



INDIA SLAMS PAK
FOR JADHAV CASE
SHENANIGANS



THE CRAFT OF
JOE BIDEN



P7

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

BORIS WARNS
'GAME NOT OVER'

SHORTEST FORMAT
STIMULATES BIG
INDIAN HOPES



P10

Mamata
threatens
country-wide
protests over
farm laws



KOLKATA, 3 DECEMBER

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Mist/shallow fog in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 27 and 08 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 95% Min: 48%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 27.2°C (+2) Min: 08.2°C (-1)
SUN RISES SUN SETS
07:00 hrs 17:24 hrs
MOON RISES MOON SETS
20:49 hrs 11:03 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Chief minister Mamata Banerjee during the inauguration of the newly-built Jay Hind Bridge (Majherhat bridge) in Kolkata on Thursday. SNS

MDH owner Dharampal Gulati dies at 97: India's spice king and MDH Masala owner Mahashay Dharampal Gulati, familiar to all those who watched him in his company's ads over the years, died in New Delhi on Thursday morning. He was 97. Gulati, who was awarded the Padma Bhushan last year, was undergoing post-Covid treatment at the Mata Chanan Devi Hospital and suffered a cardiac arrest in the morning. PS

Stop issuing new credit cards, HDFC Bank told: In an unprecedented move, the Reserve Bank has temporarily barred HDFC Bank from launching new digital banking initiatives and issuing new credit card after taking a serious view of service outages at the country's largest private sector lender over the last two years. The RBI's order came less than two weeks after the last instance of service outage across its digital banking channels, including internet and mobile banking and other payments. The outage on 21 November had severely inconvenienced customers.

Top court pulls up authorities for not ensuring compliance of Covid guidelines

NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

People are violating with impunity the Covid-19 guidelines on wearing of face masks at public places and are not adhering to social distancing norms, the Supreme Court said on Thursday while pulling up the authorities for not ensuring strict compliance of these measures to contain the coronavirus.

The apex court questioned the authorities over large gatherings including political and social during the pandemic time and said the Centre and states should give suggestions so that appropriate guidelines could be implemented and also for ensuring its compliance.

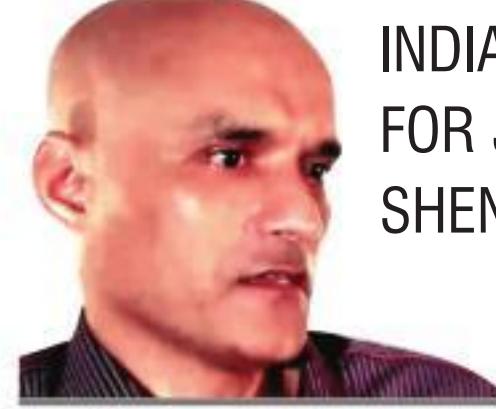
You give suggestions on what is needed to be done for implementation of these guidelines on face masks and gatherings. People are violating them with impunity, a bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said.

The bench made the remarks while hearing a matter in which the apex court had taken cognisance on the issue of proper treatment of Covid patients and dignified handling of dead bodies.

SC stays Gujarat HC order: The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed the Gujarat High Court direction to send people caught without wearing masks to do community service at the Covid-19 patient care facilities. A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan took note of the appeal of the state government against the court's order alleging that the directions were judicially unmanageable. PTI

The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



INDIA SLAMS PAK
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P5

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P7

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SHORTEST FORMAT
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P12

Govt-farmers talks deadlocked

Government assures representatives all their valid concerns would be discussed ■ Next meeting on Saturday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

Amarinder
meets Shah,
calls for
early solution

CHANDIGARH, 3 DECEMBER

Talks between three Union ministers and a representative group of thousands of agitating farmers failed to yield any resolution on Thursday, as the union leaders stuck to their demand for the repeal of new farm laws and even refused the lunch, tea and water offered to them during almost eight-hour-long hectic parleys.

On its part, the government assured the group of nearly 40 farmer leaders that all their valid concerns would be discussed and considered with an open mind, but the other side flagged several loopholes in the laws, which they said were passed hastily on September.

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who led the government side at the fourth round of talks at Vigyan Bhawan, later told reporters that the next meeting will take place on Saturday at 2 p.m.

He also said there is "no ego involved" and the government has agreed to "discuss and consider with an open mind open" all major points of concerns among the farmers about the three new laws, including on strengthening of the APMC (Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee) mandi system, tax parity with proposed private mandis and freedom for farmers to approach higher courts for any resolution.

The government will also be open to looking into the farmers' concerns related to an ordinance on stubble burning and an electricity-related law, Tomar said. A government source

Reiterating Punjab's position of seeking early resolution of the deadlock over the new farm laws, Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh today urged the Centre to rethink its stand on the legislations while appealing to the farmers to find an early solution to the problem that was impacting the state's economy and also posed a serious danger to national security.

Another farmer leader Kulwant Singh Sandhu said the government made many proposals including on MSP and procurement system, which would be discussed among the farmer organisations on Friday, before the next meeting with the government on Saturday.

AIKSCC General Secretary Hannan Mollah said the main demand of the unions remains the repeal of the three Acts and the government also listened to the 8-10 specific deficiencies pointed out by the farmer leaders.

"We do not want any amendment. We want the Acts to be repealed," he said.

Mollah said all farmer organisations would meet on Friday at 11 a.m. to take a collective call for the next round of talks with the government.

The government gave a detailed presentation on the three laws and asserted its intent towards the welfare of the farmers. However, the union leaders rejected the government's position.

The 40 farmer leaders present at the meeting refused the lunch offered by the government and preferred to eat the food ferried in a van from the Singhu border, where thousands of their colleagues are sitting in protest.

said the meeting would resume on Saturday as no final outcome could be reached due to paucity of time. Union leaders, who came out of the meeting venue shouting slogans, said the talks remained deadlocked and some of them threatened to boycott any further meetings if no solution was found at Thursday's meeting.

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It is time accountability is fixed and exemplary punishment for negligence be given to those who failed to maintain this crucial bridge.

BJP NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA

AAP govt has failed to combat Covid: Cong

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

Delhi Congress leaders and workers on Thursday, during protests across the city, alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government "failed" to make arrangements to fight COVID-19 and demanded the resignation of Health Minister Satyendar Jain.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal should remove Jain, city Congress president Anil Chaudhary said while citing that the national capital has recorded over 9,000 deaths due

to the novel coronavirus.

No immediate reaction was available from the ruling AAP in Delhi.

As per official figures, Delhi has so far recorded over 5.7 lakh COVID-19 cases and 9,342 deaths. Over 5.38 lakh patients recovered from the disease.

Chaudhary said that protests were held at nearly 75 places across the city against the Kejriwal government.

The AAP government has "failed" to make arrangements to fight COVID-19, he

said.

Jain on Wednesday had said that COVID-19 severity is coming down in Delhi and positivity rate declined to five per cent.

The minister had last Monday attributed the high COVID-19 death rate in the city to the pollution caused by stubble-burning and expected a downward trend in it in the next two-three weeks.

He had said that pollution caused problems in breathing and COVID-19 patients inhaled the smoke, which aggravated the seriousness.

Corona vaccine coming soon but students' loss can't be compensated: Sisodia

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

The COVID-19 pandemic will be a thing of the past when the vaccine becomes a reality, but the loss of education suffered by students cannot be compensated, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Thursday.

Sisodia, who is also Delhi's education minister, said while efforts were being made to provide online education as schools remain closed, providing access to these classes to students who lack internet facilities or devices continues to be a challenge.

Sisodia, who is also Delhi's education minister, said while efforts were being made to provide online education as schools remain closed, providing access to these classes to students who lack internet facilities or devices continues to be a challenge.

"Soon, the corona vaccine will be released around the world, and this pandemic would be a matter of history. But the loss of education that our students are facing today cannot be compensated by any vaccine. To minimise this loss,

a challenge to the students who lack access to the internet or devices to study," he added.

Sisodia said that due to a slowdown of economic activities, the revenue of the Delhi government has significantly reduced.

"This is why we urged companies to help the students under their CSR initiatives. We are happy that Tata Power-DDL has given 1,059 tablets, BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) 543 and BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) 300 tablets to the schools," he said.

Schools across the country were closed in March to contain the spread of COVID-19 and partially reopened in some states from October 15. However, a few states decided to keep them closed in view of a spike in infections. The teaching learning activities have moved online during the period.

Capital reports 3,734 Covid cases from over 75K tests

Delhi logs a reduction in positivity rate and a rise in number of containment zones in the last one week

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

The national capital today recorded 3,734 fresh coronavirus infections (Covid-19) detected from 75,230 tests, which pushed the city's Covid caseload to 5,82,058, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

More than 70,000 tests were thus conducted for the second consecutive day.

Today's figure of 75,230 tests included 33,298 RT-PCR tests, the health bulletin said.

The positivity rate dipped to 4.96 per cent from yesterday's 5 per cent.

Delhi recorded 82 fresh Covid fatalities, which pushed its toll to 9,424 so far.

The Covid patients who recovered during the past 24 hours numbered 4,834, which raised the cumulative count of such recoveries in the city to 5,43,514. The recovery rate rose to 93.37 per cent.

There were 17,790 coronavirus patients who were getting treatment under home isolation while 7,596 patients remained hospitalised. In all, the city had 29,120 active cases now.

The number of containment zones in Delhi was currently 5,759, the bulletin added.

Of the total 18,719 hospital beds meant for Covid patients in the national capital, 11,734 were vacant. The dedicated



Covid care centres had 6,962 vacant beds.

According to official data. In this duration, nearly 100 containment zones have been added each day, rising to 5,759 today.

Delhi yesterday recorded 3,944 Covid cases and 82 deaths. These cases were detected from a record 78,949 tests—the highest single-day figure in the city so far—including 36,370 RT-PCR tests, while the positivity rate dropped to 5 per cent.

The positivity rate has been steadily dropping since November 26 till date, except on November 29 when it marginally rose to 7.64 per cent as compared to 7.24 per cent on November 28, as per the official figures released by the Delhi health department.

The positivity rate was 8.65 per cent on November 26 when 5,475 fresh cases were recorded, and 8.51 per cent on November 27 when

5,482 cases were reported.

On November 30, the rate again dropped to 7.35 per cent, down to 6.85 per cent on December 1 and 5 per cent on December 2, as per the data.

Jain yesterday said the Covid positivity rate in the national capital was falling rapidly and it should drop below 5 per cent level in the next few days.

However, the number of containment zones has risen in the last one week from 5,156 on November 26 to 5,772 yesterday.

The count of zones on intervening days were 5,229 (November 27), 5,331 (November 28), 5,441 (November 29), 5,552 (November 30) and 5,669 (December 1), according to official data.

When asked about the rise in count of containment zones, Jain said that as per the government policy, any place where three or more cases are reported are converted into a containment zone.

"So, this is our effort to contain the spread of the virus and so the numbers are increasing, and thus not a matter of concern," he said, adding, that the rapidly falling positivity rate is a "satisfactory" trend.

The positivity rate was 15.26 per cent on November 7. There has been a reduction of nearly 55 per cent since early November, Jain had said last Tuesday.

Classified

TENDER

OFFICE OF BOARD OF ADMINISTRATORS OF TAHERPUR NOTIFIED AREA AUTHORITY TAHERPUR, NADIA

E-Tender Notice

WBMLD/ULB/TNAA/NIT-026/2020-21

Ref. Memo No.-277/2020-21/TNAA, Dt: 01-12-2020 Sealed tenders are invited by the Chairman, Taherpur Notified Area Authority, P.O: Taherpur, Dist.: Nadia for Construction of Bituminous Road at Road No.-17 under Taherpur Notified Area Authority under Pathashree Scheme of Estimated Amount of Rs. 29,35,695 from experienced or working contractor. Proof to be submitted along with the application.

Earnest Money @ 2.0 % of Estimated Amount.

Tender will be published: 07-12-2020.

Last date of submission: 07-01-2021 at 15:00 hrs.

For more detail information please go to e-tendering portal: www.wbtenders.gov.in

Sd/-
Chairman
Board of Administrators
Taherpur Notified Area Authority
Taherpur, Nadia

AUCTION against Reference No. NJ.A. No. 01 / Supdt./ NS/ / Kalvan of 2020-21 S.R. No. 01 / Supdt./ NS-Sheet No. 03 Dated: 30.11.2020 is being invited by the Supdt. Netaji Subhas Sanatorium, Kalyani, Nadia from the experienced contractors having credential of similar nature of Govt. notification as per the last date of receiving application: 09.12.2020 up to 1.00 p.m. and last date of receipt of on 09.12.2020 from 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. & open at 2.00 p.m. and other details of works may be had from this office in any working day in between 11.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. Notice inviting auction details also will be available from departmental website: www.Suptd.NS.in/ Auction & etender.wb.nic.in

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF SH. AKASH JAIN Administrative Civil Judge-Cum-Commercial Civil Judge-cum-Additional Rent Controller (West), Court Room No. 112, 1st Floor Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi Petition No. SC-101/2020 To: Ms. Divya Sehgal, w/o Sh. Bhupnik Sehgal, r/o 2712 Sec. 38C, Chandigarh-160036, Haryana.

—Petitioner/s Versus State.

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925 To, All concerned.

Whereas the abovesigned petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 in respect of the debt and securities Shares of Different Companies to be standing in the name of Late Shri Divinder Kumar Vaid, deceased.

Whereas the at 10 (Ten) O'Clock in the forenoon has been fixed for 06-01-2021 hearing on the application notice

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

Delhi riots: Court dismisses bail plea of a man, says he can be seen with iron rod in video

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

A Delhi court Thursday dismissed the bail application of a man in a northeast Delhi riots case, saying he was allegedly actively involved in the rioting and can be seen in a video footage holding an iron rod in the violent crowd.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat dismissed the bail application of Rifaqat Ali in the case related to the death of one Amaan due to gunshot injuries during the riots in Jafrabad area.

police personnel stated to be injured in the entire incident is 19. Injuries to so many police personnel at the site shows the gravity of the situation and the offence committed. There is also no doubt that Amaan also died in the incident as a result of the gunshot injury.

The court said Ali had allegedly forwarded a few hate messages to other persons, but later deleted them.

It said his mobile phone was recovered, seized and sent for expert opinion as also to retrieve the deleted data.

It further said that the cap worn by him on the day of the incident has also been recovered.

As stated in the charge sheet, the total number of

is the action of other accused persons evidenced from video footage, which clearly shows violence by the unlawful assembly, the court said in its order.

The court noted that during the riots, there was gathering of unlawful assembly and consequent assault on police officials, attempt to murder, murder with weapon, disobedience to the order of public servants, criminal conspiracy besides destruction of earlier arrested accused persons.

Sharma further said that the accused's presence was also established at the spot as per his mobile phone location and the cap worn by him as seen in the video was recovered at his instance.

The public prosecutor further alleged that Ali had forwarded a few hate messages to other persons, which was incriminating in nature.

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

Delhi's air quality remains 'very poor'

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

Delhi's air quality remained very poor on Thursday, and it is likely to remain so for the next two days.

The city's air quality index (AQI) was 342 at 9 am. The 24-hour average AQI was 373 on Wednesday. It was 367 on Tuesday, 318 on Monday and 268 on Sunday.

An AQI between zero

and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

The predominant wind direction will be northerly and the maximum wind speed 6 kmph on Thursday, according to the India Meteorological Department.

The minimum temperature was 8.2 degrees Celsius on Thursday and the

maximum is expected to settle around 26 degrees Celsius, the weather department said.

The minimum temperature this season has remained 2-3 degree Celsius below normal in the absence of a cloud cover on most days, according to IMD officials.

Calm winds and low temperatures trap pollutants close to the ground, while favourable wind

speed helps in their dispersion.

The central government's Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi said air quality is likely to remain in the "very poor" category till Saturday.

There is a possibility of the air quality reaching the "severe" category between December 4 and December 7, it had said earlier.

The city's ventilation

index -- a product of mixing depth and average wind speed is likely to be 3,000 m2/s on Thursday.

Mixing depth is the vertical height in which pollutants are suspended in the air. It reduces on cold days with calm wind speed.

A ventilation index lower than 6,000 sqm/second, with the average wind speed less than 10 kmph, is unfavourable for dispersal of pollutants.



Delhi to contain spread of COVID-19 infection, as has been done in some other states.

In a status report filed in court, the Delhi government has said that on November 28 it issued an order directing that status quo be maintained with regard to permitted and

restricted activities in the city till December 31.

"Therefore, no new activity has been permitted/ allowed till December 31," said the report, filed through additional standing counsel Satyakam.

It also said that the Delhi government has issued another order on November 28 restricting 50 per cent attendance of employees (below grade-1) of non-essential services, government departments, corporations,

public sector undertakings and local bodies.

The private establishments have also been advised to stagger the office timing and also stagger the presence of staff to reduce the number of employees attending office at the same time," it further said.

The court was hearing a PIL by advocate Rakesh Malhotra seeking increase in the COVID-19 testing numbers in the national capital and getting speedy results.



We will have to wait for the vaccine (for COVID-19). There must be some long-term plan on how to survive. Need to focus on the right priorities and in inclusive growth rather than polarisation

MAMATA BANERJEE
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 04 DECEMBER 2020

03

Haryana municipal bodies polls to be held on 27 Dec

The Haryana state election commissioner says elaborate arrangements will be made to ensure that these civic polls are free and fair; their results will be declared on 30 December

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, 3 DECEMBER

The elections to the municipal bodies of Haryana will be held on 27 December and their results will be declared on 30 December.

The notification for these polls will be issued on 4 December for inviting nomination papers, while nomination papers could be filed from 11 December to 16 December, state election commissioner, Dalip Singh, said at a press conference here today.

He said the general elections for the posts of mayor and members of all the wards of the municipal corporations in Ambala, Panchkula and Sonipat and for the president and members of the municipal council, Rewari, and the municipal committee, Sampla (Rohtak), Dharuhera (Rewari) and Ukalana (Hisar) will be held.

He said the last date for withdrawal of candidature is 18 December between 11.00 a.m. and 3 p.m. The symbols will be allotted to the contesting candidates on 18 December after 3 p.m. The list of contesting candidates will be declared on 18 December.

Singh said that the elections to the above civic bodies will be held from 8 am to



State Election Commissioner, Haryana, Dr. Dalip Singh addressing a press conference regarding upcoming General Elections of Municipalities in Haryana, at Chandigarh on December 3, 2020.

5.30 pm on 27 December. Its last one hour from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm has been fixed for Covid-19 patients and those having virus symptoms to enable them to cast their votes. The re-poll, if required, will be held on 29 December.

He said the counting of votes will be done from 8 a.m.

on 30 December and the results will be declared on the same day after counting.

The state election commissioner also said that elaborately arrangements would be made for the conduct of free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections. Adequate police force would be deployed to maintain law and order at the polling stations and in sensitive and hyper sensitive areas for conducting the polls.

He said the expenditure limit of the candidates contesting the election for the post of mayor and members of municipal corporation and for the post of president and members of municipal council and committee has been revised.

As per the revision, the election expenditure limit for the mayoral post has been increased from Rs 20 lakh to Rs 22 lakh.

The election expenditure limit for member of corporation has been increased from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 5.50 lakh. The election expenditure limit for a member of municipal councils has been increased from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 3.30 lakh. And this limit for a member of municipal committees has been increased from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 2.25 lakh.

Singh said the election expenditure limit for the position of the president of municipal council and committees has been fixed at Rs 15 lakh and Rs 10 lakh respectively.

HP has taken tough decisions to curb Covid spread: CM



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh chief minister, Jai Ram Thakur on Thursday directed the employees of CM Helpline-1100 to make phone calls to Covid-19 positive patients to boost their morale to fight the virus and also to ensure their wellbeing.

A state government spokesperson said the government was accorded top priority to ensure the wellbeing of the people of the state.

"Directions have been given by the Chief Minister to employees of Helpline to also address issues of the Covid-19 patients along with boosting morale," he added.

The spokesperson further stated that the state government had taken several effective steps to contain the spread of the virus and to ensure safety of the people of the state. "The state government has directed the senior medical officers for regular inspection of Covid wards and providing free medical treatment to corona positive patients."

Besides, the state government has decided that no political function would be held in the Himachal till 15 December," he said while urging the people to maintain social distancing and use face masks in public places.

The spokesperson added that the state government had also restricted the number of people upto 50 in social, cultural and political functions to break the cycle of this virus.

Member of Parliament, Mandi Parliamentary area, Ram Swaroop Sharma thanked the people of Seraj for electing Jai Ram Thakur, consecutively five times from the area.

FOR TWO SQUARE MEALS



A woman worker on her way to a construction site in Chandigarh on Thursday.

PARDEEP SAINI

Two men injured while trying to intervene in clash in Delhi

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

Two men were injured when they tried to rescue a person who was being beaten up by a group of people after he refused to share cigarettes, police said on Thursday.

Police have arrested three men --Deepu Pathak (20), Sachin (22) and Happy (20) -- in connection with the incident that took place in south Delhi's Neasrara area.

On Tuesday, a heated argument ensued between Masoom and the three accused after he refused to share cigarettes with them, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said.

The verbal confrontation turned into a violent clash when the accused, along with their associates, reached Masoom's house in Shiv Park with sticks and a firearm.

They started assaulting him and also opened fire. Nurul and Bhulla rushed to help Masoom but sustained head injuries during the clash, following which they were rushed to AIIMS, the DCP said.

Police registered a case and analysed the CCTV footage of the area to identify the accused.

Happy was arrested from Khanpur area and subsequently, his co-accused Deepu and Sachin were also nabbed, Thakur added.

HP govt seeks to cushion education from pandemic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh Education Minister Govind Singh Thakur on Thursday said the department has made all out effort to ensure that educational activities of students do not get affected due to Covid-19 and succeeded in the efforts.

After a review meeting of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Thakur appreciated the efforts of teachers for imparting online education to students during the pandemic and said in the year 2020-21, 28,430 students enrolled online in pre-primary class in 3840 schools of the state even during Covid-19.

"Efforts would be made to start pre-primary classes in all schools of the state and to increase the strength of students in pre-primary classes," he added.

State Education Minister also directed the officers to identify and list children of three to four years so that they could be motivated for enrollment in pre-primary classes.

He further stated that new courses would be formulated for pre-primary classes as per New Education Policy.

"The New Education Policy would be beneficial in building a better future of 21st Century students.

Further, vocational education would be provided to

students from class 9th to 12th and emphasis would be laid to impart vocational education in New Education Policy as well," he said.

He also directed the authorities to make vocational training more innovative and said the state government was focusing on empowerment and education of girls.

He added that efforts would be made to increase the number of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Schools in the state.

Secretary Education Rajeev Sharma, Project Officer Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan Virender Sharma and other senior officers were also present in the meeting.

'Eco Bridge' set up for animals, reptiles waits for 'first users'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DEHRADUN, 3 DECEMBER

A hanging rope bridge for animals and reptiles has turned into an attraction for tourists passing through the Kaladhungi-Nainital highway in Uttarakhand these days. The Uttarakhand forest department has created an 'Eco Bridge' for small animals and reptiles to cross a busy highway and avoid them getting hit by moving vehicles.

The construction work of the 90 feet long and 5 feet wide got completed last month on 28 November and camera traps were installed two days later. Even after six days, the bridge is waiting for its 'first users'.

In a move to provide free movement to the animals like monkeys and reptiles, the Ramnagar Forest Division of the Uttarakhand Forest Department has created the bridge by using bamboo, jute rope and grass on the highway.



'Eco Bridge' over Kaladhungi-Nainital highway, which has been set up to facilitate the movement of animals and reptiles.

SNS

Chander Shekhar Joshi, divisional forest officer of Ramnagar division, says, "The Eco Bridge was created with a budget of Rs two lakh and it also aims at public awareness about smaller animals and reptiles. The forest department staff are presently working to create micro climate on the bridge."

Though animals and reptiles are presently not moving on the bridge, the tourists are keen. This keeps the forest staff on their toes. The

tourists stop near the location and take their selfie with the unique bridge. Many even term it flyover for wild animals. Some even want to walk on the bridge.

Range officer Anil Gwasikoti says, "We are using wood, grass, creepers to create a natural environment on the bridge." The forest department is using the bridge as a tool to study animal/reptile behavior and also their likes/dislikes to make it usable.

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B.ED	100	10	8	2	0	0	0
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BA (JMC)	120	12	9	2	1	0	0

Last date of receiving applications : 10th December 2020

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Shimla int'l film festival to be held during 25-26 Dec

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, 3 DECEMBER

The sixth edition of the International Film Festival of Shimla will be held virtually during 25-26 December.

Pushp Raj Thakur, festival director said that due to the Covid-19 crisis, this time the International Film Festival of Shimla will be organized online through virtual mode.

A total of 120 films from 32 countries have been shortlisted for the film festival this year.

Films from Australia, Iran, Korea, Japan, Russian Federation, Belgium, USA, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Germany, Turkey, China, Brazil, France, Taiwan, Norway,



Chile, Italy, Denmark, Canada, Spain, Syria, France, Pakistan, Greece. Apart from Australia, Mexico, Israel and Indonesia and other countries have been shortlisted at this film festival," he added.

Push Raj further stated that this season films in Kannada, Tamil, Malayali, Marathi, Bangla, Rajasthani and Hindi languages had also been shortlisted for the film festival. The festival's virtual inauguration will be held on 25 December with screening of American director Dev Pink's Arabic film 'I'm Gonna Tell Everything'.

This film highlights the mental and social side effects on the lives of children in war-torn Syria, he said.

"Besides, there will also be screening of Australian director Sen McClachian's film 'Made Like a Gun'.

In the two-day virtual film festival, screening of documentaries, short films, feature films music video and animation films will be held under national and international categories.

Apart from these films, screening of other films will also be held through virtual medium at the Sixth International Film Festival of Shimla," he added.

It is worth mentioning here that earlier five editions of the International Film Festival of Shimla had been held at the internationally renowned Gaiety Theater, Shimla wherein film makers from all over the world had participated.

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- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing



The blatant hypocrisy of TMC and their leadership regarding farmers is nauseating to say the least

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING
ON CM MAMATA BANERJEE'S STATEMENT THAT SHE WAS CONCERNED FOR FARMERS

THUMBNAILS



AIKMS activists protest against price hike and new farm laws in Kolkata on Thursday.

SNS

Panchayat office ransacked: The local TMC party leaders and workers of Gourhati in Arambagh were infuriated to find their party office and the Gourhati No. 2 gram panchayat office, attacked and ransacked. All flexes and banners of 'Duare Sarkar', and photos of Mamata Banerjee were torn.

SNS

Hospital reopening: Rishra Seva Sadan hospital has remained closed for many years while every effort by TMC to keep the hospital functional, failed. District BJP today protested in front of the hospital demanding its prompt reopening.

SNS

Mamata's 2021 poll bonanza

CM announces tablets for students, computers for schools

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 3 DECEMBER

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today announced a slew of citizen-friendly initiatives including tabs to 9.5 lakh class XII students, a computer to each school, a decrease of Rs 300 in Covid testing cost at private laboratories and three percent dearness allowance for state government employees in January 2021.

"Students have been facing a lot of problems as schools are closed due to Covid. So we have decided to provide tabs to 9.5 lakh class XII students of government and government-sponsored schools and madrasas. Tabs will help them attend online classes with ease and facilitate preparations for their board examinations," said Miss Banerjee in Nabanna.

She asked the departments of science and technology, madrasa education and mass education to form a committee to select the schools that would receive the computers so that online classes can be conducted for classes VIII and IX students from poor families. The schools that are selected should have internet connectivity, she added.

Miss Banerjee said Covid test-

ing cost at private laboratories will be reduced to Rs 950 from Rs 1,250 to relieve financial strain of patients. Earlier, the cost was slashed to Rs 1,250 from Rs 2,500.

State government employees will receive three per cent DA from January 2021 that will incur an additional burden of Rs 220 cr on the state exchequer. "The Centre has not given us more than Rs 85,000 cr. Despite this, we regularly pay salaries and DA to our employees. Centre froze DA for two years and many states did not pay salaries of their employees," she said.

Miss Banerjee asked state government to extend solidarity with their counterparts in BSNL, BHTEL, Air India, Coal India and other central organizations who are reeling under fear of insecurity and joblessness. "You (state government employees) should stand with central government employees and take up their plight," she said.

Meanwhile, Miss Banerjee named Partha Chatterjee as chairman of TMC employees union, which was held by rebel party leader Suvendu Adhikari till now.

Earlier, while addressing a business summit on virtual mode, she announced com-

missioning of the 2nd phase of Silicon Valley IT Hub and an additional Rs 500 cr investment from Wipro as part of its expansion plan.

"Initially 100 acres were given at Silicon Valley IT hub in Rajarhat and the space was occupied by IT companies within a few days. Thus another 100 acres was given for expansion. Many IT companies have expressed their eagerness to set up units at the Silicon Valley," she said while addressing the inaugural session of a business conclave in the city in virtual mode.

Miss Banerjee said Wipro has assured an additional Rs 500 cr investment for expansion. Currently, the company employs 9,000 employees and will take it to 20,000. The state has 1,500 IT companies and 2.10 lakh IT professionals in the last eight years, said Miss Banerjee.

According to her, TCS, which currently employs 44,000 IT professionals in Bengal is set to increase its workforce to 61,000, which will be more than that of Bengaluru. Cognizant, with 16,000 employees, is also heading towards an expansion of their workforce, she said.

Web portal 'Karmabhoomi' has offered placements to 8,000 jobseekers in the last six months.

2 yrs after Majerhat tragedy, CM opens new-look 'Jai Hind' bridge

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 3 DECEMBER

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today inaugurated the newly constructed Majerhat Bridge, which had collapsed on 4 April 2018, while directing the Centre to return the supervision fees it had taken unnecessarily during construction and blamed Railways for delaying the project by nine months.

Miss Banerjee also announced three new flyovers in the city-Ganesh Chandra Avenue-New Market, Taratala-Tollygunge-Anwar Shah Road-Jadavpur Phari and Park Circus-Balligunge Phari.

Renaming the Majerhat Bridge as 'Jai Hind Bridge' as a mark of honour to Netaji, Miss Banerjee said the newly constructed bridge is much better than the old one.

"This bridge has been designed as the Second Hooghly Bridge and is four-laned while the old one was two-laned. The load carrying capacity of the old bridge was 155MT but now it is 385MT," she said.

Questioning the Centre as to why fees were charged while constructing the bridge, Miss Banerjee argued that usually bridges are built by the Railways and the road beneath by PWD. "We paid Rs 34 crore to the Railways. It is unjustified for the Centre to take fees for giving permission. Rs 55 crore was taken



The newly built Jai Hind bridge in Kolkata on Thursday. SNS

for dismantling bridge and KoPT took 77 lakh. It seems as if only our vehicles will ply on this bridge," she said.

"Are you not ashamed of not giving a single penny and in return taking money from us? My question is under whose direction was the fees taken? If you can then please return the money as it is your duty," she said adding that the money could have been spent on constructing many schools and roads.

State government spent Rs 311.76 cr for constructing the bridge but the manner in which photographs were

clicked appeared as if all the work was done from Delhi, she added.

Miss Banerjee blamed the Railways for the delay though she did not hold the employees at fault but accused the leaders who gave directions from Delhi. "Three months were lost due to the Covid pandemic and prior to that the project was delayed by nine months by the Railways. I wouldn't blame the employees but it is the leaders from Delhi who are at fault," she added.

Refuting the allegations, ER said that the charges were taken as per rules. "Railways



Chief minister Mamata Banerjee during the inauguration of the Jai Hind Bridge in Kolkata on Thursday. SNS

refutes all the charges as appearing in the media," said the CPPO of ER, Kamal Deo Das. "All the charges have been taken from the state PWD as per the codal provision of the Railways and according to the rules and regulations. Also, there has been no delay on the part of Railways. We are happy that the bridge has been rebuilt and opened for the use of the people in joint efforts of the state government and the Railways."

She said that bikers without helmets would not be allowed on Majerhat Flyover and said that helmets would be given free of cost from the local police station in the next three days. "We are not like some states that charge Rs 2000 for not wearing masks. Instead we request people to wear masks for their own safety," she said.

TENDER

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer, B&R Division, HPPWD Nahan, District Sirmour, H.P. on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the tender rates/bids in electronic tendering system from the eligible class of Contractors registered with HPPWD for the works detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)
1.	Construction of Veterinary Hospital Building at Burma Ppara, District. Sirmour (HP) (Sh- C/o Building Portion and Providing Water Supply and Sanitary Installation)	31,85,000/- only	55,500/- only
2.	Construction of Veterinary Hospital Building at Kala Ambi, District. Sirmour (HP) (Sh- C/o Building Portion and Providing Water Supply and Sanitary Installation)	30,75,000/- only	54,000/- only
3.	Construction of Ayurvedic Health Centre Building at Katali, Tehsil Nahan District Sirmour (HP). (Sh- C/o Building Portion and Providing Water Supply and Sanitary Installation)	29,14,000/- only	52,500/- only
4.	Improvement of Junctions on Nahan Dadam Haripurhar Amb Suketi Road (MDR-01) at RD.9/0, 12/900, 34/015 and Trilokpur Kalpa Amb Suketi Road (MDR-04) at RD.1/04/00	8,15,000/- only	16,500/- only

Starting Date for Downloading Bid:- 14.12.2020

Deadline for Submission of Bid:- 28.12.2020 up to 10:00 AM

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in.

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On behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh

I am Bengal's son, will continue to serve the people : Suvendu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TAMLUK (WB), 3 DECEMBER

Disgruntled TMC leader Suvendu Adhikari Thursday said he will continue to serve the people of the state as a 'son of Bengal and India'.

His comment came amidst speculations over his next political move following the impasse in the dialogue

between him and the party, which had claimed that differences with him had been sorted out.

Adhikari, who resigned from the Mamata Banerjee cabinet last week, was seen on Thursday holding a rally here without banners or flags of the party.

The rally was held to mark the birth anniversary of freedom fighter Khudiram Bose in Tamuk sub-division of East Midnapore district. His supporters were seen carrying the national flag during the programme.

"The Constitution of our country speaks of government by the people, of the people and for the people. I am a son of Bengal and a son of India and will continue to serve the people of my state in that capacity," Adhikari told reporters when asked about his present political stand.

The rally was held to mark the birth anniversary of freedom fighter Khudiram Bose in Tamuk sub-division of East Midnapore district. His supporters were seen carrying the national flag during the programme.

Raja flayed Palaniswami, asking him to show any DMK leader who has been convicted for graft and said he was ready for public debate on the issue with the chief minister.

Speaking to reporters here, Palaniswami also defended the Centre's contentious recent farm laws, against which farmers have been staging a massive protest near Delhi.

Refuting Stalin's allegations of corruption and scam, especially in government tenders, Palaniswami said that due processes were being followed

TN CM slams DMK, dubs Stalin a 'statement hero'

Refutes DMK chief's repeated allegations of corruption & scam against AIADMK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SALEM (TN), 3 DECEMBER

Chief minister K Palaniswami on Thursday attacked the DMK and its leader MK Stalin, terming him a 'statement hero', over repeated allegations of corruption against the ruling dispensation, seeking to remind it of the "very big" 2G spectrum allocation scam.

DMK MPs Kanimozhi and A Raja, also former telecom minister, were earlier accused in the scam but acquitted by a special court. The CBI has since appealed against the lower court verdict in the Delhi High Court.

Raja flayed Palaniswami, asking him to show any DMK leader who has been convicted for graft and said he was ready for public debate on the issue with the chief minister.

Speaking to reporters here, Palaniswami also defended the Centre's contentious recent farm laws, against which farmers have been staging a massive protest near Delhi.

Refuting Stalin's allegations of corruption and scam, especially in government tenders, Palaniswami said that due processes were being followed

and asked them to take the facts to people.

Training his guns against Stalin, he lampooned him for "issuing statements daily sitting inside a room" and dubbed him as a "Statement Hero."

"He is desperate that he could not capture power and this (allegations by Stalin) is a result of that," the AIADMK co-coordinator said. He said the erstwhile DMK government "is the only one in the country to be dismissed for corruption" and, therefore, Stalin had no right to talk about graft.

Palaniswami slammed the DMK for being a "dynamic" party and said Union home minister Amit Shah had also attacked it on the subject recently in Chennai, saying there would be no place for such politics in Tamil Nadu.

On the protest by farmers against Centre's new farm laws, Palaniswami iterated it did not affect the ryots and said it protected them from price fluctuation, among others.

Farmers could now sell their produce anywhere in the country, he added.

The chief minister quipped the BJP workers should be highlighting all these aspects

and asked them to take the facts to people.

He also said he has not received any negative feedback from farmer unions in Tamil Nadu about the legislations.

Responding to Palaniswami's tirade against his party and himself, Raja said no DMK leader has been convicted of corruption, since the days of the late Indira Gandhi or MG Ramachandran, even in "politically influenced" cases. "The statement made by the chief minister does not suit his office and is not in good taste," he told reporters in Chennai. Pointing out that he was picked by jailed former AIADMK leader VK Sasikala as CM prior to her incarceration in 2017, Raja alleged Palaniswami came to the post by "accident."

"I am prepared for a debate tomorrow or day after with him on 2G (case) if he can show if any DMK leader has been convicted for graft allegations, including in 2G," Raja said.

In an apparent reference to the conviction of former chief minister J Jayalalithaa in a disproportionate assets case, he said the AIADMK's corruption had been proved."

Andhra govt declines to stay local body elections

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 3 DECEMBER

The Andhra Pradesh government has declined to issue a stay on local body elections as pleaded by the state government.

The state government had moved court after State Election Commission N Ramesh began preparations for local body elections in February.

It has argued that the SEC had acted unilaterally by announcing the elections without consulting the state government contrary to the direction of the Supreme Court.

The SEC's counsel pointed out that the commission has reached out to the government at least thrice. Chief secretary Neelam Sawhaney had written to the commissioner saying the state government was not ready for polls in view of the pandemic.

The next hearing has been fixed on 4 January. The PIL has been filed by a social activist.

the SEC after the latter postponed the local body elections slated for 22 March this year just prior to the lockdown due to the pandemic.

An angry chief minister removed him from the post by shortening his tenure and changing the rules of recruitment forcing Ramesh to move court. The state government lost in the High Court and later moved the Supreme Court and was forced to reinstate him though the commission and the state government are still at loggerheads over conducting the elections.

Meanwhile, in Telangana the High Court has warned the state government that it would summon the chief secretary to appear in the court unless it appoints the chairperson to State Women's Commission by the end of this year.

The next hearing has been fixed on 4 January. The PIL has been filed by a social activist.

BJP trying to malign Gupkar alliance: Omar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 3 DECEMBER

National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah on Thursday said Farooq Abdullah-led PAGD is upbeat with the unprecedented support it is receiving from people across Jammu and Kashmir and that there is no question of double speak about supporting the best candidate because the best candidate for J&K and to fight to restore what we have lost are the PAGD candidates.

He made these comments while chairing a meet of central zone functionaries of the NC in Srinagar. The issues concerning the party were discussed in the meeting, besides that predicaments faced by the people on various accounts were also discussed in the meeting. The participants gave their estimation of the prevailing political situation in their respective areas.

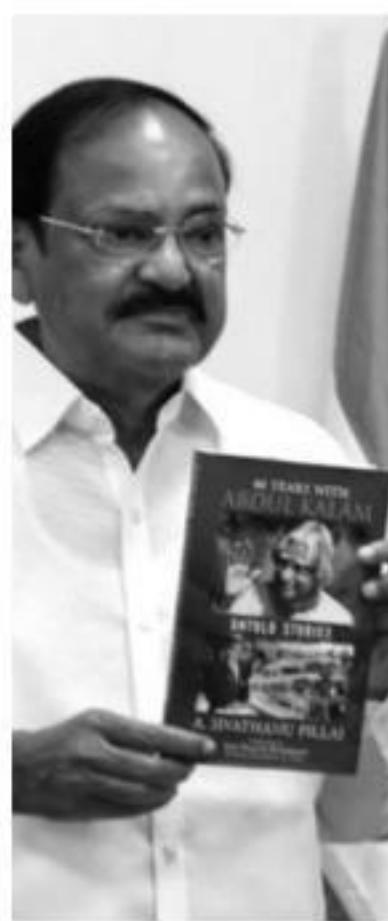
He said: "We are doing politics in extraordinary times, never in history post 1996, has the government of India been so disinclined towards contesting candidates. Such



Returning Padma Vibhushan now was an afterthought aimed at salvaging the sinking political fortunes of SAD due to supporting these laws initially....

SHIROMANI AKALI DAL'S PATRON PARKASH SINGH BADAL'S DECISION TO RETURN HIS AWARD OVER FARM ISSUES

THUMBNAILS



Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu at the virtual release of '40 Years with Abdul Kalam - Untold Stories', a book authored by the late President's close associate Dr Sivathanu Pillai.

Arnab case: Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami on Thursday filed an urgent application before the Bombay High Court, seeking a stay to the filing of chargesheet and further proceedings in the 2018 Arvay Naik abetment to suicide case.

Maha winter session: The winter session of the Maharashtra legislature will be held for two days only on December 14 and 15 in Mumbai instead of Nagpur due to pandemic, an official said on Thursday. As per the practice, session lasts for at least two weeks.

Rare surgery at HSGH saves 22-yr-old mother

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 3 DECEMBER

A team of doctors from gynaecology and surgery

Capt seeks resolution of farm stir

CM appeals to farmers to resolve crisis saying agitation is affecting Punjab economy; expresses grief at the death of two farmers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 3 DECEMBER

Reiterating Punjab's position seeking early resolution of the farm laws' deadlock, chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Thursday urged the Centre to rethink its stand on the legislations while appealing to the farmers to find an early solution to the problem that was adversely impacting the state's economy and also posed a serious danger to national security.

The problem needs to be solved quickly, the CM stressed during a crucial meeting here with Union home minister Amit Shah, whom he urged to ensure that the Centre government addresses the concerns of the farmers.

The CM said after his meeting with Shah that while he and his government were not involved in mediation in any way and the matter had to be resolved between the Centre and the farmers, an early resolution was vital in the interest of both Punjab and the country.

Stressing the need to protect minimum support price (MSP) and continue with the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) based Mandi system, the CM urged Shah to listen to the farmers with an open mind to resolve the standoff quickly so that farmers from Punjab and other states, including a large number of women, can return to their homes.

A solution has to be found at the earliest, he said, adding that he had come to meet the Union home minister to reit-



A farmer walks past a poster of 'Ravana', with the pictures of PM Narendra Modi, home minister Amit Shah, agriculture and farmers' welfare minister Narendra Singh Tomar and Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar featuring in place of the ten heads of Ravana, at Delhi-Haryana's Singhu Border.

erate Punjab's stand on the imbroglio between the farmers and the central government, as well as the need to secure the future of the farming community and agriculture. Meanwhile, CM expressed grief at the death of two farmers, Gurjant Singh and Gurbachan Singh, while participating in the ongoing protests against the farm laws. The CM has announced financial assistance of Rs Five lakh each to the families of the farmers.

Extending his condolences to the bereaved families of the deceased farmers, he prayed to the Almighty to give them courage to bear the irreparable loss in this hour of grief and grant eternal peace to departed souls.

A farmer Gurjant Singh, from Mansa district, died in Delhi during agitation, while Gurbachan Singh (80), from Moga district, died due to massive heart attack on Wednesday.

Punjab brothers doing 'sewa' by fixing tractors: From fixing cars and tractors free of

cost to serving sugarcane juice to doctors attending protesters, Rantir Singh, a mechanic from Punjab, has taken up many roles to ensure farmers camping at Delhi's Singhu Border for the last seven days can continue with their protest against the Centres farm laws.

"My brother, Jaswant Singh, is camping at the Tikri border and doing the same. He too is a mechanic," says Rantir, from Barnala district.

The duo are part of the thousands who have gathered at the two borders to protest against the new farm laws, which many farmers say will pave way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporates. "It is 'sewa' (service) and we don't charge for this," said 40-year-old Rantir who is at Singhu border since Friday. Rantir said he has travelled all the way from his village where he has a garage. "I have already fixed 30 to 35 tractors of the farmers here at Singhu border. This is 'sewa' for which, we do not charge," Rantir said.

The local police have closed the routes on NH-9 and NH-24 from Ghaziabad to Delhi. On NH-1, both sides of the route have been closed near Shani Mandir," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted. The crowd of farmers continued to swell at Ghazipur, prompting the police to close the Delhi-UP border on NH-24.

"The Ghazipur border on NH-24 is closed for traffic from Ghaziabad towards Delhi due to farmers' protests.

Key routes connecting UP-Delhi NH closed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

Police on Thursday closed routes on two national highways connecting Ghaziabad to Delhi as farmers remained adamant on their demand for scrapping of the Centre's agriculture reform laws and stayed put at the national capital's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The protesting farmers had on Wednesday threatened to block other roads of Delhi if their demands were not met.

"The local police have closed the routes on NH-9 and NH-24 from Ghaziabad to Delhi. On NH-1, both sides of the route have been closed near Shani Mandir," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted. The crowd of farmers continued to swell at Ghazipur, prompting the police to close the Delhi-UP border on NH-24.

"The Ghazipur border on NH-24 is closed for traffic from Ghaziabad towards Delhi due to farmers' protests. People are advised to avoid NH-24 for coming to Delhi and

Apsara/Bhopra/DND instead," the traffic police said. It said NH-44 is closed on both sides and asked people to take alternate routes via NH-8, Bhopra, Apsara border, and Periph-

eral expressway. At the Chilla border, one carriageway from Delhi to Noida has been opened for traffic. However, the other carriageway from Noida to Delhi is still closed.

People commuting from Noida to Delhi are advised to avoid Noida link road, the traffic police said.

The Delhi-Haryana border at Jharoda and Jhatikra remained closed for traffic movement. The Badusarai border is open only for two-wheeler traffic. However, people can travel to Haryana through Dhansa, Daurala, Kapashera, Rajkot, NH-8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera border points, the traffic police have said.

The police also kept the Haryana-Delhi border at Singhu and Tikri closed for traffic for the eighth day on the trot. "Singhu border is still closed from both sides. Lamur, Auchandi & other small borders also closed. Please take alternate routes. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK Road," the traffic police tweeted.

"Traffic is very heavy. Please avoid Outer Ring Road from Signature Bridge to Rohini & vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu, Auchandi & Lampur borders," it said.

Farmers who commit suicide are cowards: Patil

BENGALURU, 3 DECEMBER

Karnataka agriculture minister B C Patil on Thursday said the farmers who commit suicide are cowards.

"The farmers who commit suicide are cowards. Only a coward who can't take care of his wife and children commits suicide. When we have fallen (in the water), we have to swim and win," Patil said addressing farmers at Ponnampet in Kodagu district of Karnataka.

The minister was explaining to bamboo growers of Ponnampet how profitable the agriculture business is, but some cowards do not realise that and commit suicide. To buttress his point, Patil cited an example of a woman who was wearing gold bangles.

"When I enquired with her how her hands were full of gold bangles, You know what she said? She said, 'This mother earth has given me for my 35 years of life.'

"Doesn't this please you all after listening to this?" Patil said. He said when a woman who had achieved big why other farmers cannot do it.

Reacting to this, Congress Karnataka unit spokesperson VS Uppagra condemned the minister's statement, saying he has shown disrespect to the farming community.

Treat journos who died due to nCoV as 'COVID warriors': PCI to Centre

NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

The Press Council of India has urged the Centre to include journalists, who died due to Covid, in the category of 'COVID warriors' like doctors and other essential health staff, and provide them with the same benefits.

In a letter to the Centre and all state governments as well as union territories, the Press Council of India (PCI) also called for framing and implementing a group insurance scheme for journalists in line with the schemes already made by the Haryana government.

In a unanimous resolution of the PCI said: "The council resolves to recommend to all the state governments, union territories and the central government to frame and implement a group insurance scheme for the journalists in the pattern of the policy framed by the Haryana Government."

The resolution was moved by the Press Association along with some other journalist organisations.

The council also recommends to the central government to include the journalists, who died due to Covid, in the category of COVID warriors like the doctors and others and confer them with the same benefits," the PCI said.

In line with the resolution, the PCI has sent letters to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and all chief secretaries of states and union territories.

Bihar RS bypoll: Sushil Modi set for walkover

PATNA, 3 DECEMBER

Bihar's former deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi Thursday looked set to get a walkover in the bye-election for a Rajya Sabha seat with the Grand Alliance deciding against fielding its candidate and the nomination of an Independent likely to be rejected.

After having vowed not to give a walkover to Modi, the RJD-led Grand Alliance flinched from entering the contest as the odds were stacked against the Opposition coalition. Modi, who filed his nomination on Wednesday in the presence of fellow BJP leaders, those belonging to the other constituents of the ruling NDA, besides CM Nitish Kumar, appears all set to get elected unopposed on December 7, the last date for withdrawal of papers.

APPOINTMENT

Department of Botany University of Delhi

Advertisement

Applications are invited for the following post, purely on temporary basis (co-terminus with the project i.e. 10/02/2023) in a Science and Engineering Research Board funded project entitled: "Deciphering the mechanisms of reduced uptake and accumulation of Arsenic (As) in grain by arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi to develop mitigation strategies for wheat irrigated with As-contaminated ground water in India (CRG/2019/000836)".

S. No. 1. Post (numbers): Junior Research Fellow (one). **Minimum qualification/s :** • M.Sc in Botany/Microbiology/any other branch of Life Sciences (with 55% and above). • NET (JRF or LS) qualified. **Salary : Rs. 31,000/-pm + HRA (24%)**

- Candidates need to apply within 21 days from the publication of this advertisement on the DU website: The Statesman newspaper.
- To apply, send a complete CV with self-attested copies of relevant documents by e-mail to Kapoor, rupam@yahoo.com OR by post to Prof. Rupam Kapoor, Department of Botany, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007. Clearly add "Application for the post of JRF in the subject line (for e-mail applications).
- Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview.
- No TA/DA will be paid for attending the interview.

Massive crackdown on PFI, ED raids 26 locations

SNS/PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

The PFI, formed in 2006 in Kerala and headquartered in Delhi, called the raids a gimmick and an attempt to divert attention from the farmers' issue.

Shaheen Bagh area in Delhi and in Kochi, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram districts of Kerala under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

The central probe agency

is investigating PFI's "financial links" on alleged charges offuelling the anti-Citizenship (AMLA) amendment.

Act protests in the country, the Delhi riots that took place in February and few other instances. Official sources said the action against PFI was aimed at collecting evidence in multiple money laundering cases that have been clubbed into one as part of a "larger" probe against it.

The ED has also brought under its scanner, sources said, the activities of PFI operatives in criminal cases like the Kerala gold smuggling case, the conspiracy and attack on two police stations during the Bengaluru riots in August, suspect movement of funds in the aftermath of an alleged

gangrape and death of a Dalit woman in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district, and some other instances.

Cong, Left supporters unite sans leaders' nod

TIRTHANKAR MITRA
KOLKATA, 3 DECEMBER

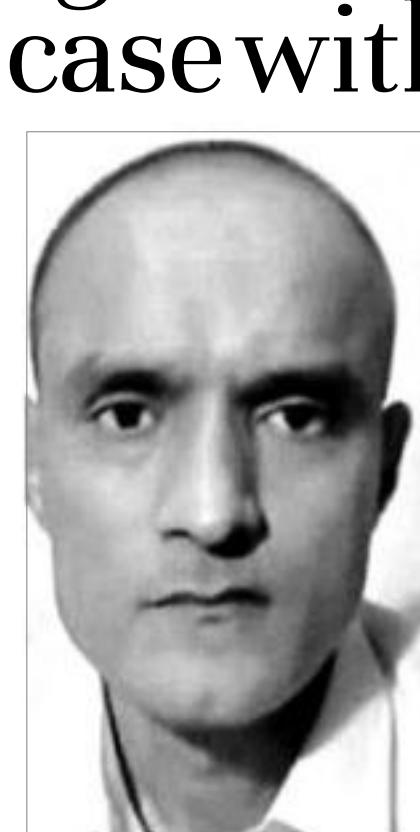
After closing ranks in a nationwide stir on 26 November, Congress and Left Front are set to hit the streets separately this month. But to the surprise of many, despite no nod from respective leaderships, the Congress and Front activists walked side by side at some spots today indicating a fraternity apparently absent in the two outfits' upper echelons.

Flags and activists of different frontal wings of the Left were discernible when Congress supporters participated during the day in a statewide agitation in protest against the rise in prices of daily commodities. It remains to be seen if Congress activists return the gesture when the peasants' wings of the Front partners will march to Raj Bhavan on 16 December in a show of solidarity to the farmers' agitation in Punjab and Haryana whose repercussions have reached the national Capital.

PCC chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury will kick off an agitation on 5 December from Purulia while on 9 December, Congress activists will again take part in a block-level stir. Though no joint agitation has been announced, given the fraternal mood of the rank and file, Front supporters are also likely to hit the streets on both occasions.

It can be said in the defence of the PCC chief that his duties as leader of Congress party in Lok Sabha require his presence away from state. But his silence when some of the Congress leaders pitched his name as the next chief minister does not send the right message.

The court then directed all the accused to be present before it on December 19. It said the trial in the case, which is being probed by the NIA, will resume from Friday. The court had framed terror charges against Purohit, Thakur and five other accused in October 2018.



to be in jail in Pakistan.

However, during proceedings of the case, Pakistan's Attorney General raised the matter pertaining

to Jadhav though the two cases were not connected in any way. Noon is reported to have made statements which are not true and are in contravention of our stand in the case. He appears to have acted under pressure from the Pakistani establishment to make such statements for which he has no authorisation," the spokesperson said.

He alleged that Noon misrepresented the position of the Indian High Commission. He was clearly told by the High Commission that he had no authority to represent the Government of India or Jadhav.

The spokesperson said Pakistan has failed to respond on the core issues concern-

ing the case including provision of all documents and an unimpeded unhindered and unconditional consular access of Jadhav which would form the basis of an effective review and reconsideration as ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Indian Mission in Islamabad has written to Noon reiterating that he has no authority to represent Jadhav and has no basis to suggest that the Indian Charge d'affaires would appear in the court.

"Our Mission in Islamabad has written to Noon reiterating that he has no authority to represent Mr. Jadhav and has no basis to suggest that the Indian Charge d'affaires would appear in the court," he added.

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of rail passengers, Railways have decided to extend the period of run of the following Festival Special Trains as per the details given below:-

Sl. Train No.	Station From	Dep. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Days of Run	Period of Extension
01077	PUNE	17:20	JAMMU TAWI	10:00	DAILY	Up till further advice
01078	JAMMU TAWI	23:40	PUNE	15:55	DAILY	Up till further advice
01115	PUNE	16:15	GORAKHPUR	00:55	THU	Upto 31.12.20
01116	GORAKHPUR	15:30	PUNE	04:05	SAT	05.12.20 to 02.

Credible path

Early two years after US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and reimposed crippling sanctions on Teheran as part of a "maximum pressure" campaign against an "arch enemy", there is hope that a credible path to repairing the damage done to stability in the region is on the horizon. President-elect Joe Biden in an interview published in The New York Times on Wednesday iterated that Washington would re-join the agreement, known officially as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), provided Iran returns to "strict compliance". The 2015 nuclear deal gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear programme. Iran would also have to address its "malign" regional activities through proxies in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen in the talks that would have to include its Arab neighbours. So, is this the first step in the coming to fruition of what Biden had promised during his campaign ~ offering Iran a "credible path back to diplomacy"? Iran's government, under pressure from an increasingly aspirational population to get the economy going, is expected to engage with the Biden Administration provided face-savers are in place given it also has to deal with the theocracy's conservative clergy which has already been warning against yielding to what it characterises as the "illusion of change by the Great Satan".

Of crucial significance, therefore, will be the role of France, Germany and the UK. The E3, as they are known, have been urged by Europe's leading diplomats to move quickly and set out a roadmap for Iran and the incoming Biden Administration to get back into compliance with the JCPOA. In a statement issued earlier this week, former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt and former Nato secretary general Javier Solana among others have warned that unless the three countries coordinate a joint public statement setting out what both sides must do to end the impasse, there is a real risk that Biden will be sworn in as US President come January facing escalating tensions with Iran. There is certainly apprehension in world capitals that the momentum towards potential reconciliation risks being disrupted by those determined to ensure that the US and Iran cannot get back to the negotiating table. The assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh last week, allegedly by Mossad, is a case in point. The timeline is tight. The remaining signatories to the JCPOA ~ France, Germany, UK, Russia, Iran and China ~ will meet in Vienna on 16 December to discuss how to keep the deal alive so signalling intent before that date is vital. India has a limited role to play but it is in its economic-strategic interest to ensure both its allies, USA and Iran, are not daggers drawn. A seat at the global high table is still a far cry for New Delhi despite the hyperbole routinely dished out by the political establishment for the domestic audience. But perhaps it can leverage its closeness to Tel Aviv and Teheran to help smoothen the path.

Goliath strikes

By sentencing three pro-democracy activists to prison for their role in last year's protests in Hong Kong, the administration in Beijing has sent out a strong message that is likely to resonate around the world. The message is that measures to curb dissent that have been ruthlessly deployed in the past on Uighurs and Tibetans will now be extended to the island, unmindful of such treaty commitments as China may have and brushing aside the opprobrium that it may face. Joshua Wong, in many respects the face of the pro-democracy activists, was sentenced to thirteen-and-a-half months in jail, while the other two, Agnes Chow and Ivan Lim, received 10-and-seven-month sentences respectively. The island territory was rocked by protests for seven months from June 2019 and millions had taken to the streets in support of their demands, which included scrapping of moves to extradite residents to mainland China and greater police accountability. The three were prosecuted for leading a huge rally outside the police headquarters and pleaded guilty to charges. They were left with no option because to crack down on protests, Beijing used the world's preoccupation with the virus that had originated in China to enact a tough new security law. This law effectively changed Hong Kong's legal system, armed authorities with sweeping powers, created new offences that could lead to imprisonment, even for life, and allowed security personnel from the mainland to operate freely in the territory. Included in the new law was a sweeping provision that criminalised any contact a resident had with a foreigner that could lead to hatred of either the Chinese Communist Party or the administration in Hong Kong. Indeed, the enactment has several vague and nebulous definitions that the regime can use to achieve its ends. Effectively, therefore, Beijing used brute power to put down the activists and has achieved success in its endeavour with protests having largely died down since July.

While Beijing says order has been restored over a city that is considered a leading Asian financial centre, resentment at the approach it has adopted simmers among people. As Wong said on the eve of his sentencing, "Cages cannot lock up souls". He had said: "All these pains and sufferings would only strengthen our courage and conviction for democracy and justice." Beijing has been forced to arrest more than 10,000 activists over the past 18 months and has placed all Opposition figures in its crosshairs. But younger Hong Kong residents, especially those who are drawing on fraternal support from similar movements across Asia, may not be put down quite so easily. And with some of them prepared to accept incarceration in the cause of freedom, the battle though tilted heavily in favour of Beijing, is likely to continue.

Full Circle

A study of recent bank failures would show that bank NPAs were a consequence of the lending of funds beyond the repaying capacity of borrowers. Most of such lending was motivated; the creditworthiness of the borrower was overestimated for extraneous considerations



A raging controversy has erupted by the report of an Internal Working Group (IWG) of the Reserve Bank of India that had recommended that business houses be allowed to set up banks and the cap on promoters' quota be raised to 26 per cent from the current limit of 15 per cent. Former Governors of the RBI, Raghuram Rajan and Urjit Patel have passionately pointed out the risks of letting big business houses set up banks, while advocates of laissez faire have found merit in the suggestions of the IWG.

Should the recommendations of the IWG be accepted, banking would come full circle, from its nationalisation fifty-one years ago. Just to remember, Mrs Indira Gandhi had nationalised private sector banks in 1969, because ownership by business entities had led to banks' lending to big businesses and related parties, to the exclusion of farmers and small businessmen.

While holding no brief for nationalisation, one can see that it did achieve the twin objectives of bringing bank branches to smaller places and making credit available for agriculture and small businesses. Bank branches have increased from less than 7,000 in 1967 to more than 152,000 today, of which more than 52,000 are in rural areas.

However, it is quite another thing that the Government soon started managing banks like other Government departments. The motive behind nationalisation, too, was not above board; the Government of the day was impoverished and facing political headwinds in the wake of two wars and one drought and the underlying idea was to use the funds of cash-rich banks for the Government's own schemes and initiatives. However, with the passage of time, bank funds came to be used for loan melas and business ventures of crony capitalists.

Resultantly, fifty-one years

after nationalisation, the banking system is gasping for breath, with the RBI appointed, KV Kamath Committee, finding that 72 per cent of banking sector debt worth Rs.37.72 lakh crore was under stress. Further, according to the Kamath Committee, bank sickness was not a new development, Rs.23.71 lakh crore, or 45 per cent of banking sector debt, was already under stress before Covid-19 hit the economy.

Considering that in 2019, the

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had placed 11 of the 21 public sector banks into Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) in view of their escalating non-performing assets (NPAs) and ballooning losses, a hypothetical question arises: "Would the banks have fared better had nationalisation not taken place?" No clear answer can be given, but our experience with private banks would indicate that the result may not have been very different. We find that half of the fourteen private banks which were floated in 1993, 2003-04 and 2013-14, have faced distress, the last being Yes Bank.

All commercial banks function under the dual control of the Finance Ministry and the RBI, however, bank managements (which are appointed by RBI/Finance Ministry) have to take the blame, when things go wrong. Should a bank fail, depositors and shareholders take a hit; deposits in banks are insured only up to Rs 1 lakh by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) which means that one would get a maximum of Rs 1 lakh in case of bank failure, that too after donkey's years, even if the amount deposited was higher. Statistically, only 7.8 per cent of the total bank deposit base is covered by insurance. The investors in Tier-1 capital of Yes Bank got nothing when the bank went kaput, and under the scheme of amalgamation approved by the Government, shareholders of Laxmi Vilas Bank are to get nothing. Contrast this with the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, which guarantees bank deposits up to \$2,50,000 and makes payments to depositors of failed banks, by the next business day. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation successfully handled 165 bank failures in 2008 and 2009 alone. A study of recent bank failures would show that bank NPAs were a consequence of the lending of funds beyond the repaying capacity of borrowers. Most of such lending was motivated; the creditworthiness of the borrower was overestimated for extraneous considerations. For example, banks overvalued the pledged assets of people like Mehul Choksi and Nirav Modi and extended

credit far exceeding the borrower's net worth. Further, banks failed to monitor the utilisation of the loaned amount. Contrast this with the treatment you or me, an ordinary middle-class person, would receive if we went to the bank for a small loan. In addition to mortgaging all our assets, we would be treated like Mallyas in the making. Should we default even on one instalment, we would find the bank's strongmen at our doors.

There are no means for a depositor or retail shareholder to know the ways in which their money is being put at risk by the shenanigans of the top management. For example, PMC Bank's Annual Report dated 12 September 2019 did not give any indication that the Bank was stressed and was about to fail within the next two weeks. Rather, the latest Balance Sheet, audited by a reputed firm of chartered accountants, showed a net profit of close to Rs100 crores and Gross NPAs of only 3.76 per cent. Surprisingly, PMC's fraudulent conduct was exposed not by auditors or regulators but by some public-spirited lady employees of the bank.

Similarly, rating agencies had given IL&FS the topmost rating which was amended to unsatisfactory only after IL&FS collapsed. No one came forward to take responsibility for the sickness of the 11 Public Sector Banks which had to be put under Prompt Corrective Action. Shifting blame, the RBI hastily clarified that it did not have much control over Public Sector Banks because the chief executives of PSBs were appointed by the Finance Ministry.

In most cases, it was found that some non-performing loan accounts had brought a bank to its knees. The defalcated monies have never been recovered, despite the involvement of myriad enforcement agencies, raising doubts on the motives behind the obsessive secrecy under which banks operate. The ladies heading ICICI and Axis Bank, who at one time enjoyed iconic status, had to leave their jobs under a cloud and one of them is under investigation for doubtful dealings with a borrower. Such instances have shattered the myth that ladies and pri-

vate banks were above-board in their financial conduct and it was only the Public Sector Banks which needed to be controlled. Rather, repeated instances of massive bank frauds and bank failures have put a question mark over the capability of the Reserve Bank to oversee the working of banks. The Narasimham Committee-II (1998) Report had recommended greater autonomy to public sector banks to enable them to be run professionally. Government equity in nationalised banks was proposed to be reduced to 33 per cent and the practice of nominating MPs, politicians and bureaucrats to bank boards was proposed to be discontinued because such persons were found to be interfering in the day-to-day operations of banks, often forcing the banks to lend to undeserving persons. Even after twenty-two years, none of these crucial reforms has been implemented. All recommendations of the Banks Board Bureau, which was formed for recommending names for selection of heads of Public Sector Banks and Financial Institutions, were invariably junked.

Proceeding on the premise that there is no inherent advantage in having a large number of very large banks, why can't we have smaller banks that can be managed on commercial principles by their own directors? The directors of such banks should be finance professionals who would be well paid for their labours, and not random well-connected individuals. Smaller banks would not be able to hide their misdeeds in the plethora of figures, in the manner the bigger banks do. Each bank branch would function as a profit centre with a mandatory annual audit, with commensurate rewards to staff for good performance. In this set-up, poor performance and fraud would be quickly identified and corrected without sending the entire bank into ICU.

Moreover, to shore up confidence of the public in the banking system, instead of reviving failed banks by injecting capital from PSUs like SBI or LIC, the Government should pay back depositors fully and send the bankrupt banks to NCLT. Remembering the succinct observation of poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht: "It is easier to rob by setting up a bank than by holding up a bank clerk," perhaps, the Government can ponder on ways to improve governance of banks, before granting banking licences to more entities.



DEVEN德拉
SAKSEMA
The writer is a retired Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Govt should guarantee MSP

SIR, This refers to the report, Farmers snub Centre's offer (2 December). The central and state governments should try to identify the pulse of farmers' organisations.

The government granted the freedom to farmers to sell farm produce but has

not given the legal guarantee for getting MSP under the new agricultural law. This may force farmers to sell their produce below the prescribed MSP.

Keeping in view the delicacy of the situation, the Central Government should

agree to make legal amendments in order to provide MSP security. The farmers' organisations should give up the illegal, unethical and anti-social path of closing Delhi's borders. The print and electronic media is sympathetic to the anger of agriculturists across the country. But this movement should not deviate from its objectives.

Otherwise, the atmosphere could deteriorate across the country. The legal and fundamental rights of farmers can no longer be suppressed.

Yours, etc., Yugal Kishore Sharma, Faridabad, 2 December.

DISGRUNTLED

SIR, This refers to your interesting editorial, 'Hubris' published on 29 November. You are absolutely right in saying that Miss Mamata

Banerjee is going to be a victim of 'hubris'. In fact, she seems to be the all-in-all in her party, and does not care for other leaders' opinions. In many of her decisions, she has been found to be discriminating against some sections of society, keeping an eye on the vote bank. She hardly thinks what the repercussions of her decisions would be, because it is crystal clear that she follows appeasement policy.

There are many leaders who are disgruntled with her policies and activities. They have grievances about the functioning of the party, which remain unattended to. Consequently, infighting grows in the leadership, and it leads to resignations of some from the party, particularly before the election. Ms Banerjee is too proud to understand that the popularity she enjoys is waning.

Yours, etc., Gautam Kumar Mazumder,

GANDHIJI

SIR, Jaydev Jana mentioned many facts from the pages of history in his letter published today to support his view that Gandhiji's relationship with Subhas Bose was not as bitter as many Bengalis believe. The Statesman

But Gandhiji's role in partition was not exactly as described. There was a time when Gandhiji meant Congress and Congress meant Gandhiji. It is also true that Gandhiji told Moulana Azad, "If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it would be over my dead body." But the man who used to go on hunger strikes often did not use that weapon when Partition was announced.

Yours, etc., Manas Biswas, Rourkela, 3 December.

INTEMPERATE

SIR, Apropos your report "Suvendu can't stay as TMC protects mafia" (December 3), I think, BJP's national secretary and West Bengal observer Kailash Vijayvargiya should not be allowed to go unpunished when he says the Trinamul Congress has a nexus with coal mafia syndicates. Both Vijayvargiya and Dilip Ghosh are in the habit of using defamatory language which at times crosses the limits of decency. If the Trinamul Congress leaders are such eyesores to the BJP, why do they allow them to join their party without reservations. Their own identity shall be in crisis within no time.

Yours, etc., Arun Gupta, Kolkata, 3 December.



A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Spectres of monarchy

When the country was fighting tooth and nail against king Gyanendra's direct rule, KP Oli, then a senior leader of the erstwhile Communist Party of Nepal (UML) had said that abolishing the monarchy was as far-fetched a dream as attempting to reach America in a bullock cart. But it did not take long for Nepal to adopt republicanism. When the movement for the restructuring of Nepal into a federal republic was gaining momentum, Oli was again a naysayer. Oli's ideas proved to be against the tide once again, and the country adopted federalism.

It's strange, the game of thrones that is politics. Today, Oli is the prime minister of the country, endowed with the responsibility of strengthening federalism and safeguarding the democratic rights of the people that had long been curtailed by the monarchy, among others. And it seems that Oli, who has never really overcome his antagonism with federalism, has found his ideological allies in the apologists of the monarchy. Several rallies that seem to be supported by various little-known royalist and pro-Hindu organisations hit the streets in various parts of the country, including Dhangadhi, Nepalganj, Mahendranagar, Bardia, Birgunj, Janakpur, Nawalpur, Pokhara, Rautahat and Biratnagar.

And on Monday, the pro-royalist and pro-Hindu forces marched on Kathmandu's streets. Their demands include scrapping the federal system and making way for the return of the monarchy. It is by doing this, they say, that the country can be saved. Although a few motorcycle rallies may not bring the monarchy back, people's nostalgia for it is nevertheless possi-

THE KATHMANDU POST
bly exacerbating thanks to the inefficiency of almost all governments that followed its abolition. The recent rallies, thus, should be taken as a manifestation of the general public's frustration against the government of the day, and the endless bickering in the ruling party that has held the country hostage. In a democracy, every citizen has the right to raise their voice peacefully; every citizen's voice deserves to be heard. In that sense, each peaceful demand of citizens, notwithstanding their numbers, is legitimate. They might sound archaic as we have moved far ahead towards a democratic polity in the past decade and a half. But they are right in expressing their voices against the political mess created by democratic leaders all these years as the country gets riddled with rampant corruption, in-fighting within the ruling party, unemployment, curbing of free speech, and weak opposition, among others. Make no mistake, we packed king Gyanendra off to the hills of Nagarjun in 2008 because of the monarchy's inherent problems that were antagonistic to the idea of a democratic polity. It is due to this that today, barring a small section of apologists, people have no serious nostalgia for the monarchy to want to bring it back from the dead. But they will have no nostalgia for today's political leaders either if they continue to dupe them all the time. It is high time the leaders realised this.

IN MEMORIAM

GHOSH MURALIJIBAN — In fond memory of our father and husband of the late Usha Ghosh. He left us this day in 1979. Remembered by sons — Abhijit Ghosh-Dastidar and Arindam Ghosh-Dastidar.

SUNIL SHARAN

If you analyze Joe Biden's cabinet and White House, you will notice that he has hired a bunch of people from the Obama-Biden administration, but none who really was especially close to the former president. Biden has insisted that his administration is not going to be an Obama 3.0, and his hiring spree indicates that he is fearful that were he to induct Obama's left and right hands, his administration could very well end up as Obama 3.0.

First of all, all is not well in the kingdom of Biden and Obama. At the end of Obama's presidency, Biden, the vice-president, deserved to be nominated for president, but Obama threw his weight behind Hillary Clinton, who was once his fierce rival. It's unclear until today why Obama did what he did. The excuse trotted out then was that Biden was grieving the loss of his son, Beau and in no condition to run for president.

Biden seemed consigned to the dustbin of history until he decided to run for the presidency in the 2020 cycle. Still Obama didn't endorse Biden until after he had won the Democratic nomination. It was believed that Obama did not want to play favourites between the different Democratic presidential contenders and therefore withheld his support to Biden.

Obama has usurped Bill Clinton's popularity in the Democratic party. He and his wife, Michelle, are clearly the new shimmering stars of the party. Even in the upcoming Senate elections in Georgia, which are crucial to the Democrats gaining control of the Senate, partymen seem to want Obama to campaign there over President-elect Biden. That is an astonishing political statement.

Obama revels in the limelight and looms large over Biden. But Biden has spent 47 years in that most ruthless of power capitals of the world, Washington, D.C. Just look at his appointments. The most important one is that of the White House chief of staff. That has gone to Ron Klain, a former top aide of Biden's.

The new secretary of state will be Antony Blinken who worked for Biden's failed presidential campaign in 2008. Jake Sullivan will be one of the youngest national security advisors in history for the oldest man to assume the presidency in history. Sullivan was Biden's national security advisor when Biden was vice-president. Janet Yellen is the new treasury secretary. She was appointed chair of the federal reserve bank by Obama. The president-elect's climate envoy is

The craft of Joe Biden



John Kerry, who, even though he was secretary of state during Obama's second term, never really had the ear of his boss because Obama was reportedly the most withholding foreign policy president since Richard Nixon.

Out of Biden's loop so far are many Obama favourites. Susan Rice, a big supporter of Obama and his national security advisor, nearly made the cut to become Biden's vice-president. But now she languishes by the wayside. Another Obama favourite was Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security advisor under Obama. He too has got nothing. Eric Holder, Obama's

attorney general, has got nothing. Valerie Jarrett was a key Obama advisor. Nothing. The list goes on and on.

Biden has got his trusted men and women in all the key places. He has not even been kind to his Democratic rivals, except to Kamala Harris, who was nasty with him during the primaries, but whom he forgave to make her his vice-president. She has a fairly thin resume, being the attorney-general of California, and then just a few years in the Senate, but was not seen as beholden to Obama.

Biden's primary rivals - Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie

Sanders, Pete Buttigieg, Beto O'Rourke, Andrew Yang - have not found a place in his orbit so far. Some of them might land minor portfolios. What does his hiring tell you about Joe Biden?

It tells you that he's a crafty old fox and will run his administration with an iron hand. He has installed a climate czar, but the second most important issue during the election after the pandemic was police reform or systemic racism, call it what you will. Biden has not appointed a czar for police reform. It was one of the planks

that he was elected on but one that he now seems to be brushing under the carpet. How do you remove prejudice from the system? Lyndon B. Johnson, the former US president, did his best to do so. Lincoln did it. It can be done. It needs political will and the right people for the job.

Biden must not back away from police reform, otherwise the issue will come back to haunt him, just as it drowned Donald Trump.

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

The wrong turns Pakistan took



MAHIR ALI

For the first 23 years of its existence, Pakistan was virgin territory as far as meaningful representative rule was concerned. This depressing fact goes a long way towards explaining the popular enthusiasm in the run-up to the nation's inaugural general elections 50 years ago this month.

The sheer novelty of universal adult franchise, and the multiplicity of expectations grounded in the very idea of democracy, underlay the palpable excitement that preceded the balloting on Dec 7 and 17 for the national and provincial assemblies. The banners and bunting and street-

corner stalls are a cherished childhood memory, an early lesson in the power of possibilities and the necessity of hope.

Further lessons were to follow shortly thereafter, notably about the consequences of a dream not so much deferred as defenestrated. But it was beyond the realm of contemplation as my parents and I, stretched out on mattresses, watched the results roll in, presumably like millions of others, on the first election night.

The results may not have been entirely unpredictable, but expectations were exceeded. The Awami League's near clean sweep in East Pakistan surprised even Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, while Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

found cause for rejoicing in the fact that his Pakistan Peoples' Party not only emerged triumphant in Sindh but did even better in Punjab.

The provincial assembly elections 10 days later followed a similar pattern, with the National Awami Party thriving in NWFP (KP) and Balochistan.

But before any of the results could be translated into governance, the national representatives were expected to hammer out a new constitution in 120 days. The assembly never met. Mujib's Six Points, a constitutional platform for coexistence in a geographically unique nation, began to be viewed exclusively as a recipe for secession by the West Pakistan

establishment, including those who had initially acknowledged some of its merits.

The 1970 elections, initially scheduled for October, had been postponed after widespread floods in East Pakistan. Another disaster soon followed: a cyclone and tidal wave categorised at the time as one of the most devastating natural catastrophes in history. Stopping in Dhaka on his way back from Beijing as a personal emissary of the Nixon-Kissinger clique, Pakistan's military dictator Yahya Khan all but ignored the agony.

By the time he grasped the significance of at least pretending to empathise, his efforts were greeted with disdain. The idea of postponing the elections yet again was discussed, but the argument was trumped by fears of an uprising in the eastern wing. The resentment of Pakistan's Bengali citizens was not by any means a recent phenomenon. It had been building up for a couple of decades. It came to a head in March 1971.

Looking back, it's not hard to argue that even if the level of autonomy demanded by the Awami League, with overwhelming backing from the Bengali masses, was effectively a pathway to secession — or, perhaps more accurately, self-determination — it ought to have been acceptable to all genuine democrats. Those who saw Mujib's putative prime ministership, based on his party's clear parliamentary majority, as a threat to Punjabi hegemony were hardly in any position to decry the League's parochialism.

With a bit of compromise on both sides, at least the illusion of a

united Pakistan could have persisted. If that was not to be, surely a separation could have been arranged peacefully. The real tragedy of 1971 was that the separation entailed a grotesque bloodbath.

Nearly half a century after the birth of Bangladesh, the bloodstains remain. Yet, notwithstanding its awful consequences, it is still possible to gaze back upon the elections of 1970 — and the sometimes exhilarating months that preceded them — with a degree of nostalgia. I guess it has got something to do with lingering notions of what might have been. The idea that Pakistan could have turned into a viable, sustainable democracy still casts a certain spell.

But perhaps it's no more than an illusion. After all, look what's become of the world's largest democracy to Pakistan's east, which once played a key role in the creation of Bangladesh. In recent years it has veered sharply towards a kind of fascism without much military assistance.

Pakistan's first flawed experiment in representative rule, following the second partition, lasted little more than five years. An invaluable opportunity to recast what remained of the nation and set it on a progressive path was squandered and Bhutto's dogged determination to use the military to his own advantage fatally backfired. The nation has never completely emerged from the malign shadow of what came next.

As for the nation's first (and perhaps only free and fair) elections, all one can ultimately say is that Pakistan was never the same again. Yet the nation's trajectory could have taken a very different turn.

Dawn/ANN.

NO 28154

It is to be feared that no great result can be expected from President Wilson's acceptance of the invitation of the League of Nations to act as mediator regarding the Armenian situation — unless, indeed, it should give such an exhibition of impotence on the part of the League as may induce the Powers, for very shame's sake, to strengthen its hands. If ever there was a case in which the functions of the League should be exercised with effect it is that of Armenia. A newly created state which might be regarded as a ward of the League is in danger of being trampled underfoot. It can only escape from the Kemalists by submitting to the Bolsheviks, and if these adversaries should make up their quarrel Armenia, apparently, will be a pawn in any game they choose to play. The League has induced President Wilson to attempt the task of mediation, and the President, in spite of his illness, has responded to the call with a spirit which does him all honour. He is obliged to make it clear, however, that he can only use moral influence, because he lacks authority to employ force without the consent of Congress. It is not in the least likely, especially after the defeat of Mr. Wilson's party in the Presidential election, that Congress will give such consent. It is equally unlikely that either the Kemalists or the Bolsheviks will submit to any mediation which may curb their doings.

Delhi, Dec 3
Dr. Ziauddin, principal of the Aligarh College, has issued a complete and connected narrative of recent developments at Aligarh and the present situation. The principal proceeds: Mr. Gandhi and the Ali Brothers arrived here. On their arrival I called on Mr. Gandhi, and reminded him of his promise, made to Principal Rudra in March, at Delhi to prohibit students from taking an active part in politics. Mr. Gandhi remarked that Turkish and Punjab affairs had changed his opinion, and though academically he could not appeal to the students without reference to the principal staff or parents, he was disregarding academic considerations for higher political reasons. A meeting was held in the Students Club, at which non-cooperation leaders addressed the students. After four hours' discussion the meeting was a failure.

WEAVING INSTITUTE AT DACCA

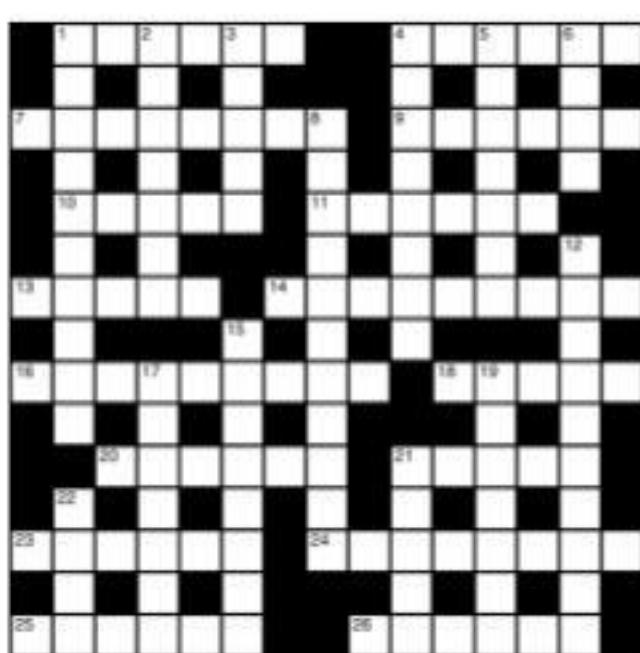
At a meeting of the Industrial Improvement Committee which consists of representatives of the District Board and the Municipality held at the District Board Office, the detailed scheme framed by the Principal of the Government Weaving Institute, Serampore, regarding the establishment of a Weaving School at Dacca was considered. The scheme has been formulated on the assumption that provision be made for the training of 20 artisan students at a time. The object of the school will be to teach the students improved methods of weaving with improved ornamental borders of dhoties and sarees which command a good market. The institution will be mainly residential, but day students may also be admitted. The course of training is to be for one year and instructions will be given through the medium of the vernacular.

BOMBAY Y.M.C.A.

Sir Arthur Yapp, General Secretary of the English National Council Y.M.C.A., delivered a lecture on Wednesday night in Bombay on "The Red Triangle in Peace and War." His Excellency, Sir George Lloyd presided, and there was a large attendance of Europeans and Indians. Hon. Sir George Carmichael, President of Bombay Branch of the Y.M.C.A., opened proceedings by appealing to the public of Bombay to respond to the joint appeal of the National Council and local Y.M.C.A. for the sum of Rs 1,56,000 requested to carry out their work. Nearly Rs 56,000 had already been collected, and only a lakh of rupees were required to be raised. Sir Arthur Yapp, addressing the meeting gave an account of the work of the National Y.M.C.A. during the war and the great social problems it was about to tackle.

MUNITIONS BOARD CASE

At Bow Street today the case in which P.H. Michaels, H.P. Blackburn and C.S. Waite are charged with conspiracy and cheating within the jurisdiction of the Government of India was again adjourned, after the collapse of Waite at the termination of his examination. Giving evidence on his own behalf, Waite said that at the time of the transactions he was away from the Office, receiving Pasteur treatment for a serious injury, and that the only reason he came to London was for the purpose of undergoing an operation. He emphatically denied the allegations against himself, and denied the receipt of any commission from Spaldings. Bail was allowed.



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS

- 1 Prompt indication of future trends in financial reporting? (6)
- 4 US writer omitting name of apostle in version of Bible (6)
- 7 Very sweet woman's engaged in applying the third degree? (8)
- 9 European country keeping parliamentarian in government (6)
- 10 Variable administrators of chess taking step back to improve? (5)
- 11 One transmits notes about currency (6)
- 13 Friend in America goes to
- 14 Bird riding big horse (9)
- 16 Book expert, one under one zodiacal sign not initially following another (9)
- 18 A weight, carrying coals to Newcastle? On the contrary (5)
- 20 Limits to growth set by one Indian leader (6)
- 21 Drink provided by drink provider runs short? It requires steps to be taken (5)
- 23 The writer's turned round story associated with university environment (6)
- 24 Recalled difficulty entering top-rated British and American city areas (8)
- 25 Appropriate picture — source of light in heavens (6)
- 26 Hot line seen in various notes (6)

DOWN

- 1 German physicist to succeed bottling hydrogen in the works (10)
- 2 "Alien to spoil it after turning up" — a Nationalist (7)
- 3 Honourably turned on by embracing ladies primarily (5)
- 4 Notice European harbour feature accommodating 100 — that's competence (8)
- 5 Place having additional numbers around after I beg (7)
- 6 Males losing head are contributors to rows (4)
- 8 Times of commemoration seen with certain parties (11)
- 12 Start at one, working to produce primer (10)
- 15 US writer, poet with change of heart, to get engrossed (8)
- 17 Pragmatic approach is adopted by field of study (7)
- 19 Corporation anger reduced after introduction of British vehicle (7)
- 21 Billion invested in basic automatic device (5)
- 22 Drink popular between bridge partners (4)

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



Efforts are underway to operationalise vital infrastructure links between India and CLMV countries

GURUPRASAD MOHAPATRA
SECRETARY, DPIT

THUMBNAILS

Setback for OVL: In a setback to ONGC Videsh Ltd, Australia's Woodside Petroleum Ltd on Thursday said it has exercised its right to match an offer by the Indian company to buy FAR Ltd's stake in the \$4.2-billion Sangomar oil project in Senegal. OVL, the overseas investment arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), had last month reached a deal to buy Australian firm FAR Ltd's 13.67 per cent stake in the Sangomar project off Senegal's shore for \$45 million.

PTI

ICICI Bank in Nepal: ICICI Bank on Thursday opened its representative office in Nepal's capital Kathmandu. The representative office will closely work with the domestic banks in Nepal to facilitate investment, trade, payments and treasury business between the two countries, ICICI Bank said in a statement. ICICI Bank is the first Indian private sector lender to foray into Nepal, it added.

PTI

Maruti-Toyota: Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Thursday said it will not get its compact SUV Vitara Brezza manufactured at Toyota Kirloskar Motor's manufacturing plant in Karnataka as was decided earlier. The country's largest car maker said it will allot some other model, in place of Vitara Brezza, to be manufactured at the Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) plant.

PTI

Sany India: Sany India, a leading manufacturer of construction equipment and heavy machinery, has rolled out its 15,000th machine from the company's India facility this month. Delivering on the increased trust of customers in the indigenous construction sector, the company has expanded its network to 36 dealers and over 150 customer touchpoints in India and South Asia, said a release.

SNS

Ford campaign: Like every year, Ford has brought back its unique sales campaign "Midnight Surprise" for consumers across the country from 4 to 6 December 2020. Offering irresistible deals and assured gifts worth up to Rs 5 lakh, the Midnight Surprise will be valid on Ford's entire product portfolio, including Ford Figo, Ford Aspire, Ford Freestyle, Ford EcoSport and Ford Endeavour, the company said.

SNS

Hype expansion: Hype Luxury Mobility, a luxury car rental company in India, has announced its expansion to four new cities - Kolkata, Cochin, Kozhikode and Indore. Consumers in these cities can now rent luxury cars by using Hype's website or mobile app, according to a Press release.

SNS

Canara ups rates: State-owned Canara Bank has raised its rates by 0.2 per cent for fixed deposits having a maturity period of at least two years.

PTI

HCL's Roshni Nadar richest woman in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 3 DECEMBER

IT major HCL Technologies' Roshni Nadar Malhotra has topped a list of the richest women in the country with a networth of Rs 54,850 crore, followed by Biocon's Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw at Rs 36,600 crore, a report said today.

A total of 31 women in the list of 100 having a networth of at least Rs 100 crore, prepared by Hurun India and Kotak Wealth, are "self-made", it said. This includes six professional managers and 25 entrepreneurs.

Shaw leads in the self-made category, followed by Radha Vembu of Zoho (Rs 11,590 crore networth) and

Services activity rises for second straight month

New work orders support business activity growth and first rise in employment in 9 months: Survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

The recovery in the Indian services sector was sustained in November as new work orders supported business activity growth and the first rise in employment in nine months, a monthly survey said today.

The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index posted above the critical 50 mark that separates growth from contraction for the second month in a row during November.

Despite falling from 54.1 in October to 53.7 in November, the latest reading was still indicative of a solid pace of expansion amid better demand conditions and a relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions.

"The Indian service sector continued to recover from the coronavirus-induced contractions recorded from March through to September. Companies enjoyed a further rise in new work intakes and responded to this by lifting

RECOVERY SUSTAINED



► The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index posted above the critical 50 mark that separates growth from contraction for the second month in a row during November.

business activity and employment," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

Services firms hired additional workers in November, ending an eight-month sequence of job shedding. That said, the rate of employment growth was marginal overall as some companies reported having sufficient

up in inflationary pressures could threaten the recovery," Lima noted.

Meanwhile, the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) began its three-day deliberation on Wednesday amid expectations of status quo on the benchmark lending rates in view of high retail inflation.

The RBI will announce its monetary policy review on 4 December.

Looking ahead, services firms were confident of a rise in business activity in the coming 12 months. The overall degree of optimism improved to a nine-month high. Positive sentiment was boosted by hopes that a vaccine for Covid-19 will be rolled out.

Meanwhile, Indian private sector activity rose for the third straight month in November, but the pace of growth softened from October's near-nine-year high.

The Composite PMI Output Index, which measures combined services and manufacturing output, was down

from 58 in October to 56.3 in November. Both goods producers and services firms registered slower increases in sales.

"Output and sales across the private sector have held up well, but there were some signs of growth losing momentum among goods producers and service providers. As has been the case in most nations worldwide, the manufacturing sector outperformed its services counterpart as the latter was hit harder by the Covid-19 pandemic," Lima said.

India's economy recovered faster than expected in the September quarter as a pick-up in manufacturing helped the gross domestic product (GDP) clock a lower contraction of 7.5 per cent and held out hopes for further improvement on consumer demand bouncing back.

The GDP had contracted by a record 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2020-21 fiscal (April 2020 to March 2021) as the coronavirus lockdown pummelled economic activity.

in the winding up process but had written to the Reserve Bank of India in this regard.

The Bench posted the matter for further hearing next week and directed that all cross appeals be placed on record.

On 24 October, Karnataka High Court had said that the decision of the Franklin Templeton Trustee Services Private Limited to wind up six schemes cannot be implemented unless the consent of the unit holders is obtained.

The six schemes are Franklin India Low Duration Fund, Franklin India Ultra Short Bond Fund, Franklin India Short Term Income Plan, Franklin India Credit Risk Fund, Franklin India Dynamic Accrual Fund and Franklin India Income Opportunities Fund.

Franklin Templeton MF closed these six debt mutual fund schemes on 23 April, citing redemption pressure and lack of liquidity in the bond market.

Till 13 November, the six schemes received total cash flows of Rs 9,682 crore from maturities, pre-payments and coupon payments since 24 April 2020.

SC tells Franklin to take investors' consent for closure of schemes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

The Supreme Court today asked Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund to initiate steps within one week for calling a meeting of unit holders to seek their consent for closure of six mutual fund schemes and said there will be no redemption of units by investors till further orders.

The top court also agreed to hear an appeal filed by Franklin Templeton against the Karnataka High Court order which stopped the fund house from winding up its debt fund schemes without prior consent of the investors.

A Bench of Justices S Abdul Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna observed that the issue is big and people wanted a refund.

It said that without prejudice to the rights of any party, trustees are allowed to call a meeting of unit holders to seek their consent for approval and in this regard steps be taken within a period of one week.

Advocate Pratap Venugopal, appearing for the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), submitted that the market regulator has no role

MDH owner Dharampal Gulati passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

India after Partition and set up his business in Delhi.

Mahashian Di Hatti (MDH) was founded by his late father Mahashay Chunni Lal Gulati.

Tributes for the entrepreneur, whose face became synonymous with his brand, poured in on social media platforms.

Saddened by the demise of "Mahashian Di Hatti"

(MDH) president Shri Dharampal Gulati ji, who was honoured with Padma Bhushan. He was a well-known personality of the Indian industry. His social service activities are also commendable. My condolences to his family and fans, President Ram Nath Kovind tweeted in Hindi.

Dharampal Gulati said he was an inspiring personality. "He dedicated his life for the society. God bless his soul," he tweeted.

"India's most inspiring entrepreneur, MDH owner Dharampal Gulati passed away this morning. I have never met such an inspiring and lively soul. May his soul rest in peace," added deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia.

In December 2018, the

RBI bars HDFC Bank from issuing new credit cards, digital launches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI/ NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

"The RBI has advised the bank to temporarily stop all launches of the digital business generating activities planned under its programme ~ Digital 2.0 (to be launched) and other proposed business generating IT applications, and sourcing of new credit card customers," the bank informed the stock exchanges in a filing.

HDFC BANK

bank's new mobile application crashed within hours of its launch in what was attributed to the inability of the servers to handle the heightened traffic. Exactly a year later, its online channels were down during the salary time. After the second incident, the RBI had said that it was looking into the glitches.

Usually, the RBI slaps monetary penalties on erring entities that come under its reg-

ulatory framework. On Thursday, HDFC Bank said the latest incident on 21 November was a result of a power failure in its primary data centre.

The RBI has advised the bank to temporarily stop all launches of the digital business generating activities planned under its programme ~ Digital 2.0 (to be launched) and other proposed business generating IT applications, and sourcing of new credit card

customers," the bank informed the stock exchanges in a filing. The central bank has also asked HDFC Bank to ensure that its board "examines the lapses and fixes accountability".

This is the first major challenge faced by its new chief executive Shashidhar Jagdisan, who took charge in late October.

The bank is the largest issuer of credit cards and had 1.49 crore customers as of September this year while on the debit cards front, it had 3.38 crore customers.

HDFC Bank official said existing users will be able to continue using the services and added that security-related updates for mobile banking apps will be the only addition allowed till the RBI order is in force.

Bank of India to acquire 49% stake each in BAIM, BATS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 DECEMBER

State-owned Bank of India today said it will acquire 49 per cent stake each in BOI Axa Investment Managers Pvt Ltd and BOI Axa Trustee Services Pvt Ltd.

Following the transaction, both the entities - BOI Axa Investment Managers Pvt Ltd (BAIM) and BOI Axa Trustee Services Pvt Ltd (BATS) - will become Bank of India's fully-owned subsidiaries.

"Bank of India has amongst other parties entered into a share purchase agreement (SPA) with AXA Investment Managers Asia Holdings Pvt Ltd (AXA IM) on 2 December 2020 whereby the bank has agreed to purchase AXA IM's entire 49 per cent in BAIM," the bank said in a regulatory filing.

Besides, it has also entered a SPA to purchase the entire 49 per cent equity shares in BATS, it added. Bank of India holds 51 per cent equity shares in each in BAIM and BATS.

"Pursuant to this transaction, Bank of India shall hold 100 per cent equity shares in BAIM and BATS. The transaction is done at arms-length basis," Bank of India said. The closure of these transactions are subject to various regulatory approvals, it added.

BAIM had a total turnover

of Rs 25.45 crore in the last fiscal year. While, BATS had a total turnover of Rs 0.12 crore. Bank of India said the strategic acquisition of 49 per cent stake of AXA IM in BAIM and BATS shall enable it to have complete control of BAIM and BATS and grow the asset management business by leveraging on the BOI brand and distribution strength.

The transaction, to be done on a cash basis, is proposed to be completed by end of December 2020, or another extended date mutually agreed between the lender and AXA IM, it said.

AXA IM is a promoter of BAIM and BATS. AXA IM is an investment arm of AXA Investment Managers - one of the world's leading asset managers, backed by the AXA Group.

NCLT gives nod to Reliance Infratel resolution plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 3 DECEMBER

Under the resolution plan approved by lenders, RCom and its subsidiary Reliance Telecom Infrastructure Ltd (RTIL) will go to UV Asset Reconstruction Company (UVARCL), while the tower unit Reliance Infratel will go to Jio for a total consideration of Rs 20,000-23,000 crore to be paid over a period of seven years.

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Resolution plan was approved by 100 per cent votes of the committee of creditors.

"Distribution of the proceeds from resolution plan is subject to the disposal of the Doha Bank Intervention Application," the source said.

Email sent to the resolution professional of Reliance Infratel did not receive any immediate reply.

RCom's overall debt is estimated to be around Rs 46,000 crore when the company had filed for bankruptcy with around 53 financial creditors

submitting their claims that included domestic banks, foreign banks, non-banking financial companies and funds.

Besides the banks, operational creditors like the tower companies, equipment vendors and the telecom department have claimed nearly Rs 30,000 crore in dues, of which over Rs 21,000 crore has been verified.

RCom was forced to shut its wireless operations late 2017, hurt by mounting debt and widening losses amid intense competition in the telecom sector after Jio's entry in September 2016. It tried to sell its wireless assets, such as spectrum and towers, to Jio, but failed due to a slew of legal cases.

This forced the telco and its units to opt for insolvency proceedings, which was admitted under the IBC in May 2019.

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"Distribution of the proceeds from resolution plan is subject to the disposal of the Doha Bank Intervention Application," the source said.

Email sent to the resolution professional of Reliance Infratel did not receive any immediate reply.

"It's a kind of choppy trading day for domestic equities.

Reliance Infratel, which has around 43,000 towers and 1,72,000 route kilometres fibre, is going through insolvency proceedings at the Mumbai Bench of NCLT.

The lenders will get around Rs 4,400 crore from Reliance Digital Platform, a group company of Reliance Jio and the successful resolution applicant," the source said.

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We can, together, help the Lebanese people move beyond the emergency phase and onto the path for longer-term recovery

ANNOUNCING THE CREATION OF A FUND HANDLED BY THE WORLD BANK TO SUPPORT LEBANON

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 04 DECEMBER 2020

09

Bangla begins Rohingya relocation

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on Thursday urged the government to cancel the relocation plan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DHAKA, 3 DECEMBER

Authorities in Bangladesh have begun relocating thousands of Rohingya refugees to an isolated island despite calls by human rights groups for a halt to the process, officials said Thursday.

The United Nations has also voiced concern that refugees be allowed to make a free and informed decision about whether to relocate to the island in the Bay of Bengal.

The island's facilities are built to accommodate 100,000 people, just a fraction of the million Rohingya Muslims who have fled waves of violent persecution in their

native Myanmar and are currently living in crowded, squalid refugee camps.

On Thursday, 11 passenger boats carrying refugees left Cox's Bazar district on the way to the island, where they are expected to arrive after an overnight stopover, a government official involved with the process said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. He said a few thousand refugees were in the first batch. Authorities in Cox's Bazar did not say how the refugees were selected for relocation.

About 700,000 Rohingya fled to the camps in Cox's Bazar after August 2017, when the military in Buddhist-majority Myanmar began a harsh



crackdown on the Muslim group following an attack by insurgents. The crackdown included rapes, killings and the torching of thousands of homes.

Foreign media have not been permitted to visit the island, called Bhashan Char, or floating island. It was once regularly submerged by monsoon rains but now has flood protection embankments, houses, hospitals and mosques built at a cost of more than USD 112 million by the Bangladesh

navy.

Located 34 kilometers from the mainland, the island surfaced only 20 years ago and was never inhabited.

Contractors say its infrastructure is like a modern township, with multifamily concrete homes, schools, playgrounds and roads. It also has solar-power facilities, a water supply system and cyclone shelters.

International aid agencies and the UN have vehemently opposed the relocation

since it was first proposed in 2015, expressing fear that a big storm could overwhelm the island and endanger thousands of lives.

The UN said in a statement Wednesday that it has not been involved in preparations for the relocation or the selection of refugees and has limited information about the overall plan.

The United Nations takes this opportunity to highlight its longstanding position that Rohingya refugees must be able to make a free and informed decision about relocating to Bhasan Char based upon relevant, accurate and updated information," it said.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on Thursday urged the government to cancel the relocation plan. The current refugee camps near the town of Cox's Bazar are overcrowded and unhygienic. Disease and organized crime are rampant. Education is limited and refugees are not allowed to work.

Still, most Rohingya are unwilling to return to Myanmar due to safety concerns. Government officials didn't have an estimate of how many refugees would be willing to relocate to the island.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has repeatedly told the UN and other international partners that her administration would consult them before making a final decision on the relocation, and that no refugees would be forced to move.

Australian leader seeks conciliation in dispute with China

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND), 3 DECEMBER



A diplomatic war of words between Australia and China over a graphic tweet seemed to finally cool on Thursday as Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison struck a much more conciliatory tone.

Morrison's change in approach came even after he was thwarted in getting his views out directly to Chinese people over the messaging app WeChat, after the Chinese company deleted his post on the grounds it could distort historical events and confuse the public.

Earlier this week, Morrison expressed indignation and anger at the tweet posted by a Chinese official that showed a fake image of a grinning Australian soldier holding a bloodied knife to a child's throat.

The post took aim at alleged unlawful killings and abuses by Australian soldiers during the conflict in Afghanistan.

Earlier this week, Morrison called the tweet truly repugnant and deeply offensive and demanded an apology from China. But China had not backed down, saying that Australia should be the one examining its actions.

On Thursday, Morrison took a much different approach, telling reporters in Canberra that his aim was for the two countries to have a happy coexistence.

"My position and my government's position is to seek constructive engagement," Morrison said.

The relationship with

Azerbaijan discloses conflict toll

BAKU (AZERBAIJAN), 3 DECEMBER

Azerbaijani authorities disclosed for the first time Thursday details of the country's military casualties in the recent fighting with Armenian forces over the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which was halted last month by a Russian-brokered truce.

Azerbaijan's Defence Ministry said that 2,783 troops were killed during the 44 days of intense clashes, and 103 of them are yet to be identified. More than 100 servicemen are considered to be unaccounted for, the ministry said, and 1,245 are currently undergoing treatment in medical facilities.

President Ilham Aliyev said earlier this week that 94 Azerbaijani civilians were also killed and 400 more have been wounded. On Thursday, he signed a decree ordering a moment of silence at 12:00 p.m. (0800 GMT) on Friday to honor the victims of the fighting.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been 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.

Heavy fighting erupted in late September, marking the biggest escalation of a long-simmering conflict between the two ex-Soviet nations. The violence was halted by a Russian-brokered peace deal.

China's population may decline as fertility rate falls below warning level

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 3 DECEMBER

China's total fertility rate has fallen below the warning line and the population growth has entered a critical turning point, Chinese Minister of Civil Affairs Li Jiheng has said amid demographers warning that the country's population will soon start to decline.

Facing a demographic crisis with a rapidly ageing population after implementing the decades-old one child policy, China permitted to have a second child since 2016.

Now the demographers call on the government to immediately lift restrictions on having babies and be more tolerant toward babies born out of wedlock, and do more to lower the costs of raising and educating children.

Li in an article said that under the influence of various factors, Chinese people are less willing to have children, the total fertility rate has fallen below the warning line, and the population development has entered a critical transition period, state-run GlobalTimes reported on Thursday.

On November 1, China started the world's biggest exercise of population count to document demographic changes in the country.

About seven million workers began a door to door survey for the seventh census in the country to account for China's population stated to be 1.37 billion in the last exercise conducted ten years ago.

The figures were expected to reveal more data related to the population which is key for

China's strategic development as the second-largest economy after the US and demographic crisis faced by it.

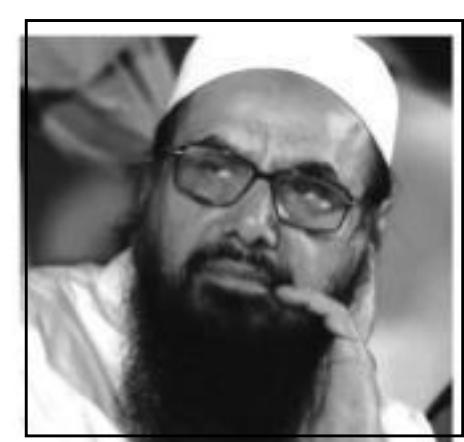
He Yafu, an independent demographer, told the newspaper that the total fertility rate (the average number of children a woman gives birth to) should remain at about 2.1 for China's population to stay stable, and a total fertility rate of 1.5 is a highly sensitive warning line, given historical and international experience.

"Once it slips below 1.5, a country falls into the trap of low fertility and is unlikely to recover," he said, noting that China's fertility rate has fallen below that.

He warned that China's total population will soon start to decline, ending the trend of economic growth.

Pak court sentences Saeed's spokesman to 15 years in jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, 3 DECEMBER



Mumbai terror attack mastermind and Jaish-e-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed's spokesperson Yahya Mujahid has been sentenced to another 15 years in jail by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court in a terror financing case.

Mujahid was last month handed down 32 years jail term by the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in two terror financing cases.

Besides Mujahid, the ATC Lahore on Wednesday also handed down 15 years imprisonment to JuD's senior leader Zafar Iqbal and six months jail to Saeed's brother-in-law Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki.

Earlier, the ATC Lahore had sentenced Iqbal for 26 years imprisonment in three such cases.

Judge Ijaz Ahmad Buttar announced the verdict under different provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997.

The three convicts were present in the court when the judge announced the verdict.

The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police had registered as many as 41 FIRs against JuD leaders, including Saeed in different cities. The trial courts have so far decided 25 cases.

The ATC has sentenced Saeed for a collective imprisonment of 21 years on terror financing charges under sections 11-N of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 in four cases so far.

Saeed-led JuD is the front organisation for the Lashkar-e-Taiba which is responsible for carrying out the 2008 Mumbai attack that killed 166 people, including six Americans.

Saeed, a UN designated ter-

rorist whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty on, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror financing cases. The 70-year-old JuD chief is lodged at Lahore's high-security Kot Lakhpat jail.

The US Department of the Treasury has designated Saeed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. He was listed under the UN Security Council Resolution 1267 in December 2008.

The recent verdicts by anti-terrorism court comes in the wake of Paris-based global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog's decision to retain Pakistan on its 'grey list' till February 2021 as Islamabad failed to fulfil the Financial Action Task Force's six key obligations, including failure to take action against two of India's most wanted terrorists - Saeed and Maulana Masood Azhar.

The FATF placed Pakistan on the 'grey list' in June 2018 and asked Islamabad to implement a plan of action to curb money laundering and terrorist financing by the end of 2019 but the deadline was extended later on due to Covid-19 pandemic. With Pakistan's continuation in the 'grey list', the country may find it difficult to get financial aid from the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the European Union.

Late ex-French ex-president Giscard helped reshape Europe

AGENCIES
PARIS, 3 DECEMBER



day after he died Wednesday of complications from COVID-19 at age 94.

France has lost a statesman, Germany a friend and all of us a great European, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in a tweet, via her spokesman.

President Emmanuel Macron praised Giscard's achievements at home and abroad of the man whose seven-year-term transformed

France. He allowed young people to vote from the age of 18, women to legally terminate unwanted pregnancies, divorce by mutual consent, got new rights for people with disabilities. But he also worked for a stronger Europe, a more united Franco-German couple, and helped stabilize international political and economic life by founding the G-7.

Prime Minister Jean Castex praised his leadership during the economic turbulence of the 1970s, during which he significantly advanced the building of Europe and the international influence of France, whose history he marked. Known affectionately in France as

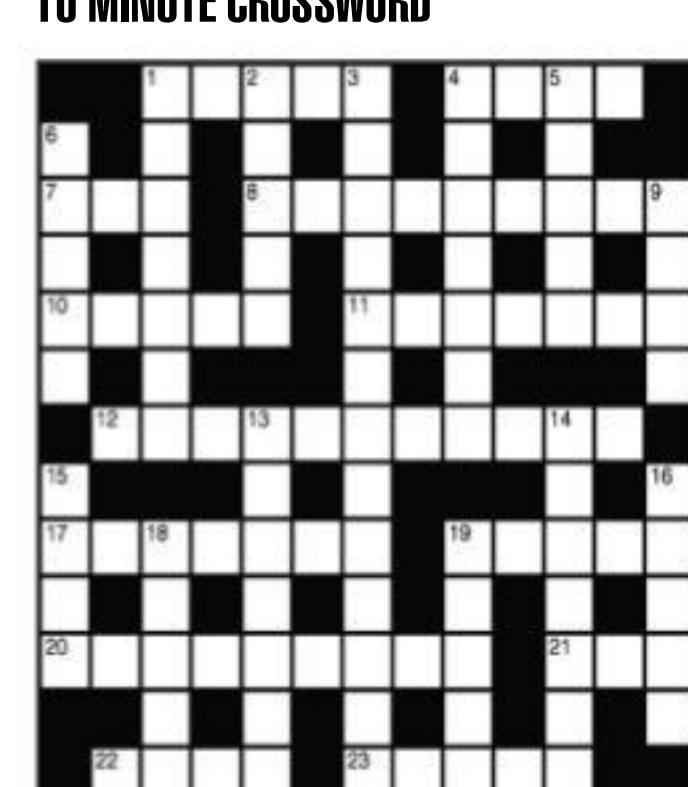
simply by the initials VGE, his name sometimes too long to pronounce, Giscard was president from 1974-1981. He was the model of a modern French president, a conservative with liberal views on social issues.

He was full of contradictions. Like an elected monarch with a technocrat's skill and a feel for the zeitgeist, he played his accordion in working class neighborhoods. One Christmas morning, he invited four passing garbage men to breakfast at the presidential palace. He calmed a prison riot in Lyon by chatting with inmates in their cells.

But having long groomed himself for an office he won at 48, Giscard then seemed to lose touch with common con-

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

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General Inquiry 139

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• Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320

• Guru Tegh Bahadur

• Punjab Roadways 23867842, port 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 23671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838

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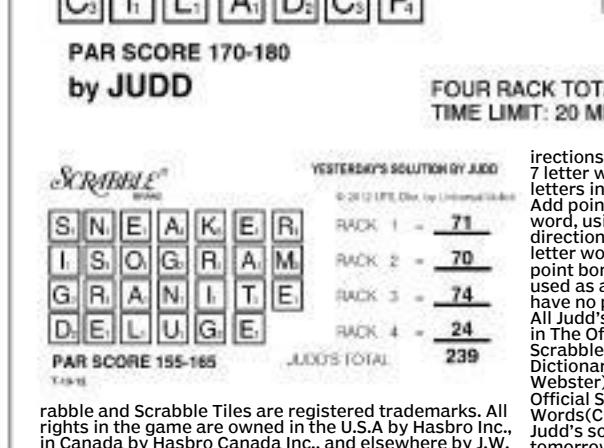
• Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City)

• Singapore Airlines Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

SCRABBLE BRAND



SCRABBLE® BRAND



Instructions: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in your rack. Add points of each word, using scoring table. If a word contains a letter that is not in the rack, deduct 25 points. All words must be in the Official Scrabble Dictionary (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary).

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I don't mind if I lose an election, but I want to lose an election fair and square

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

REPEATING HIS UNSUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATIONS OF VOTER FRAUD IN US ELECTIONS

World

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	32	25 R
HONG KONG	19	13 CL
TOKYO	11	7 H
LONDON	8	4 R
DUBAI	27	20 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	18	9 H
NEW YORK	10	1 S
MOSCOW	-4	-9 H

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

THUMBNAILS



A man watches embers fly over his property as the Bond Fire burns through the Silverado community in Orange County, California on Thursday.

Ex-Hong Kong lawmaker goes into exile: A Hong Kong pro-democracy activist and former lawmaker who is visiting Denmark said Thursday he is going into exile and will soon move to Britain. I hereby announce that I will go into exile and will withdraw my membership in the Democratic Party of Hong Kong to leave Hong Kong, Ted Hui said in a statement.

AP

Lunar probe preparing to return rock samples: China's latest lunar probe has finished taking samples of the moon's surface and sealed them within the spacecraft for return to Earth, the government announced on Thursday.

AP

Ivanka Trump deposed: Ivanka Trump has been deposed by attorneys alleging that President Donald Trump's 2017 inauguration committee misused donor funds, a new court filing reveals. The attorney general's office has filed a lawsuit alleging waste of the nonprofit's funds.

AP

Bill to delist deceitful Chinese firms from American stock markets

WASHINGTON, 3 DECEMBER

The US Congress has passed a bill that prohibits companies from being listed on American stock markets if they fail to provide the regulators access to their audit information for three years in a row, paving the way to delist deceitful Chinese companies from the US securities exchanges.

The bipartisan Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act will help protect American investors and their retirement savings from foreign companies that have been operating on US stock exchanges while flouting oversight. The bill was passed by the House of Representatives on Wednesday. It was passed by the Senate on May 20. The bill now heads to the White House for President Donald Trump to sign it into law.

The bill prohibits securities of a company from being listed on any of the US securities exchanges if the company has failed to comply with Public Company Accounting Oversight Board audits for three years in a row.

It requires public companies to disclose whether they are owned or controlled by a foreign government, and ensures foreign companies traded in America are subject to the same independent audit requirements that apply to American firms.

The Trump administration has passed a series of measures aimed at severing the economic ties between the US and China. US-China ties have deteriorated sharply over issues ranging from trade, the pandemic and telecoms-gear maker Huawei to China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and its clampdown on Hong Kong.

PTI

Game not over yet, warns Boris Johnson

UK PM urges people to follow rules, not to get over-excited after vaccine news

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 3 DECEMBER

Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought to strike a note of caution amid the excitement of the UK becoming the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19, warning that it is not game over for the deadly virus just yet.

Johnson hailed the searchlights of science fighting back against the world's invisible enemy but urged people to not get carried away with over optimism over the course of the long and cold months ahead while the two-dose vaccine starts to be injected into the arms of those at the highest risk of death from the disease.

He urged people to follow the Covid Winter Plan of tiered lockdown which is now in force across England, with a majority of areas still under high alert measures of social distancing.

"It is a fantastic moment, but the worst thing now would be to think that this is the moment when we can relax our guard and think it's game over in the fight against Covid. It's not. This is not the end," Johnson said, during a briefing at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday evening.

We have been waiting and hoping for the day when the searchlights of science would pick out our invisible enemy and give us the power to stop that enemy from making us ill and now the scientists have done it," he said.

"It is all the more vital that as we celebrate this scientific achievement we are not carried away with over optimis-

ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS, 3 DECEMBER

Nearly 100 world leaders and several dozen ministers are slated to speak at the UN General Assembly's special session starting Thursday on the response to Covid-19 and the best path to recovery from the pandemic which has claimed 1.5 million lives, shattered economies, and left tens of millions of people unemployed.

Assembly President Volkan Bozkir said when he took the reins of the 193-

mism... we've got to stick to our Winter Plan", he noted.

The UK PM confirmed that in line with the advice of the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the first phase of the vaccine deployment will include care home residents, health and care staff, the elderly and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

But there are immense logistical challenges: the vaccine must be stored at minus 70 degrees and each person needs two injections, three weeks apart. So it will inevitably take some months before all the most vulnerable are protected, he said. [But] we are no longer resting on the mere hope that we can return to normal next year in the spring, but rather on the sure and certain knowledge that we will succeed, he added.

The UK claims to be the first country to pre-order supplies of the vaccine from Pfizer/BioNTech, with 800,000 doses being made available next week and 40 million doses ordered overall - enough to vaccinate up to a third of the population - and the

member world body in September that it would have been better to hold the high-level meeting in June.

Nonetheless, he said Wednesday it "provides a historic moment for us to come together to beat Covid-19."

The world is looking to the UN for leadership. This is a test for multilateralism. When financial markets collapsed and the world faced its last great crisis in 2008, major powers worked together to restore the global economy, but the Covid-19 pandemic has been striking for the opposite response: no

leader, no united action to stop the pandemic that has circled the globe.

The two-day special session will not be raising money to finance vaccine immunisations or taking any political action, and there will be no final declaration, just a summary document from Bozkir.

The real point of this

special is to galvanise concrete action to approach our response to Covid-19 in a multilateral and collective way, General Assembly spokesman Brenden Varma said Wednesday.

majority of doses anticipated in the first half of next year.

The MHRA started the rolling review of Pfizer/BioNTech's data in October and the UK government asked the regulator to assess the vaccine for its suitability for authorisation under Regulation 174 of the Human Medicines Regulations, enabling the temporary supply of medicines to be authorised.

The regulator has stressed that a speedy timeline does not mean any corners have been cut and the vaccine was declared safe for human use only after very rigorous checks.

This vaccine has now passed all of the extensive checks needed for authorisation to supply and will soon be ready to be delivered to the NHS, said Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England.

TESTING TIMES



Students on their way to take the college entrance exam in Seoul, South Korea, on Thursday. South Korean officials on Wednesday urged people to remain at home if possible and cancel gatherings as about half a million students prepare for the crucial national college exam.

AGENCIES

PAK TO START VACCINATION DRIVE FROM APRIL 2021: The Pakistan government will provide the coronavirus vaccine free of cost to its people and plans are afoot to start the immunisation drive by April next year, officials said on Thursday. Parliamentary Secretary on Health Nausheen Hamid said the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government has approved funds to purchase the vaccine doses. Hamid said the phase III of clinical trials of Chinese vaccines was proceeding well and the shots would be available to the people soon. Pakistan's coronavirus caseload rose to 4406,810 on Thursday after 3,499 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours.

RUSSIA INFECTIONS HIT NEW RECORD: Coronavirus infections in Russia hit a new record on Thursday, as the country's authorities reported 28,145 new confirmed cases, the highest daily spike in the pandemic and an increase of 2,800 cases from those registered the previous day. Russia's total number of COVID-19 cases - nearly 2.4 million, remains the world's fourth-highest. The government coronavirus task force has reported 41,607 deaths in the pandemic. The country's authorities have resisted imposing a second nationwide lockdown or a widespread closure of businesses. Virus-related restrictions vary from region to region but are largely mild.

China testing blunders stemmed from secret deals with firms

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WUHAN (CHINA), 3 DECEMBER



Secrecy and cronyism at China's top disease control agency led to widespread test shortages and flaws that hampered the early response to the coronavirus outbreak, an Associated Press investigation has found.

China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention gave test kit designs and distribution rights exclusively to three then-obscure Shanghai companies with which officials had personal ties, according to the investigation. It was based on interviews with more than 40 doctors, CDC employees, health experts, and industry insiders, as well as hundreds of internal documents, contracts, messages and emails.

The Shanghai companies Geneo Biotech, Huirui Biotechnology, and BioGerm Medical Technology -- paid the

own homemade kits. They took control of patient samples and made testing requirements to confirm coronavirus cases much more complicated.

The flawed testing system at a time when the virus could have been slowed stopped scientists and officials from seeing how fast it was spreading. Chinese authorities failed to report a single new case between January 5 and 17, even as hundreds were infected in Wuhan, the city where the virus was first detected.

The apparent lull in cases meant officials were slow to take early actions such as warning the public or barring large gatherings. It also caused critical shortages of testing kits, barring access to care for many who were infected.

The testing problems, along with other mistakes and delays, allowed the virus to rip through Wuhan undetected and spread

across the world.

China was hardly the only country to grapple with testing. In the US, the CDC declined to use a WHO design and insisted on developing its own kits, which turned out to be faulty and led to even longer delays than in China. Still, the hiccups in China were especially consequential because it was the first country to detect the virus.

Because you have only three companies providing testing kits, it kept the capacity of testing very limited, said Yanzhong Huang, a senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. It was a major problem that led to the rapid increase in cases and deaths. China's foreign ministry and China's top medical agency, the National Health Commission, did not respond to requests for comment.

But interviews and documents suggest that a culture

of backdoor connections quietly flourished in a top-down, underfunded public health system. Though none of the first three diagnostics companies tapped to make test kits were well-known in the industry, there were extensive ties between the companies and top China CDC researchers.

The founder of BioGerm, Zhao Baihui, was the former chief technician of the Shanghai CDC's microbiology lab. Emails and financial records obtained by the AP show that Zhao first started BioGerm's predecessor through an intermediary in 2012, while she was still at the Shanghai CDC. In the next five years, she sold thousands of dollars' worth of test kits to her own workplace through the intermediary.

After quitting the CDC in 2017, Zhao went on to spearhead lucrative contracts with Shanghai officials. Zhao did not respond to requests for comment.

Another of the three companies, GeneoDx, enjoyed special access because it is a subsidiary of the state-run firm SinoPharm, which is managed directly by China's cabinet. In October 2019, GeneoDx co-organized an internal CDC training conference on emerging respiratory diseases in Shanghai.

Tan Wenjie, the CDC official who ran the training, was later put in charge of developing test kits.

GeneoDx did not respond to requests for comment or interviews. The National Health Commission did not respond to a request for a comment or an interview with Tan.

The last company, Huirui, is a longtime partner with Tan, the CDC official in charge of test kits. In an interview, CEO Li Hui said the CDC routinely contracted his company to make emergency testing chem-

icals. He denied any personal relationship with Tan or any payments to the CDC.

We've been working with the CDC to respond to emerging new diseases for about ten years, not just for a day or two, it's normal, Li said.

It's unclear whether the agreements between the China CDC and the three test kit companies violated Chinese law.

They raise questions around potential violations of bribery laws, along with rules against abuse of authority, self-dealing and conflicts of interest, said James Zimmerman, a Beijing-based corporate attorney and former chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China.

But other experts caution that the state may have designated the three companies to make test kits under special laws on the procurement of emergency goods during natural disasters.

Naming a health care team next on Biden's to-do list

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 3 DECEMBER



Up soon for President-elect Joe Biden: naming his top health care officials as the coronavirus pandemic rages. It's hard to imagine more consequential picks.

Already one prominent candidate to lead the Department of Health and Human Services has faded from the scene. New Mexico Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham was offered another Cabinet post, interior secretary, and turned it down, a person close to the Biden transition said Wednesday.

That person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. Lujan Grisham's office had no comment.

Also in the running is former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, co-chair of Biden's coronavirus taskforce. Murthy has a soft-spoken demeanor and a reputation for consensus building. He's the author of a recent book addressing the human toll of loneliness, a problem that has become more widely recognised in the time of Covid-19.

Alongside his health secretary, Biden is expected to name a top-level White House adviser to coordinate the government's extensive coronavirus response.

Vaccines developed under the Trump administration will be delivered on Biden's watch, a massive undertaking that's bound to have its share of logistical problems.

Democratic health policy experts say the leading candidate is businessman Jeff Zients, an economic adviser in the Obama White House who was widely credited with rescuing HealthCare.gov after its disastrous launch in 2013.

Keeping the focus on the virus, Biden is also said to be close to nominating a commissioner for the Food and Drug Administration and a director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Under consideration for FDA are former deputy commissioner Dr Joshua Sharstein, who has also served as Maryland's health secretary, and Dr. Luciana Borio, a member of Biden's coronavirus advisory board who formerly held senior posts with the FDA and the National Security Council and has expertise in responding to disease outbreaks and bioterrorism.

Being considered for CDC director is Dr. Julie Morita, a top executive of the non-profit Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The US Senate has unanimously passed a bill that eliminates the per-country numerical limitation for employment-based immigrant visas and raises it for family-based visas, a legislation that will hugely benefit hundreds of thousands of Indian professionals in America who have been waiting for years to get their green cards.

The passage of the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act by the Senate on Wednesday comes as a big relief to Indian IT professionals who come to the US on H-1B work visas and their current waiting period for Green Card or permanent residency is running into decades.

Originally passed by the US House of Representatives on July 10, 2019 by a bipartisan 365 to 65 votes, the legislation increases the per-country cap on family-based immigrant visas from seven per cent of the total number of such visas available that year to 15 per cent. It was sponsored by Republican Senator Mike Lee from Utah in the Senate.

The legislation eliminates the seven per cent cap for

employment-based immigrant visas, a provision that will facilitate removal of the massive backlog of Indian IT professionals in the US. It also removes an offset that reduced the number of visas for individuals from China. Because of arbitrary per-country caps, the legal status of Indian IT professionals was constantly in jeopardy.

In fiscal year 2019, Indian nationals received 9,008 category 1 (EB1), 2,908 category

Need for effective communication

Given the present crisis situation, as information in social media is becoming increasingly unreliable with each passing day, the importance of public relations is gaining traction

NIKKY GUPTA

With effective communication emerging as bedrock of brand management strategies, public relations has evolved into a necessary component for brands and organisations. Once considered a non-necessary investment, PR has grown to become a vital component of brand communication today. In India, the growth has been particularly pronounced over the past 20 years when evolving media needs made dedicated communication specialists a necessity, rather than luxury.

In 2017, the PR industry grew 18 per cent to become a Rs 1,315 crore industry in India, a report by Public Relations Consultants Association of India (PRCAI) estimated. Evidently, the new emerging communication channels - digital, social media and content driven campaigns were found to contribute the most to the revenue of PR companies.

Covid-19 and its aftermath has lent a fresh push to the PR industry, bringing about a new round of growth as well as evolution.

Effective and sustained communication strategies have emerged as critical components of image management of brands today. With social and digital media channels having the potential to spread any information (or misinformation) faster than fire, faster communication, quick reaction times and effective message control are absolutely critical. Crisis situations are particularly important for sustained and effective communication with one's audience. As Covid-19 crisis forces organisations to change their marketing as well as communication strategies, public relations is assuming significant importance. This is particularly true for healthcare organisations for whom keeping miscommunication and misinformation at bay is extremely important at this juncture. However, non-healthcare organisations are also feeling a greater need to have onboard dedicated PR specialists to guide their communication strategies, create positive brand recall and craft a responsible brand image.

Earlier this year, a survey of 300 communications executives and senior leaders in the US concluded

that business leaders were banking on their communication resources to help them deal with the Covid-19 crisis. Over 80 per cent of respondents labelled the communication function as "important" or "very important" to their organisation's Covid-19 response.

While advertising tends to have a big bang and immediate effect for a brand, public relations is a slow and steady process with long term gains. Since public relations involves a non-paid medium as against advertising, which is based on bought space, it also carries greater credibility in the eyes of consumers. Advertising is also an excessively big budget exercise that requires significant investment and budgetary allocation. In contrast, Public Relations is much cheaper and affordable even for smaller organisations who do not have big advertising budgets.

A research by World Federation of Advertisers conducted in April this year found that large brands were deferring their marketing campaigns and ad spends for several months in response to the coronavirus pandemic and the cash crunch brought about

by it. This is also one reason why PR is gaining much traction in the post Covid era, which has forced organisations to go on cost cutting measures. A number of organisations who invested heavily in big budget advertisements earlier are going slow on this count and turning to the low cost and sustainable PR drives.

Covid-19 has furthered an already ongoing change towards greater proliferation of digital and social media with shrinking traditional media space. A series of newspaper editions in different cities and lifestyle supplements have shut down due to the cash crunch. Newspaper sales dipped during the pandemic as people avoided purchasing newspapers and turned to online news sources. This has created new challenges and requirements for the PR industry. The rising value and reach of digital media has shifted priorities and created the need for dedicated digital media strategies.

Social media has been another emerging source of information for millions of people and has the potential to make or break brand images. Clients today are demanding equal

footing to social media strategies and effective content marketing to help increase the brand's visibility among the millennial population. PR firms now need to ensure that social and digital media strategies are as crucial to their new media strategies. Simultaneously, the Covid-19 crisis has made clients more demanding, requiring a highly dynamic approach from PR specialists.

Interestingly, according to a research conducted among PR professionals about the impact of Covid-19 on their professions by BuzzStream and Fractl, 49 per cent PR professionals reported reduction in PR budgets from clients. However, 21 per cent also reported increased PR spending, indicating that some organisations understand the importance of effective communications in the current environment. Around 57 per cent of respondents in the research said their clients had changed their PR strategies because of Covid-19 and many also reported increased stress and burnout.

The writer is co-founder and director, Teamwork Communications Group

FUELLED THEIR AMBITIONS

Women are becoming more visible in the crypto currency world as they are creating significant lifestyle and professional changes using this novel and rewarding investment instrument

KUBER SHARMA

Investment and fund management is an industry, mostly dominated by men. For every four male investors, there is just one female investor. Further to this, investment in crypto-currencies until recently was driven by men folk. But this scene is changing as slowly and gradually women are becoming more visible in the crypto currency world and they are using it to create significant changes in their lives using this new and one of the most rewarding investment instruments. According to a recent survey car-

ried out by Crypto Exchange BuyUcoin across large metro cities in India, female traders spend more than Rs 1,40,000 on average, whereas men invest half of that, around Rs 70,000 on investment in Crypto currencies.

For the readers who are new to the topic, crypto currency is one of the most visible applications of a very popular and much trust-worthy blockchain technology that eliminates the need of middlemen, allowing transactions to perform directly between two entities. Crypto currencies are digital currencies that are able to operate as a medium of exchange at a person-to-

person level, enabling direct payments between individuals or entities in some cases. Because it is distributed and exchanged, there is no need for a centralised entity, such as a bank or a technology company to manage it.

Discussed below are some of the trends fuelling the transition of increased investments by women in crypto currency against traditional investments into gold, real-estate or equity.

Adoption of technology, ease of investing

The slow but steady adoption

of block chain technology and crypto currencies is contributing to an increasing number of women wishing to include this innovation in their everyday lives. In March, financial platform 2gether revealed that 23 per cent of its app users are women aged between 26 and 45, belonging from a wide range of professions such as accountancy, economics or law. As the report points out, today female users spend crypto currency in the same way as they would spend their fiat currency.

The writer is professor, practice and investments dynamics, JK Business School

PLUS POINTS

Empowering women



In a major women empowerment initiative, Bridgestone India has undertaken the training of women to become professional drivers by providing opportunities to pursue driving and auto-mechanics as profession. Till now, 81 women have been trained in Indore. The company plans to take this initiative to other cities as well.

Spread over three and a half months, the training included driving skills, preventive maintenance and emergency repair. Soft skills training in spoken English, map reading, first aid, self-defence was also imparted. An insight into women related law, Motor vehicle act, insurance act was also provided. Post the training many have been successfully employed as cab drivers, personal drivers, e-rickshaw drivers and a driver on call.

Brilliant invention



26-year-old IIT Guwahati student Sunit Nandi launched privacy-first email provider startup "Letter" recently. It is a powerful email hosting provider packed with an array of advanced features, an intuitive user interface, impressive performance and global standard security, which boasts on sharing strongest data privacy and encrypted storage for emails.

Email communication in today's world is often treated like an afterthought even though online businesses have to depend on it the most. Major email providers not only mine user data but also use this data to display ads or sell to third parties. Currently pursuing his PhD from IIT Guwahati, Nandi wants to offer "Letter" as a Made-In-India well thought product offering business uncompromised data privacy. For details visit: www.letter.is

Worthy campaign



Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) launched a webinar series - "Swavalamban Sankalp - Mega Campaign", an initiative initiated a year back to boost Government of India's flagship Stand-Up India (SUI) scheme recently.

Dr Milind Kamble, founder chairman, DICCI shared that DICCI intends to connect with potential aspiring SC-ST entrepreneurs who need appropriate guidance. He informed that along with Swavalamban Sankalp, DICCI has also started Business Facilitation Centres in all their chapter offices to facilitate existing and aspiring entrepreneurs in availing support from government schemes which are otherwise underutilised.

Nurturing skills



To thank Covid warriors and nurture promising talent, Imarticus Learning – a professional education firm, is launching the #JoyOfGiving movement as a part of its CSR initiative. The new initiative would offer a 100 per cent scholarship to Covid warriors.

Available to graduates from any discipline falling in the age group of 21-25 years, the scholarship will be granted to those nominated as a Covid warrior by their friends, colleagues, family, or even an acquaintance. Plasma donors would also be eligible for the scholarship.

Nominations are invited by simple tagging of Covid Warriors on the social media handles of Imarticus and online submission of memoirs. The best 25 memoirs will be posted on social media and top two with highest likes, and engagements will be awarded a 100 per cent scholarship on an industry-endorsed Imarticus ProDegree. For details visit: <https://www.imarticus.org/scholarship/>

