at least one age-group tournament in each category and also the women's

tournament during IPL."

Shukla becomes new VP

In other decisions, veteran Congress leader Rajiv Shukla was officially anointed the Board's vice president in place of his protege Mahim Verma from Uttarakhand.

Brijesh Patel will continue as the chairman of the IPL Governing Council.

Ganguly-Shah to be India's face at ICC

It was also learnt that the general body decided in favour of BCCI President Sourav Ganguly continuing as a director in the ICC Board. Secretary Jay Shah will be the alternate director as well as India's representative at the Chief Executive Committee meets of the global body.

Women's Test matches

The house deliberated on having women's Test matches and there could be a two-Test series in the offing next year but a final call in this regard will be taken by the BCCI Apex Council.

Amul Milk
MERRY CHRISTMAS
AMUL DOODH PEETA HAI INDIA

Had my head in the sand before BLM: Paine; regret making hurtful one-liners, says Cummins

AGENCIES

MELBOURNE, 24 DECEMBER

Australia Test skipper Tim Paine said he was living with "his head in the sand" before the Black Lives Movement while his deputy Pat Cummins admitted to making hurtful "one liners" to players of colour that he now regrets.

Paine said he didn't think a lot about the issue of racism as it didn't affect him, adding that the BLM has shifted his perspective.

"Mine has only shifted in the last 12 months since the whole Black Lives Matter thing started to take off," Paine was quoted as saying by ESPNCricinfo.

"I was probably someone who, if I am totally honest, had my head in the sand a little bit and because it probably wasn't a part of my world I didn't have it as a big issue."

"That's really opened my eyes to things and issues our Indigenous people, black people and people of all sorts of different cultures around the world go through."

When asked how he coun-

selled youngsters to handle racism, Cummins said: "Just taking that extra second to think about what you say or do. You might try to throw in a joke and I've definitely done this in the past."

"You say a little one liner or something off the top of your head and then just making sure you actually reflect on that and go actually that's not me" or "I've said the wrong thing there. I don't believe that, I don't know why I've said that, and I hate how I've made that person feel," the pacer added.

The 36-year-old Paine said he has spoken to his teammates about their experiences and that has helped him gather a better understanding. "But since this has sort of got going I have taken time to speak to teammates -- whether it's Tasmania or Hurricanes or club cricket -- about how they feel about it and how it affects them."

"For me my learning has come from speaking to teammates, understanding more how it affects them and how I can help them through that."

Chetan Sharma appointed new chairman of selectors

AHMEDABAD, 24 DECEMBER

Former India pacer Chetan Sharma was on Thursday appointed chairman of the senior national selection panel by the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC), which also picked Abey Kuruvilla and Debasish Mohanty in the five-member team.

The new panel was formed on the sidelines of the BCCI's 89th Annual General Meeting (AGM) here.

The selection panel also has former India players Sunil Joshi and Harvinder Singh.

Sharma is a former player who represented India in 23 Tests and 65 ODIs during an 11-year-old internation-

al career, the highlight of which was his hat-trick in the 1987 World Cup.

At the age of 16, Sharma started playing first-class cricket for Haryana and made his Test debut aged 18, a year after making his ODI debut against the West Indies in December 1983.

As per the BCCI constitution, the candidate with the most Test caps becomes the chief selector.

"It's indeed a privilege for me to get an opportunity to serve Indian cricket once again. I am a man of words and my action will speak louder than words," Sharma, who has a five-wicket haul at Lord's in a Test match, said. PTI

Given its teams a few days of winter holidays, instead of the usual two weeks. The next round of games starts on Tuesday.

Asensio spurs Real Madrid to 2-0 win

AGENCIES

BARCELONA, 24 DECEMBER

A moment of inspired attacking by substitute Marco Asensio ensured Real Madrid stayed level on points with Spanish league leader Atletico Madrid in a title race that is shaping up as a cross-town contest.

Asensio came off the bench to help lead Madrid to a 2-0 win over Granada on Wednesday at its Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium. Moments after hitting the post with a shot, Asensio set up Casemiro to finally break through Granada's defense in the 57th minute.

Karim Benzema scored Madrid's second goal in the game's final seconds with Granada caught off balance while searching for an equalizer.

Madrid's fifth league victory in a row kept it in second place behind Atletico on goal difference. They are both six points ahead of Real Sociedad and Villarreal. Fifth-place Barcelona is eight points back.

Atletico has more games in hand to play than the pursuing pack. Atletico has played 13 games, Barcelona 14, Madrid and Villarreal 15, and Sociedad 16.

We have to be pleased with how we are playing, said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane, who has turned things around over the past three weeks following a poor start to the season.

We are going to have to keep working hard and fighting on the field like we have been doing. Now we need to rest a little bit, spend some days with our families, and then get back to work.

After compacting its playing calendar because of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic that shut down competition for several months, the Spanish league has only

given its teams a few days of winter holidays, instead of the usual two weeks. The next round of games starts on Tuesday.

BREAKING THROUGH

GRANADA, 24 DECEMBER

Granada's well-disciplined defense anchored by Domingos Duarte frustrated Madrid's attack throughout most of the game.

The visitors even enjoyed a good chance to stun Madrid moments after kickoff. Kennedy intercepted a pass by Madrid's Raphael Varane and passed for Roberto Soriano to set up Antonio Puertas, only for his shot to sail high.

Sputtering in attack, Madrid lost forward Rodriago Gois in the 38th when the 19-year-old Brazilian grabbed his right thigh and asked to be substituted. He had to be carried off on a stretcher.

On came Asensio, and the match swung in Madrid's favor.

The creative midfielder, who has struggled to regain his form since undergoing knee surgery last year, showed why he was once considered a future star for Madrid and Spain's national team.

Asensio went inches from scoring in the 55th when he used an audacious flick of his

heel to bat a pass by Dani Carvajal on to the post.

The scare seemed to break Granada's focus for the first time, and holes briefly appeared in its area. Seconds after Asensio had hit the woodwork, Granada goalkeeper Rui Silva had to repel back-to-back shots by Toni Kroos and Federico Valverde.

The goal came on Madrid's next attack when Asensio dribbled to the endline and crossed the ball into the heart of the area for Casemiro to leap over his marker and head home.

Granada pressed for an equalizer, but its salvos of crosses into the box were well defended by Madrid.

Benitez then got his eighth goal of the season, making him the competition's joint-top scorer with Villarreal striker Gerard Moreno.

Granada was in seventh place after its first loss in four rounds.

HAZARD WAITS

Eden Hazard was back on Madrid's squad after his latest injury since joining the Spanish club kept him sidelined for six matches.

But he never left the bench. Zidane said that he had opted to let his injury-struck star wait because it was a difficult match.

Indian team indulges in wrestling-like drill

MELBOURNE, 24 DECEMBER

The Indian cricket team on Thursday tried a hitherto unseen training drill that vaguely resembled a wrestling bout, with a pair of two players each seemingly striving to outdo each other.

New Zealander Nick Webb, India's strength and conditioning coach, had introduced a few drills in the past and among them is a wrestling-like strength training activity. But the players haven't been seen performing this particular drill in the past.

One of the purposes of this activity is to help players get ready for high-intensity duels. There was also a bit of touch rugby-like session happening.

It is understood that these sessions are basically conducted to give players a break from the

monotony of regular training regime.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja was the first to arrive at the nets for the training session and he was put through a fitness test as he ran between the wickets with a bat on his hand, two days before the Boxing Day Test begins at the hallowed Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Jadeja, who has bagged 213 wickets and scored 1869 runs in 49 Tests, had missed the final two T20Is and the first Test against the hosts due to a concussion and a hamstring injury suffered during the first T20.

One of the tour's finds, pacer TNatarajan bowled well at the nets and often managed to beat the outside edge of both stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujara.

Set to play in the second Test

against an in-form Australian team, KL Rahul had a long hit at the nets, and so did Rishabh Pant.

As the players got busy at the nets after warming up, the Indian think-tank -- chief coach Ravi Shastri, bowling coach Bharat Arun and batting coach Vikram Rathour -- were seen exchanging notes from the practice session. They also had a long chat with Rahane, who will lead the team in the remaining three Tests in the absence of Virat Kohli, who has flown back to India for the birth of his child.

Shastri was seen discussing something with Rahane after the batsman's net session and Prithvi Shaw, who is going through a lean patch, was also seen batting in the net against the likes of chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav. PTI

Lyon leads Lille and PSG going into mid-season winter break

AGENCIES

PARIS, 24 DECEMBER

Lyon tops the French league on goal difference heading into the winter break after beating struggling Nantes 3-0, while Lille won 3-2 at Montpellier as the frontrunners stayed one point ahead of Paris Saint-Germain.

Defending champion PSG beat Strasbourg 4-0 in an otherwise uninspired performance that saw the home side benefit from three late goals amid sloppy defending from the visitors.

Third-place PSG has lost four times already this season and finds itself in the rare position of chasing other sides.

Defender Timothee Pembe poked PSG ahead in the 18th minute from close range after Angel Di Maria's shot was saved by goalkeeper Eiji Kawashima.

Until the latter stages of the game, PSG struggled to break down a defense brilliantly marshalled by 20-year-old Mohamed Simakan, who made several superb tackles to thwart striker Kylian Mbappe and his teammates.

The match was effectively decided when PSG was gifted a goal in the 79th, as substitute Stefan Mitrovic into a botched clearance that allowed Di Maria time to square a simple pass for Mbappe.

Idris Gueye then drilled in a fine shot from 25 meters in the 87th and fellow substitute Moise Kean added the fourth goal during injury time as Strasbourg's defense crumbled.

In southern France, northern side Lille was pegged back

twice by Montpellier before veteran Turkey striker Burak Yilmaz settled the match in the 85th.

American forward Timothy Weah the son of Liberia President George Weah put Lille in front midway through the first half with a low shot.

In a dramatic finish, Yilmaz finished neatly before Laborde