





## SHORT TAKES

## Farmers move Supreme Court against 2 laws

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protests to increase pressure on the Centre for the withdrawal of the new laws. The AAP has already decided to join the protests. In a statement on Friday, the party said, "In solidarity with the call given by farmers, AAP would lay siege to district headquarters across Punjab on December 14 against the new agrarian laws introduced by the Modi government at the Centre."

Ahead of the roadblocks planned by the farmer unions to further intensify their agitation, authorities are keeping a close watch on villages along the Rajasthan and Haryana borders. There are reports that members of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangarsh Committee have begun their journey from Amritsar to join the protesters at Delhi borders. "About 700 tractor trolleys are moving towards Delhi's Kundli border," committee leader S.S. Pandher said.

Support for farmers' has been coming from different quarters. Many villagers along the highways and gurdwaras are serving langar (community kitchen) to the protesting farmers. An Amritsar-based eatery is providing meals at the Ghazipur border. A free medical camp has been set up at the Singhu border due to the prevailing coronavirus pandemic. Farmers from various states have been camping at Delhi's Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Chilla (Delhi-Noida) border points for over two weeks, demanding a repeal of the farm laws enacted in September.

One of the key reasons behind the continuing surge in the number of protesters lies in the fact that sowing of wheat is over and farmers are free for about a month till the first irrigation of the crop is to begin. After the initial silence, Bollywood is finally beginning to show its support for protesters. A week after he posted and then quickly deleted a tweet referring to the ongoing 'protests, actor Dharmendra Deol on Friday commented about the crisis, saying the government needs to "do something fast" to ease farmers' pain.

## BJP's big push: 700 meets on benefits of laws

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they want to, we can definitely talk about the proposal... I think we will find a solution. I am hopeful. I would like to urge the farmer unions that they should break the deadlock. The government has sent them a proposal. If there is an objection over the provisions of an Act, the discussion will be held over it," a news agency quoted Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar as saying.

With the farmer unions showing no sign of relenting, the BJP has decided to hold at least 100 press conferences and 700 'chaupals' till the district levels to "dispel the myth and propaganda" against the three laws. The party has also activated its social media teams and supporters to explain why the three laws were enacted, why the reforms were needed in the agri sector and how its political opponents are "trying to misled the farmers for their political interest."

## Anti-CAA stir resumes in Upper Assam, may intensify

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parties have opposed the Act, claiming that it damages the secular fabric of India and is, thus, unconstitutional. Meanwhile, an anti-CAA forum of political parties and organisations in Assam has called for a united fight against the CAA. The move is aimed at galvanising anti-CAA forces to pile pressure on the BJP-led government to get the new law revoked before next year's Assembly elections.

The Coordination Committee Against Citizenship Amendment Act (CCACAC) has also issued a public appeal for a united fight on December 12, the first anniversary of the enactment of the CAA, that the organisation will observe as Sankalpa Diwas (Pledge Day).

"We have decided to observe the first anti-CAA anniversary on December 12. We will not only be renewing our pledge to continue our fight against the unconstitutional law but will also appeal to all anti-CAA forces to put up a united fight against the law," CCACAC chief coordinator Deben Tamuly told reporters.

## ■ Social distancing violated, claims FIR Cops file FIR against protesting farmers

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

As the protests against the agriculture laws entered sixteenth day, several routes in the national capital remained off bounds for commuters on Friday. Meanwhile, the Delhi Police filed an FIR against the farmers who are protesting at Delhi borders.

The Delhi Traffic Police took to Twitter to inform people about road closures and advised them to take alternative routes to avoid inconvenience.

An FIR against farmers sitting on Delhi's Singhu border red light has been lodged. The Delhi Police filed the case against the agitating farmers at Alipur police station on

December 7, for not following social distancing under Pandemic Act and other sections.

Protesting against the new farm laws, the farmers forcibly entered the Delhi border from the Lampur border and sat on the Singhu border red light on November 29. Since then they have blocked the road, obstructing the traffic movement.

The farmers on Friday remained adamant and said that to mark their protest against the new farm law, on December 12 they will block Delhi-Jaipur highway.

"On December 12, the farmers have decided to block the Delhi-Jaipur Highway and if still the law is not rolled back, the

farmers on December 14, will stage sit-in protests in front of Deputy Commissioner's (DC) offices across the Country and houses of BJP leaders. We will also block Reliance and Adani toll plazas. There is no program to stop trains. The number of farmers coming here is increasing day to day," said Balbir Singh Rajewal, Bharatiya Kisan Union, while addressing media on Friday.

The Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur, Auchandi, Safiabab, Piao Maniyari, and Saboli and Chilla border remained closed for traffic movement.

"Jhatikara borders is open only for two wheelers and pedestrian movement," Delhi Traffic Police (DTP) tweeted.

## 2 DCPs at Singhu test positive for Covid-19

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Two senior Delhi Police officers heading security arrangements at Singhu border where thousands of farmers have been camping for two weeks have tested positive for Covid-19, an officer said on Friday.

Hundreds of police personnel have been deployed at the Singhu border to prevent the protesters, demanding a rollback of the new farm laws, from entering the

national capital. "Two senior police officers deployed at Singhu border tested positive for coronavirus a few days ago. Both are in isolation," a senior police officer said.

Thousands of farmers agitating against the centre's new agri laws have been camping at multiple border points for two weeks. On Thursday they threatened to intensify their agitation with a plan to block railway tracks if their demands are not met soon.

## 2,385 cases, 60 Covid-19 deaths in Delhi in last 24 hrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

The national capital recorded 2,385 new Covid-19 cases on Friday with over 71,000 tests being conducted, even as the positivity rate stood at 3.33 per cent, authorities said.

The positivity rate from December 3-7 had successively dipped to 4.96 per cent, 4.78 per cent, 4.2 per cent, 3.68 per cent and 3.15 per cent respectively. However, on December 8, it had risen again to 4.23 per cent, falling again to 3.42 per cent on December 9 and 2.46 per cent on December 10.

These new cases came out of 71,679 tests conducted the previous day, including 31,724 RT-PCR tests, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department.

Sixty fatalities were recorded, pushing the death toll in the national capital to 9,934, the bulletin said. The tally of active cases on Friday dropped to 18,676 from 18,753 the previous day.

The bulletin said the total number of cases has climbed to 6,03,535.

## Home ministry summons Didi's two top officials

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While further reports are being obtained and compiled, in the circumstances, I am directed to request you kindly dispense with the presence of the state officials in the meeting, considering that the state government is already addressing this issue with utmost seriousness."

But Sreerampore TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee blamed BJP leader Rakesh Singh for provoking the attack on his party chief. "Mr Singh was in the convoy in front of Mr Nadda. He has 55 criminal cases against him and he made provocative gestures at the crowd."

"An FIR has been registered against him," he alleged.

The Union home affairs' step to summon the two officials came after it received an adverse report from governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on "serious security lapses" on part of the state police which led to the brazen attack on Thursday leaving two senior BJP leaders, Kailash Vijayvargya and Mukul Roy, who were in Mr Nadda's convoy, injured.

Sources said that Mr Shah may visit the state on December 19-20.

## Lobbying for loyalists or show of strength?

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Mr Scindia refused to divulge what was discussed at the meeting but said, "Expansion of ministry is chief minister's sole jurisdiction. The chief minister as well as the Central leadership of the party will take a call on it."

Sources said the meeting discussed reconstitution of the state executive body and district units of the party apparently to accommodate Mr Scindia's loyalists who had resigned from Congress and joined BJP recently. "The meeting discussed accommodation of particularly the former MLAs and ministers who lost the November 3 Assembly by-elections in the organisations and state-owned corporations. The former MLAs had resigned from Congress and joined BJP recently. Majority of them are followers of Mr Scindia," a senior BJP leader told this newspaper on the condition of anonymity.

Mr Scindia also took up the issue of re-induction of Mr Rajput and Mr Silawat in the state Cabinet with the chief minister, sources added.

## BJP workers protest outside residences of AAP ministers

## Mayors on dharna to work from outside CM's residence

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

On the fifth day of their indefinite protest outside chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence, all the three mayors on Friday announced that from Monday onwards they would run their offices from the "dharna site."

The Delhi BJP, meanwhile, intensified its campaign to put pressure on the Delhi government for immediate release of funds. Senior leaders and workers of its frontal organisations protested near residences of Delhi Cabinet ministers.

North, South, and East Delhi mayors Jai Prakash, Anamika, and Nirmal Jain respectively, along with senior party council-

Delhi BJP spokesperson Aditya Jha said: "Through these protests at the minister's residence, we conveyed that BJP will not hesitate from intensifying its stir in the interest of Delhiites."

lors, spent four nights outside the gate of the chief minister's residence.

"All three mayors of Delhi will run their offices from the dharna site outside the chief minister's residence from Monday," they said.

Mr Prakash said, "We have tried to pursue Mr Kejriwal but he hasn't responded yet. We have been getting support from all quarters, even from employees' unions. Till the chief minister does not release the dues of ₹13,000

crore to all the three corporations, we will continue our agitation outside his residence."

Delhi BJP spokesperson Aditya Jha said, "Through these protests at the minister's residence, we conveyed that BJP will not hesitate from intensifying its stir in the interest of Delhiites and municipal employees who are suffering due to funds held back by the government."

"Protests were held near the residences of Delhi ministers Satyendar Jain, Gopal Rai, and Rajendra Pal Gautam at the Civil Lines area and near the residence of Imran Hussain at Rouse Avenue," said the Delhi BJP vice president, Ashok Goel, who led the protest at Mr Hussain's residence.

In another protest at Mr

Rai's residence, Delhi BJP vice president Virender Sachdeva led workers of the Poorvanchal Morcha. Party spokesperson Virendra Babbar said that on Saturday BJP workers will stage protests outside the residence of AAP MLA houses.

Delhi BJP secretary Impreet Singh Bakshi said that because of non-availability of funds, development work had come to a standstill and that BJP will continue to fight for people.

"Kejriwal is the first CM who is not giving funds to the civic bodies for development work, which has affected basic facilities such as health, pension, education, sanitation, cleanliness, road construction, and maintenance of parks," Mr Bakshi added.

## HC dismisses plea to transfer Tablighi leader's case to NIA

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

The Delhi high court, on Friday, dismissed a plea seeking direction to transfer from the Delhi police to the NIA the investigation of a case lodged against Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad for holding a congregation in March in alleged violation of the orders against large gatherings to contain the spread of Covid-19.

A bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Talwant Singh dismissed the petition after the petitioner sought to withdraw it with liberty to approach the Supreme Court.

"Advocate Yash Chaturvedi, for the petitioner, seeks liberty to withdraw the petition with liberty to further prosecute the petition seeking similar relief instituted by him herein before the Supreme Court. Leave and liberty granted. The petition is dismissed as withdrawn," the bench said while dictating the order.

The bench said once the petition has already been filed in the Supreme Court with similar prayers, it cannot keep it pending here.

The petition filed by Mumbai-based lawyer Ghanshyam Upadhyay has also sought direction to the NIA to investigate the matter in a time bound manner and the probe to be monitored by the high court, alleging that the Delhi police has failed to arrest the leader despite lapse of considerable time.

It had claimed that the crime branch of Delhi police has miserably failed in tracing out/apprehending/arresting Maulana Saad despite lapse of considerable time and his photograph being published in electronic media.

It is virtually impossi-



Maulana Saad

ble for Maulana Saad to hide himself for such a long time and that too in the capital of the country. The performance of the Delhi police has been pathetic from the very inception and outset. Failure of the Delhi police is explicit from the fact that despite there being lockdown and curfew like situation, Maulana Saad was able to arrange gathering of thousands of people belonging to Tablighi Jamaat in the capital of India, the plea claimed.

The plea alleged that from media reports and evidence so far collected by the Delhi police crime branch, it is now axiomatic that Maulana Saad and his henchmen conspired to spread and transmit coronavirus in different parts of the country with the oblique and ulterior motive of causing massive deaths all over the country and thereby to derail the government of India in preventing the deadly disease.

The Delhi police's crime branch had, on March 31, lodged an FIR against seven persons, including the cleric, on a complaint by the station house officer of Nizamuddin police station here for holding a congregation of Tablighi Jamaat followers in alleged violation of the orders against large gatherings to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has also filed a money laundering case against Saad, trusts links to the Jamaat and others.



A ragpicker collects disposed masks near the farmers' protest site at Singhu border in New Delhi on Friday.

— PTI

## High court seeks AAP govt's stand on plea against ₹800 cap on RTPCR tests

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the AAP government's response on a plea challenging its decision fixing a cap of ₹800 on RTPCR tests for detecting Covid-19 infection in the national capital.

Justice Navin Chawla issued notice to the Delhi government and sought its stand on the plea by an Association of Practising Pathologists which has contended that the price fixed would not cover the cost of consumables to be used in the test. The association also contended that the price cap cannot be made applicable to TrueNat and CBNAAT tests, which are also used to detect COVID-19 infection, as they use cartridges which are very expensive. It further said that sensitivity of TrueNat and CBNAAT was 98 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively, which were much higher than that of RTPCR open ended system test which stood at 67-70 per cent.

It also said that approximate costs incurred by the labs on TrueNat and CBNAAT tests were ₹2,000 and ₹3,500, respectively and were higher than the

## AIIMS doctors join IMA's protest against 'Ayurvedic surgeons', wear black ribbons

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Doctors at several hospitals in the national capital, including AIIMS, on Friday sported black ribbons in support of the protest call of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) against the Centre's move allowing post graduate practitioners of Ayurveda to be trained in performing surgical procedures.

The IMA, which had given the nation-wide call on December 1, has demanded withdrawal of

amount of ₹1,200 for RTPCR. The Delhi government, represented by its standing counsel Ramesh Singh and additional standing counsel Gautam Narayan, told the court that the price cap was not applicable to CBNAAT and TrueNat tests as these are different from RTPCR.

The court also noted that the three tests are not common and hence a common price cannot be fixed for them. RT/PCR, short for Reverse Transcription

polymerase chain reaction, is a laboratory technique widely used in the diagnosis of genetic diseases and to measure gene expression in research.

Cartridge-based nucleic acid amplification test (CBNAAT) is a recently introduced polymerase chain reaction (PCR) based method for detection of TB. TrueNat is an indigenously developed portable version of CBNAAT and was also meant for detecting tuber-

culosis (TB). The association, in its petition, has sought quashing of the November 30 notification of the Delhi government capping price of RTPCR tests at ₹800. It has claimed that "the continuance of the unreasonable price cap, would force the labs to compromise on quality of kits and testing standards and such actions would be counterproductive in the fight against Covid and the health of the residents of Delhi".

President of FORDA, an apex body of various RDAs in the city, Shivaji Deb Barman said, "Doctors in Delhi observe black ribbon protest, but will not withdraw any services".

The association, in its petition, has sought quashing of the November 30 notification of the Delhi government capping price of RTPCR tests at ₹800. It has claimed that "the continuance of the unreasonable price cap, would force the labs to compromise on quality of kits and testing standards and such actions would be counterproductive in the fight against Covid and the health of the residents of Delhi".

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## Probe initiated into 'misappropriation' of ₹2,400 crore by MCDs, says Jain

New Delhi, Dec. 11: Delhi's urban development minister Satyendar Jain on Friday said the additional chief secretary of his department has been requested to investigate the alleged misappropriation of ₹2,400 crore by the BJP-led municipal corporations.

The Aam Aadmi Party has been claiming that there is a misappropriation of over ₹2,400 crore done by the BJP-led North Delhi MCD with the amount it had taken from South Delhi MCD, an allegation refuted by the saffron party.

Addressing a press conference, Jain said on one hand, the BJP-led north municipal corporation is incapable of paying salaries to frontline workers, but on other hand, it is misappropriating a hefty amount.



Satyendar Jain

"The Delhi government has been instrumental in paying off whatever is due to MCD, before time. We are not supposed to pay them anything, instead, they are the ones who owe us thousands of crores," Jain said on the claims of the MCD.

The Delhi BJP had earlier said that there was no corruption or manipulation in settling of dues

between two government bodies as reportedly done by North and South MCDs.

On Friday, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said Jain's comment on the municipal commissioner's proposal to settle a rent amount between North and South MCDs is a "politically biased statement."

"It is shocking that even after being in power and administration for six years Satyendar Jain does not know that in MCDs, the commissioner independently brings the budget before the Standing Committee and it is up to the elected councillors to accept his proposals or reject them," he said.

"The BJP-ruled North MCD Standing Committee stands firmly resolved to

reject the commissioner's proposal to write off South MCD's rent dues," Kapoor said.

Addressing another press conference, AAP spokesperson Atishi attacked the BJP-led municipal corporations.

"For the past 15 days commissioners of all the three BJP-ruled MCDs are on leave; who is running the MCDs right now? At one side the mayors of the MCDs are sitting outside the CM residence and busy doing their politics; on the other side the commissioners are on leave," she said.

"The Aam Aadmi Party wants to know why has the BJP left the MCD in such a headless condition and who is responsible for making the new budgets or imposing these series of new taxes on citizens," Atishi added. — PTT



## IN BRIEF

## Gold worth ₹4.5 cr seized mid-sea

**Chennai:** In a joint mid-sea operation on Friday, the Coast Guard and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) foiled a bid to smuggle into the country gold bars worth ₹4.50 crore from Sri Lanka. Acting on a tip-off, the Coast Guard and DRI officials intercepted a fishing boat 'Sailor' with five fishermen off the Tamil Nadu coast and seized the gold concealed in a bag, a press release said. Initial investigations revealed that the boat with the contraband was proceeding from Gulf of Mannar to Marakkayar Pattinam near Mandapam in Ramanathapuram district, the release said. The gold weighed nine kgs and worth ₹4.50 crore, it said. The fishermen were apprehended and further investigations on, the release said.

## VIGILANCE PROBE AGAINST SACKED BJD LEGISLATOR

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 11

Odisha Lokayukta on Friday directed the state Vigilance Directorate to investigate the corruption allegation levelled against expelled BJD leader and Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi. The Lokayukta asked the Vigilance to submit a report within two months after preliminary investigation.

On December 7, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had recommended the Lokayukta for a probe into the corruption charges against Panigrahi, who is currently lodged at Jharpada jail after his bail plea was rejected by Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate (SDJM) Court on December 3.

This was the first case of corruption allegation that has been referred to Odisha Lokayukta by the state government after its formation. The crime branch had arrested the former minister on December 3 in connection with a case filed at the cyber police station.

## UZBEKISTAN TO JOIN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

In a major development, Uzbekistan has agreed "in-principle" to India's request to join the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), an important initiative taken by India, Russia and Iran to promote transportation cooperation and to enhance connectivity with central Asian countries, the MEA said on Friday.

The INSTC is the "shortest multimodal transportation route linking the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf via Iran to Russia and North Europe". The "in-principle concurrence" of Uzbekistan was conveyed by the Central Asian country at a Virtual Summit between the two nations on Friday co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. India had maintained that Uzbekistan's participation in the project would add to the "overall improvement of connectivity in the larger Eurasian space".

The two nations also inked nine pacts including in the fields of cyber-security, information technology and solar energy and agreed to strengthen cooperation in the areas of defence, security, counter-terrorism, and civil nuclear energy as well as trade linkages.

## Don't play with fire, gov warns Mamata

*Dhankhar sends report to Centre on law & order, says recent developments 'extremely disturbing'*

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI**  
with agency inputs  
KOLKATA, DEC. 11

West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday advised Trinamul Congress supremo and chief minister Mamata Banerjee "not to play with fire" and "apologise" for mocking BJP president J.P. Nadda as "Chaddha, Nadda, Fadda, Bhaddha" after her party workers' brazen attack on his convoy at Diamond Harbour, also her nephew Abhishek Banerjee's Lok Sabha constituency, in South 24 Parganas a day before.

Mr Dhankhar said he has sent a report to the Centre about "extremely disturbing developments" in the state, in the backdrop attack on the convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda.

Several vehicles in Mr Nadda's cavalcade were damaged and BJP leaders and workers injured by stone-throwing protesters carrying TMC flags at Sirakol when he was travelling to Diamond Harbour to address a public meeting.

Castigating the Mamata Banerjee government over the attack, allegedly by TMC supporters, Mr Dhankhar said a dangerous game of insider and outsider is going on in the state. "It is dangerous that she is using the word 'outsider'. India is one nation. We all are Indians. We believe in one Constitution. The CM is not above the Constitution. She must not call who is an outsider or an insider. Such a com-

## A day after attack, PM Modi talks to Nadda, Vijayvargiya

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

After senior BJP leaders' convoy in West Bengal came under attack allegedly from the ruling TMC cadre, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to party president J.P. Nadda and national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, who were also in the convoy.

Many senior BJP leaders from the state, including Mukul Roy, Anupam Hazra and many MPs were in the convoy when it came under attack on Thursday.

The convoy of BJP leaders was pelted with stones when they were on their way to attend a party event in Diamond Harbour,

ment from her side is unwarranted, shameful and painful. Madam chief minister, please don't play with the fire," he said at the Raj Bhavan.

The TMC supremo has on several occasions said that the BJP is bringing outsiders into the state for the upcoming assembly elections.

Claiming that the BJP is bringing musclemen from outside and sending them to the villages in West Bengal, she had told a



which is the Lok Sabha constituency of Abhishek Banerjee, chief minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee's nephew.

While Banerjee termed the incident as "nautanki," the BJP claimed that the state has "descended into an era of tyranny, anarchy and darkness" under the TMC rule. Crucial assembly polls in the state are lined up early next year and the BJP has launched an aggressive campaign in an effort to oust the TMC.

farmers' protest rally here on Thursday to challenge them and file FIRs against such entrants.

Addressing the press conference where he excoriated Ms Banerjee, Mr Dhankhar asserted, "The governor will vindicate his oath, come what may."

He said it is shameful that such an incident occurred on International Human Rights Day.

"Finding the situation alarming, as my constitutional duty, I have sent a

## 7 held for attack on Nadda's convoy

**Kolkata:** Seven persons were arrested in West Bengal on Friday for their alleged involvement in the attack on BJP national president JP Nadda's convoy a day ago, a senior police officer said.

Four persons were arrested from Falta, and three from Usthi police station area, both in South 24 Parganas district, he said.

All seven of them were booked under various sections of the IPC for rioting, obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions and other offences. —PTI

report to the Central government about the extremely disturbing developments that do not augur well for democratic values, that are antithetical to rule of law, that sound death knell of constitutional parameters," he told a press conference at the Raj Bhavan. "What happened was most unfortunate. I once again make an appeal to her to withdraw her video with an apology," he added.

He said that he does not

## Amit Shah likely to visit Bengal later this month



Amit Shah

**Kolkata, Dec. 11:** Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah is likely to visit West Bengal for two days later this month to take stock of the party organisation ahead of the 2021 Assembly polls, a senior party functionary of the state said on Friday.

Mr Shah's possible visit will take place in the backdrop of the ongoing tussle between the Trinamul Congress government and the ministry of home affairs over the attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda's convoy on Thursday.

The Mamata Banerjee dispensation decided not to send the chief secretary and the director general of police to New Delhi on December 14 disregarding the MHA's summons in the wake of the attack. "Most likely Amit Shah

Ji will be in West Bengal on a two-day visit from December 19. He will attend a programme of refugees in North 24 Parganas and another function at Santiniketan. However, nothing has been finalised as of now," BJP state general secretary Sayantan Basu said.

State BJP sources said Mr Shah visit is of immense political significance with governor Jagdeep Dhankhar criticising the "worsening" law and order situation in the state. BJP state chief Dilip Ghosh had last month said that Mr Shah and Mr Nadda would visit Bengal every month till the Assembly elections is over. —PTI

wish to share the contents of the report as part of propriety.

The TMC reacted sharply to the governor's remarks, calling him a "conduit pipe" of the BJP. "The governor has made a habit of speaking to the press daily. We do not want to react to his statements, we can only say he is a conduit pipe of Bharatiya Janata Party," TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee told reporters.

Describing the attack on

J.P. Nadda's convoy on Thursday as most "unfortunate and a slur on our democratic fabric", the governor said, "The violators of law in Bengal have immunity and protection of political police and administration."

"Present political scenario in West Bengal is that any Opposition is ruthlessly suppressed... human rights were in flames yesterday on World Human Rights Day," Mr Dhankhar said.

## Cong lost focus after I became Prez: Pranab

**New Delhi, Dec. 11:** The Congress had lost political focus after his elevation as the President and some party members believed that had he become the prime minister in 2004, the 2014 Lok Sabha poll debacle could have been averted, Pranab Mukherjee wrote in his memoir.

Mukherjee completed the book, *The Presidential Years*, before his death. It will be published by Rupa in January.

He died on July 31 at the age of 84, following Covid-19 complications. His observations come at a time of intense internal turmoil in the Congress. The publishers issued a statement announcing the book.

"Some members of the Congress have theorized that, had I become the PM in 2004, the party might have averted the 2014 Lok Sabha drubbing. Though I don't subscribe to this view, I do believe that the party's leadership lost political focus after my elevation as president. While Sonia Gandhi was unable to handle the affairs of the party, Dr (Mamohan) Singh's prolonged absence from the House put an end to any personal contact with other MPs," Mukherjee is quoted as saying in his book.

Mukherjee was the 13th President of India after having spent five decades in politics. —PTI

## 'No Rohingya infiltration on Indo-Bangla border'

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
KOLKATA, DEC. 11

The Border Security Force (BSF) on Friday informed that no instance of Rohingyas' infiltration has been found at the India-Bangladesh border under its South Bengal Frontier in West Bengal this year so far.

"Our mandate is to maintain the sanctity of the international border. We are against any sort of border violation. No such incident about the Rohingyas has been noticed not only in the recent past but also in this whole year in this area," BSF inspector-general (South Bengal Frontier) Ashwini Kumar Singh said.

He was speaking alongside Border Guard Bangladesh additional director-general (South West Region, Jessore)

General Mohammed Zakir Hossain after their three-day-long BSF-BGB regional commander-level conference in Kolkata.

When asked about any recent trend of the Bangladeshis living in India without valid documents of returning to their motherland on the first anniversary of the CAA, Mr Singh said, "We have not experienced any such thing as well. Everything, as far as border is concerned, is normal." He, however, added that the BSF and BGB have jointly decided to check the incidents of firing between themselves across the border. "The issue has been discussed in detail. We have formulated many steps to reduce firing between two sides and lower the loss of both the countries."



Doctors hold banners in Thane on Friday, during their strike, demanding the withdrawal of CCIM notification.

—PTI

## Docs across country join IMA stir

**New Delhi, Dec. 11:** Scores of doctors at several hospitals in Delhi and other cities across the country joined the protest call of the IMA on Friday against the Centre's move allowing post-graduate practitioners of Ayurveda to be trained to perform surgical procedures.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) had given the nationwide call for withdrawal of non-essential and non-COVID services on Friday in protest against the notification by the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM), stating that it will lead to "mixopathy" and

demanding withdrawal of the notification.

In a statement, the IMA said a large number of doctors at various hospitals across the country responded to the call and withdrew services, which affected patients.

In Delhi, doctors at the AIIMS and various city government-run facilities, including the LNJP hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality hospital, DDU hospital, GTB hospital, BSA hospital, Sanjay Gandhi Memorial hospital and the civic-run Hindu Rao Hospital, performed their duties wearing black armbands and ribbons. Shivaji Deb Barman,

president of the FORDA, an apex body of various RDAs in Delhi, said doctors in Delhi will observe a black-ribbon protest, but "will not withdraw any services".

The IMA's call had sought withdrawal of non-essential and non-Covid services between 6 am and 6 pm on Friday to protest against the notification.

The notification issued by the CCIM to allow legal practice of surgeries by Ayurveda practitioners and the formation of four committees by the NITI Aayog for the integration of all systems of medicine will only lead to "mixopathy", the IMA

has said. IMA president Dr Rajan Sharma said, "Allowing doctors of Ayurveda to conduct surgeries would be a compromise with the health of patients. The notification of the amendment to the CCIM Act on post-graduate Ayurveda surgery and the entitlement to study and practise independently have to be seen as another step in advancing and legitimising mixopathy," he said.

Doctors at various hospitals in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, among other states, responded to the IMA's call by striking work or withdrawing OPD services. —PTI

## SHOOT TO KILL

**Device will help user to detect, engage targets effectively**

## Special forces get a CornerShot boost

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 11

Counter-insurgency operations by special forces across the country are all set to get a major boost with the Centre procuring CornerShot devices to be used with Glock pistols.

The CornerShot, which provides its operator the ability to observe and engage targets from behind cover, will minimise casualties and gunshot wounds during counter-insurgency operations or hostile situations.

The ministry of home affairs (MHA) recently

cleared the proposal and orders for the state-of-the-art weapons system is to be placed shortly.

"CornerShot will enable the user to detect and engage targets effectively, using traverse firing in day or night. It also allows its user to see and fire around corners. It will go a long way in preventing and minimising casualties as the user will not be exposed to return fire by the enemy," a senior police official told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Though CornerShot systems are being used for training purposes, this will be the first time that per-



sonnel in the CRPF, BSF and other forces will be using them in their Glock pistols.

The CornerShot weapon system consists of two joined sections. The front

portion holds the pistol along with the camera and other features including tactical LED light, laser device besides other attachments. The rear section houses the operating features, monitor, controls and has a foldable butt.

Among other countries, Israel has been a leading manufacturer of CornerShot systems that are used by military special forces and counter-terrorism units across the world. They mostly use it for their Beretta and Glock pistols.

"CornerShots that are being purchased will have a

visible laser indicator with zeroing mechanism for range not less than 15 metres under clear starlight night conditions. The CornerShot lever allows the operator to quickly swivel the weapon system up to 60 degrees in either direction and turn it back to straight just as quickly," another official involved in anti-insurgency operations explained.

The CornerShot system is already in use for the Indian Police Service (IPS) probationers at the prestigious Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

**This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to extend the periodicity of the run of following Festival Special trains as under:-**

Train No. & Name	Already Notified Upto	Extended Upto
03019 Howrah-Luckow-Kathgodam Special	31.12.2020	31.01.2021
03020 Kathgodam-Luckow-Howrah Special	02.01.2021	02.02.2021
02323 Howrah-Delhi Jn.-Barmer Special	25.12.2020	29.01.2021
02324 Barmer-Delhi Jn.-Howrah Special	30.12.2020	03.02.2021
02331 Howrah-Jammu Tawi Special	29.12.2020	30.01.2021
02332 Jammu Tawi-Howrah Special	31.12.2020	01.02.2021

**Note: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.**

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table of stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in>

Security Helpline No. <b>182</b>	Integrated Helpline No. <b>139</b>	<b>NORTHERN RAILWAY</b> Your Convenience - Our Concern Visit us at : <a href="http://nr.indianrailways.gov.in">nr.indianrailways.gov.in</a> Please join us on
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## SHORT TAKES

## Man jailed for hurling slipper at magistrate

**Thane:** A man who hurled a slipper at a magistrate after being convicted in a theft case in January last year was on Friday sentenced to two years in jail for the act by a court in Bhiwandi in Thane district. On January 29, 2019, Ashraf Ansari (23) got annoyed after being convicted for theft and threw a slipper at the Bhiwandi first class judicial magistrate, who ducked in time, while another hit an advocate, advocate Vijay Munde said. District and Sessions Judge PM Gupta sentenced Ashraf, a resident of Aampada in Bhiwandi, to two years in jail under section 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) of IPC after eight witnesses were examined, said Munde, who appeared for the prosecution. — PTI

## Jawan saves woman who fell on rail track

**Mumbai:** A 23-year-old woman who felt dizzy and fell on the railway tracks was saved in nick of time by a railway police constable on Friday. The incident took place at Sandhurst Road railway station in Mumbai, and the incident was captured in CCTV cameras which showed that CSMT bound local train was entering the station when the incident unfolded. The woman was identified as Anisha Shaikh, who felt dizzy and fell on the railway tracks off platform number 2 when the RPF constable Shyam Surat, posted on the platform spotted her. The constable rushed to check what had happened and found her to be unconscious. Seeing a train entering the platform, the constable jumped on the tracks and lifted the woman and put her on the platform in nick of the time.

## India, Cyprus review relations

**New Delhi:** India and Cyprus on Friday reviewed the cooperation in various fields, including political, economic, consular and cultural areas, the external affairs ministry said. In a statement, the MEA said the fifth round of foreign office consultations between India and Cyprus was held on December 10 virtually. "The Indian side was led by Neeta Bhushan, joint secretary (Central Europe) and Cypriot side was led by Thessalia Salina Shambois, political director, ministry of foreign affairs of the government of Republic of Cyprus," the MEA said. During the consultations, both sides appreciated the traditionally warm relations and reviewed the cooperation in various fields including political, economic, consular and cultural areas. — PTI

## MP: DESPERATE GROOM ABDUCTS BRIDE'S SISTER

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
BHOPAL, DEC. 11

A groom in a Madhya Pradesh village 'kidnapped' minor sister of his bride after being upset over cancellation of his marriage, police said on Friday. The incident took place on Thursday night in the village of Paddapur under Porsa police station in Morena district. The local women and child development department officials along with police raided the village and stopped the marriage following a tip off that the bride was a minor. According to the investigating officer, the anti-child marriage unit of women and child development department visited the village and asked the parents of the bride to stop the marriage saying that it was an offence under the law to marry off a minor girl. Later, the minor bride and her parents were taken to Porsa police station for counseling. Meanwhile, the groom, Vinod Sikwar, along with his kin and friends landed in bride's house for marriage. He got furious when he found the bride missing and "abducted" the bride's sister, aged 12, for marriage. The bride's father who found his younger daughter missing when he reached home from police station, reported the matter to the police. In his complaint at the Porsa police station, he said his minor daughter was kidnapped by Vinod for marriage following cancellation of his marriage. Police later rescued the "abducted" girl.

## Over 120 warships deployed in Indian Ocean region: CDS

*China's rise has prompted race for 'strategic places, bases', says Rawat*

**New Delhi, Dec. 11:** Over 120 warships of extra-regional forces are currently deployed in the Indian Ocean Region in support of various missions, Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat said on Friday, referring to increasing maritime presence of various countries in the strategic sea lanes.

In an address at an online conference, Gen. Rawat said there has been a "race for strategic places and bases" in the Indian Ocean region (IOR) which is only going to gain momentum in times to come.

He said an increasing number of countries are focusing on the IOR considering its geo-strategic importance.

"At present, there are over 120 warships of extra-regional forces deployed in the Indian Ocean region in support of various missions. Till now the region, by and large, remained peaceful," Gen. Rawat said at the Global Security Summit.

The Indian Ocean, considered the backyard of the Indian Navy, is critical for India's strategic interests. China has been making concerted efforts to increase its presence in the region.

Referring to India's aspirations to become a major global power, he said the country will have to achieve it despite living in a "tough neighbourhood" and in an "increasingly contested" region.

"We are witnessing a race for strategic places and bases in the Indian Ocean Region which is only going to gain momentum in times to



Bipin Rawat

**GEN. RAWAT** said there has been a 'race for strategic places and bases' in the Indian Ocean region which is only going to gain momentum in times to come

come. Based on challenges we face as a rising regional power, we require structured long-term planning for capability building and capability development of our defence forces.

"In our quest to build a stronger India, we need a peaceful and stable security environment. We need to maintain our strategic autonomy and cooperative relations underscored by strong regional linkages," he said.

Delving into the evolving geo-political scenario, Gen Rawat said China's "economic and military rise coupled with competition increased its influence and attracted a great deal of interest.

Gen. Rawat said the world appears to be on the brink of a new era as new centres of power and alliances based on geo-politics are emerging putting pressure on the Bretton Woods institutions.

He said the Indo-Pacific region in general and the Indian Ocean region in particular will remain vital for transit and world trade. — PTI

## India rejects charges that Delhi spreading disinformation 'Pak circulating fabricated dossiers'

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

India on Friday lambasted Pakistan over its accusations that New Delhi was spreading disinformation, saying when looking at disinformation, the best example is the "country next door which is circulating fictional and fabricated dossiers and purveys a regular stream of fake news".

Responding to questions on Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan quoting an EU disinformation lab report to accuse India of subversive activities through fake media organisations and similar allegations by Pakistan

foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, ministry of external affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said that as a responsible democracy, India does not practice disinformation campaigns.

"In fact, if you are looking at disinformation, the best example is the country next door which is circulating fictional and fabricated dossiers and purveys a regular stream of fake news," he said at an online media briefing.

Disinformation is practised particularly by those who have records to hide such as sheltering international wanted terrorists including Osama bin



Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti leader Akhil Gogoi interacts with media representatives during the routine health checkup at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital in Guwahati on Friday.

— PTI

## India-China border issue due to actions by China: MEA

## LAC standoff: Match words with actions, India tells China

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

India on Friday blamed China for the military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Ladakh sector in the past six months, saying it was the "result of the actions of the Chinese side which has sought to effect a unilateral change in status along the LAC.

In a statement at his weekly briefing, MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "Our position has been very clear and has been articulated several times in the past. The situation that we have seen since the last 6 months has been a result of the actions of the Chinese side, which has sought to

**THE TWO** Asian giants have been locked in a military face-off in the Ladakh sector since this Summer after China amassed thousands of its troops in the border areas in the Ladakh sector. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson blamed India again for the standoff.

effect a unilateral change in status along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh. These actions are in violation of the bilateral agreements and protocol on ensuring peace and tranquillity along the LAC in the India-China border areas."

The two Asian giants have been locked in a military face-off in the Ladakh sector since this Summer after China amassed thousands of its troops in the border areas in the Ladakh sector.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson on Thursday blamed India

again for the standoff. "We have taken note of the Chinese side's statement that it observes 'strictly the agreements between the two sides and is committed to resolving the border issue through dialogue and safeguarding peace and tranquillity' in the border areas. We expect that the Chinese side will match its words with actions," Mr Srivastava said.

"The core issues, as I mentioned last week, remains that both sides need to strictly follow the various bilateral agreements and protocols in

their entirety, including the 1993 and 1996 agreement on maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the LAC in the border areas, which require that there should not be amassing of troops, each side should strictly abide by and respect the LAC and should not take any unilateral action to alter it," he pointed out.

India also labelled as "factually incorrect" the Chinese embassy's recent assertion that the proposed joint release of commemorative stamps to mark the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and China was cancelled by the Chinese side on account of no feedback given by the Indian side before the launch time agreed by both.

## Have enough ammunition for winters, say farmers

**GAURAV SAINI**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Taking a sip of tea sitting beside a bonfire at the Singhu border, 52-year-old Makkhan Singh Deol tapped on a carton full of roasted gram and said, "The farmers have enough ammunition for the winters."

Numerous bonfires dot the GT-Karnal road, the "new home" of the protesting farmers who have been staying put at the Singhu border point of the national capital demanding withdrawal of the new farm reform laws.

A trolley containing jagery, roasted gram and peanuts arrived on Friday morning from Gurdaspur, Punjab. Another containing dates and gajjak reached the Singhu border on Thursday evening to help the protesting farmers fight the biting cold.

"These are to keep us warm. Come and eat. You won't catch a cold," Deol tells this reporter. He just finished his tea and was now onto 'gajar halwa'.

According to Jagjeet Sandhu from Jalandhar-headquartered Shaheed Bhagat Singh Youth Federation, the farmers get tea, kheer and tomato soup twice a day to keep the cold at bay.

Volunteers from a multitude of non-profit organisations have been supplying coffee, tea, milk, jagery, dates, and peanuts to the farmers in their trolleys and sheds.



Farmers take rest on a tractor-trolley at Singhu Border during their ongoing Delhi Chalo protest in New Delhi on Friday.

— PTI

## New laws benefit farmers: Gadkar

**Nagpur, Dec. 11:** Union minister Nitin Gadkari said the three new laws were good for farmers but confusion was being spread about them.

Speaking to a news channel, the minister said farmers would not protest if they studied the new agri-marketing laws and understood them. "The laws are in the interest of farmers. However, confusion is being spread among farmers with political intentions. I want to appeal to political parties and their leaders to discuss what farmers are gaining and what they will lose," Mr Gadkari said. "I have been working for farmers for the last 20-25 years. I know the situation. These laws have been made on the basis of ground realities." — PTI

## Javadekar: India not responsible for climate change

**New Delhi, Dec. 11:** is not responsible for the problem of climate change and is presently contributing only 6.8 per cent of global emissions, Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar said on Friday.

He said India is the only G20 nation to be in compliance with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Addressing a press meet on the eve of "Five years of Paris Agreement", the minister said India is "walking the talk" on climate change as it has already achieved 21 per cent of its target of reducing emissions intensity of GDP by 33-35 per cent by 2030.

"India's historical contribution to this phenomenon of climate change is only three per cent. India is not responsible for the problem of climate change. Still we will do our bit. Presently, we are contributing only 6.8 per cent of global emissions and per capita emissions is only 1.9 tonnes. Thus, our historical as well present contribution to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions is low.



Prakash Javadekar

"We are among the few countries who are Paris Agreement compliant i.e. our actions lead to maximum temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius which is to be achieved by the year 2100. India is the only G20 country which is complying to the Paris Agreement," Javadekar said.

The G20 or Group of 20 countries comprises the world's largest and fastest growing economies and accounts for 85 per cent of the global GDP and two-thirds of its population.

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 countries in Paris on December 12, 2015 and entered into force on November 4, 2016. — PTI



Telangana chief minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao meets Union home minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Friday. He reportedly sought relief fund for the recent flood hit people in and around Hyderabad. KCR also met Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. — PTI

## Dress code: No T-shirt, jeans in Maha govt offices

**Mumbai, Dec. 11:** Jeans and T-shirt may mean stress-free wear for some, but they are no longer suitable "office attire" for government employees in Maharashtra.

And the government may do a policy "flip-flop" once in a while, but the employees are not allowed to wear the humble slippers to the office as per the new dress code.

Also, all government employees must wear khadi clothes at least on Fridays to encourage the

use of handspun, a circular issued on December 8 stated.

"It has been observed that several officials/staff (mainly contractual staff and advisers engaged for government work) do not wear attire suitable for government employees. Hence, the image of government staff gets sullied among people," it said.

People expect "good behaviour and personality" from all government officials and employees, it reminded.



**ALL GOVERNMENT** employees must wear khadi clothes at least on Fridays to encourage the use of handspun, a circular issued on December 8 stated.

**CLOTHES** with deep colours and strange embroidery patterns or pictures should not be worn

"...if the attire of officials and employees is unsuitable and unclean, it also has an indirect impact on their work," the circular said. The attire should be

"proper and clean", it said. Women employees can wear sarees, salwars/chudidars, kurtas, trouser pants and shirts along with dupattas if necessary, it said.

For men, there is less choice: they can wear shirts and "pants or trouser pants".

"Clothes with deep colours and strange embroidery patterns or pictures should not be worn. Besides, employees and staff should not wear jeans and T-shirts in offices," the circular ordained.

Women employees should wear chappals, sandals or shoes while men should wear shoes or sandals, it was stated. — PTI



THE ASIAN AGE

12 DECEMBER 2020

Nadda stoning: All parties guilty of decorum breach

The attack on the motorcade of BJP president J.P. Nadda in the Diamond Harbour area near Kolkata on Thursday is disquieting. We know the culture of violence appears deeply embedded in West Bengal, ironic as this is for a part of the country to which the uplifting description “renaissance” is ascribed for the all-round effervescence seen here in the nineteenth century in conditions of colonial modernity. No political party operating in the state can claim to be free of guilt in this regard.

Even so, when politically mobilised hooligans, even at a symbolic level — as seems the case in the attack on Mr Nadda’s entourage — target the highest functionary of a political party, in this case the organisational head of the ruling party of the country, it is time for all concerned to reflect and get back to the drawing-board — for the sake of West Bengal and India. If not, political misfortune is apt to overtake us, no matter which party is in the saddle.

The BJP veteran Rajnath Singh, the defence minister and a former BJP chief, put the matter in a very sober way when he noted after the sorry incident, “Attack on political leaders is highly condemnable. The incident should be thoroughly probed and accountability should be fixed.”

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee can hardly be said to have covered herself with glory when she rhymed disparagingly on Mr Nadda’s name

This is the right way, but “nothing happened” to Mr Nadda’s convoy, tweeted the state police. It noted, “A few bystanders threw stones at vehicles trailing his convoy. Everyone is safe and the situation is peaceful,” adding that a probe was on. What are they probing if nothing happened and all is tranquil? At any rate, the police are charged with investigating a crime in neutral fashion, not pass judgments.

When the force has already passed a judgment, it is likely the probe will be designed to be a formality. The head of police ought to be asked questions about his organisation taking such a cavalier view of things in its social media interactions — and frankly, in its actions. It should have been proactive in clearing the route the BJP leader’s convoy was taking. If it pleads that it had not been told about it in advance, it is even worse. The local police ought to know. This is no one else’s business, Mr Nadda’s ‘Z plus’ security status notwithstanding.

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee can hardly be said to have covered herself with glory when she rhymed disparagingly on Mr Nadda’s name. This is not “bhadrak” at all, and sits even worse on a CM’s tongue. “I have asked the police to find out all this,” she said in public remarks. But she ought to be ordering a magisterial inquiry.

The state is to have Assembly elections in a few months. If events of recent weeks are an indication, political violence may possibly rise. BJP is desperate to unseat Ms Banerjee’s Trinamul Congress. In the circumstances, it is necessary not to fan political passions. Union home minister Amit Shah tweeted soon after the tawdry incident, “The West Bengal government will have to answer for the state-sponsored violence.”

This is an observation laden with political partisanship, and because state polls are due soon it gives off the sense of President’s rule being imposed. The home minister ought to sound more sober and act with due responsibility.

A lone ranger departs

In the culture wars of yesteryear, his dance was totally lost on critics. Not considered Indian enough in the West, and Western enough in India, his zany moves failed to satisfy either the “diversity” or the “fashionableness” criteria. Then there were the traditionalists. Whenever he approached potential sponsors for money for his performances or projects, they invariably asked him, “What is modern dance?”

Astad Deboo kept on dancing, for 50 years, not just in India, but all over the world. His dance education was grounded in kathak, taken up at age six. His inspiration, on the other hand, had been a show by the American Murray Louis Dance Company, which he chanced to attend while pursuing a commerce degree in erstwhile Bombay. The adventurous Parsi boy left Mumbai in 1969 onboard a cargo boat and hitchhiked his way through Europe to reach New York in 1974.

In New York, Deboo enrolled at the famous Martha Graham dance academy, but dropped out. He then trained with Pina Bausch in Germany and, in 1977, returned to India and learned kathakali under E. Krishna Panicker, eventually evolving his own style that was minimalist and eloquent in equal measure. But it was not until 1986 that his breakthrough came in terms of peer recognition when Deboo was commissioned to choreograph for Maya Plisetskaya, the prima ballerina of Bolshoi Theatre. The versatile Deboo would go on to collaborate with Bausch herself, theatre artiste Alison Becker Chase, rock band Pink Floyd, dhrupad singers the Gundecha brothers, even Manipur’s Thang-Ta martial artistes and Pung cholom dancers.

Accolades arrived late, in the form of a Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 1995 and a Padma Shri in 2007, and when they came were too little given his contributions.

It would not be incorrect to comment that Deboo was among the few who changed Indians’ puritanical approach to music and dance. For a long time, he was the only one in his field of contemporary dance, a genre he single-handedly, or rather single-footedly, pioneered in India. He leaves behind a transforming legacy, and unreserved admiration in the hearts of his now-sizeable tribe of students, dance aficionados and followers.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Farrukh Dhondy  
Of Cabbages & Kings



“What use the scorching summer  
That burns the buds of spring?  
And these intense obsessions  
That with them despair bring?”

What good the freezing winter  
In which viruses survive?  
Oh! take the seasons as they come  
It’s good to be alive!”

— From *Great Expectorations* by  
Bachchoo

Why we need  
to ‘tolerate’ all  
those who have  
contrary views

Philosophy quibbles over words? If language is the avatar of thought, then ideas, propositions and proofs are the recipes in the avatar’s cookbook. No, not cardamom pods, but cinnamon sticks? Not “ambiguity” but “ambivalence”? “Generalisation” is the foundation of science, “generality” the enemy of it. And thus, we philosophers (*Kabh sey? Pack it in yaar!* — *Ed. Arrey kuchh tho pretension karney do sethji — fd*) purify the dialect of the tribe.

Long years ago, in my teenage in Pune, there was an establishment at one end of the cantonment’s Mahatma Gandhi Road called the Punjab Book Service. It had a display window in which were arranged books such as Bertrand Russell’s *History of Western*

*Philosophy*, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, several literary hard-covered tomes and titles which made the Punjab Book Service (PBS) look like it was in any street in Oxford or Cambridge.

But those titles were not what the clientele wanted and were not the titles stocked in the body of this lending library. The front room had packed shelves of detective stories, Perry Mason courtroom sort of stuff and “Westerns”. There was a back room which you entered through a heavily beaded curtain, with shelves full of brown-paper-covered pamphlet-like books with titles such as *Confessions of a Russian Princess*, *Forget the Hocus Enjoy the Pokus* and *The Nun’s Delight*. All to be borrowed overnight or so for a few annas.

Gentle reader, I beg you to believe that I only became aware of these titles when my friend Dara Cama borrowed them. I never crossed the beaded curtain.

Then a fateful day Dara went to the showcase and brought Will Durant’s *Story of Philosophy* to “Punjabi”, as we called the proprietor, at the book-borrowing counter.

Punjabi stared at the hard-covered volume as though he had never seen it

before. There was a long pause because he couldn’t believe that anyone wanted to read the stuff that he used as decoy material for his chaaloo lending library. He looked up.

“Arrey vah Kyemah! Thoo flaastry pudthai?”

And yes, it was the moment when I converted from addiction to Earl Stanley Gardner to “flaastry”. And then it was I came to appreciate, as perhaps Socrates did, that substituting one word for another changes the world.

This memory of such realisation came to me when in September of this plague year Cambridge University’s vice-chancellor issued a sort of fatwa on free speech demanding of the university staff and students that they “respect” all opinions. His bulletin was widely interpreted as the outlawing of any arguments or contentions which would offend any group. The fatwa was probably issued as a caveat to opponents or those who would argue against the “reality” or achievability of gender transformation. The call to “respect” the insistences of “trans” people and their supporters was interpreted in some quarters as a ban on expressing any opposition to them. This could, if extended, apply to a ban on countering the arguments of anti-

vaccers, people who oppose vaccination.

A professor of philosophy at the university, Arif Ahmed, saw this fatwa as a mandated opposition to free speech. He proposed a simple amendment: substitute the word “tolerate” instead of the word “respect”. That would recognise the right to live with, but not agree with, opinions which seemed to you either ridiculous, contrary to scientific fact or unacceptable for some reason of faith, or otherwise.

Prof. Ahmed calls the vice-chancellor’s directive a policy and labels it as “academic McCarthyism”. The injunction to “respect” an opinion could merely mean to support the fact that it exists. But it could also mean to refrain from publicly contradicting it.

Prof. Ahmed began alone but soon signed up a fair number of academics and students to his amendment to the directive. He is certainly motivated by the acute opposition to the recent practice in British universities of banning (they call it “no-platforming”) people whose views they feel will offend one or another minority.

Prof. Ahmed sees that as an infringement of free speech within institutions which should be the champions of it and of vociferous arguments against

offending ones. He told London’s *Times* that there is the risk of “self-censorship”, that there are now views and opinions in British academia that dare not speak their name.

He goes controversially further, saying that it’s right for academics to engage with white nationalists or even Islamic fundamentalists and that people should be able to hear their, possibly toxic, reasoning, and “make up their own minds and criticise as disrespectfully as they want”.

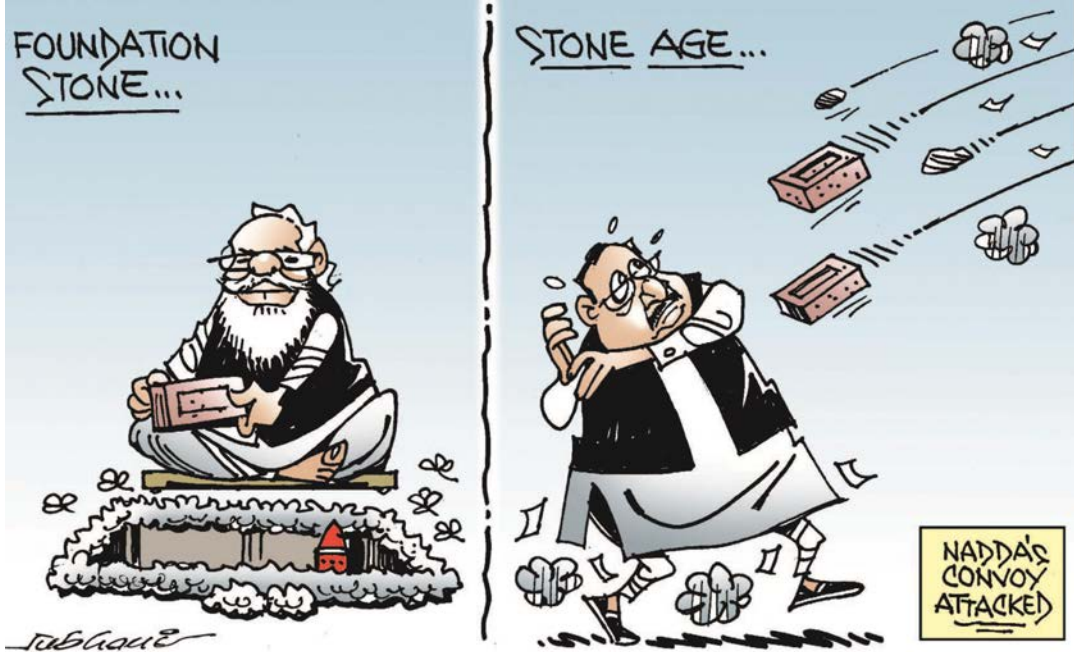
Myself? If I was president of the Cambridge Union and Osama bin Laden (Fish be Upon Him) was still alive, I’d send him an email asking him to speak about why Donald Trump — sorry, I mean America — is in his opinion The Great Satan. I’d perhaps invite Richard Dawkins or someone more militant to speak against him and let a thousand flowers (followers?) fight it out.

I shall not cease from mental strife... etc.

P.S. — As we go to press, Cambridge announces that the Arif amendment and others were passed with a huge majority.

Should tolerators and repliers, supporters of all free speech, now be termed “Arifists”?

Subhani



V is for valour, victory...  
But V is also for vaccine!



Shobhaa De

There is a joke doing the rounds on the social media which goes something like this: “Meanwhile, in Ulhasnagar, everybody is waiting impatiently for the original Covid vaccine to be launched... They say that their duplicate has been ready for two months!” That joke says it all, and is such an accurate reflection of collective angst as one hears the “latest” vaccine-waley breakthroughs, with sombre experts weighing in with their considered opinion on the V-word. In Mumbai, it is as if Covid never happened, or at any rate, even if it did, the virus has miraculously vanished, and the party can begin. In drawing room discussions, the conversation flits from, “Are you going to take it?” to “I hear SRK went to Pune and has already taken it”. I am asked if I plan to take it, and I hesitate before replying... truth be told, I am still sitting on the fence. When I saw pictures of 90-year-olds getting jabbed, I turned cynical because I found it hard to understand why they would risk it at this stage of their lives. The Covid updates in the national dailies remain unread by me, and I switch off when prime time panel discussions breathlessly focus on “Who will win the vaccine race?” The point is, whichever pharmaceutical company wins that Covid Cup, it still won’t solve our problems here in India. But sure... shareholders who have invested in any of the big pharma players will be in a joyous mood over Christmas and New Year.

The off-site narratives of the vaccine story are most engaging. Kids and senior citizens, frontline

workers and others in privileged categories, are busy boasting about being one up on the rest. Getting a shot will soon become a social test — if you aren’t amongst the first to extend an arm for the jab — hey — poor you! The usual “janata class” jamboree will kick in, with folks who will try to jump the queue, bribe their way to “qualify”, forge certificates and documents, call up influential “contacts”, fake illness, do whatever it takes to stake a claim and brag about it. “I have taken the shot — and you haven’t? Arrey! You should have called me, na? I know somebody who would have arranged it for you — that too, at home. Why go and stand in a line like all the others?” Funny... our “line complex”! We hate being seen standing in an orderly line anywhere. If you have to line up, it means you are a nobody — that’s the thinking. I remember one of our most dazzling billionaire wives cribbing that she hated flying “commercial” because it involved lining up with the hoi polloi! She used to frequently berate her husband publicly for not getting her a private jet. “It is so humiliating to be seen at an airport standing with the public!” she would moan and groan. It didn’t matter that personalities in the league of Ratan Tata and Azim Premji not only fly commercial, but carry their own bags on board, with

Neither have I understood the booster shot logic or the reactions to it — headaches, body aches and other symptoms. It’s being described as ‘The Post-Vax effect’.

Azim preferring to fly economy class whenever possible — but that is his special brand of eccentricity. I suspect we will see a similar scramble for the vaccine, with India’s swish set flying off to get their shots in London rather than wait it out for their turn back home. “Apna Time Aayega” holds no appeal for most self-styled VIPs, who consider it infra dig to be told they need to line up like everybody else.

My own state of denial has made me push Covid and the vaccine into the background. I am not convinced it is THE answer, no matter what the docs say. Neither have I understood the booster shot logic or the reactions to the vaccine — the headaches, body aches and other symptoms. It’s being described as “The Post-Vax effect” and it isn’t sounding good — pain swelling, fever. “The vaccine works! Crow those whose faith is undiminished, even if the statistics aren’t in place right now to make such declarations about this particular vaccine. But when it is pointed out that America has crossed the 15 million coronavirus cases, and people are still dropping like flies there, the writing on the wall is ominous indeed. What can be said to reassure citizens? Canada has already picked its vaccine of choice (Pfizer-BioNTech), the same one approved by Bahrain and the United Kingdom. Approvals are being rushed by several other countries, after stating just how rigorously the testing process is being imposed. I dunno! Call me a sceptic — this unholy rush to “market” the vaccine seems more

driven by commerce than humanitarian compulsions. To think such a swathe of people across the globe will be at the mercy of agencies and governments! If your government decides — “This is the one” — then, that is the one! We will never know why this one was picked over that one. Who lobbied for it — who had the most to gain... Today, this one magic-vaccine is going to determine the future of the world — and it will instantly become the single most potent factor when it comes to votes and elections. Its availability and efficacy will determine the fate of governments and political parties across the world. Citizens may never know why a certain pharma company was picked over rivals. Questions about decisions that will affect the health and well-being of our planet will be decided by politicians! The almost unlimited power of the virus over our lives has been established. Now comes the challenge of how we can tame the microbe, save ourselves and keep the faith. What if we discover a few years down the line that our governments have shortchanged us by withholding vital information. Or that our leaders sold our safety in order to stay in power. That the wrong pharma horse was backed? That a corrupt system bought a vaccine it knew full well would not work as promised and made guinea pigs out of us? We have given the mandate a bit too easily. Was there ever a choice?

Readers can send feedback to  
www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

What if we discover a few years down the line that our governments have shortchanged us by withholding vital information? That the wrong pharma horse was backed?

LETTERS

FLEETFOOTED ROSSI

The sudden demise of celebrated Italian footballer Paolo Rossi has cast a pall of gloom over the soccer world. The legend’s passing comes at a time when football buffs are still recovering from Diego Maradona’s going. Rossi’s remarkable run in the 1982 World Cup in Madrid where he slotted in six goals including a hat-trick against Brazil and a brace against Poland reads like a fairytale. He scored Italy’s first goal in the final to set up a stunning 3-1 win over favourite West Germany and drag Enzo Bearzot’s Azzurri to a third World title. His death has robbed the sport of yet another great. RIP.

N.J. Ravi Chander  
Bengaluru

CLAIM YOUR VICTORY

CAN THE FARMERS’ agitation continue till the cow comes home? Most of their demands being acceded to by the government, they have surely proved a force to be reckoned with. Now with the revisions, it is a win-win for all. They are naive if they are expecting the laws shall be taken back lock, stock and barrel. The sustainability of the agitation is doubtful as Delhi is likely to be gripped by biting cold, as fear of Covid looms large. And their own brethren at home are unable to fetch a fair price because of the stir. Pro-longing it now will be self-defeating.

Deepak Singhal  
Noida

BITTER LESSON

THE SCALE OF THE farmers’ agitation has only magnified the one lesson this government has failed to imbibe. Degrees of dissent or alternate opinion do not scale up with greater “democracy”. An electoral majority is not a silver bullet to quell dissent. True democracy creates institutions that provide interfaces to nurture an ethos of constructive dialogue. The earnestness now shown by the government to conduct a clause-by-clause analysis of the laws could have been done with far more distinction before enacting them. The toilers of our much touted Green Revolution are surely capable of inputs to refurbish agro-policies and yet the government chooses to reserve all wisdom to itself.

R. Narayanan  
Navi Mumbai

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



## SHORT TAKES

ARGENTINA ABORTION  
LEGALISATION BILL  
PASSES KEY VOTE

**Buenos Aires:** Politicians in Argentina have voted yes to a bill that brings the largely Catholic country one step closer to legalising abortion, a change long-sought by women's rights activists.

Parliament's lower house voted in favour of the proposed law by 131-117.

Before becoming law, the bill must also pass the upper house, the Senate. The vote is expected before the end of the year.

President Alberto Fernandez proposed the bill which would permit abortions to be carried out up to the 14th week of pregnancy. Currently abortion is only permitted in case of rape or if the mother's health is at risk from pregnancy.

—Agencies

UN BACKS AFGHAN  
PEACE TALKS IN  
RESOLUTION

**United Nations, Dec. 11:** The UN General Assembly approved a resolution over Russian objections on Thursday commending progress in peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban while urging stepped-up efforts to tackle terrorist attacks by the Taliban, al-Qaida, the Islamic State extremist group and their affiliates.

The vote in the 193-member world body was 130 in favour, Russia against, and China, Pakistan and Belarus abstaining. Fifty-nine countries did not vote. The 15-page resolution titled "The Situation in Afghanistan" covers a wide range of issues including peace and reconciliation, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, human rights, counter-narcotics, social and economic development and regional cooperation. While welcoming progress in the intra-Afghan talks, including the December 2 agreement on rules of procedure for negotiations.

INDIAN AMONG 3  
HELD IN \$3MN  
FRAUD CASE IN US

**Washington, Dec. 11:** An Indian-American from Michigan has been arrested along with two others on charges of conspiring to defraud at least 43 victims of more than \$3 million through the sale of phony business opportunities, a US attorney has said. David Weinstein, 61, Vijay Vanam Reddy, 45, and Kevin Brown, 61, have been charged with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud.

Reddy on Thursday made an appearance in a Detroit federal court. Brown and Weinstein were arrested on December 8. Brown was released on \$50,000 bond and Weinstein a day later. From September 2015 through August 2018, the three advertised business opportunities for sale on various websites. They purported to sell "blocks" of contracts with medical providers who allegedly wanted to outsource their medical billing, collections, appeals, answering, credentialing or transcription functions.

The buyers would then provide the contracted services to the medical providers and earn a profit.

ITALIAN ON TRIAL  
FOR THREAT TO  
BLOW UP UK HOSP

**Berlin, Dec. 11:** A 33-year-old Italian man was going on trial Friday in Berlin on allegations that he threatened to blow up a British National Health Service hospital unless he was paid off with 10 million pounds in crypto currency.

The Berlin resident, identified only as Emil A. in line with German privacy laws, is accused of attempted extortion on allegations he sent an email in April 2020 from his home to the NHS, threatening the attack on an unspecified hospital unless he received the funds in his Bitcoin account.

The NHS did not respond, and the suspect proceeded to send another 17 threatening emails until his arrest in June, according to prosecutors. Investigators were able to track the suspect through his electronic trail, which he had attempted to conceal through basic encryption that was easily cracked, said court spokeswoman Lisa Jani. "It was not highly professional," she said. Investigators determined the suspect had no bomb and no specific target, and the case was assigned to a Berlin district court rather than a higher court due to the nature of the allegations, Jani said.

## UK, EU prepare for 'no-deal' Brexit

British PM admits Sunday deadline for next discussion does not hold out great promise

**London, Dec. 11:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has issued the starkest warning yet that the UK could be out of the EU on January 1, 2021, without a trade agreement in place as the two sides remain divided on key areas amidst last-ditch talks between the chief Brexit negotiators.

After Johnson's urgent talks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels failed to break the logjam over the European Union (EU) fishing rights in UK territorial waters as a non-member and competition rules for businesses, the Prime Minister admitted that a Sunday deadline for their next discussion does not hold out great promise.

"At the moment, I have to tell you in all candour, the treaty is not there yet and that was the strong view of our Cabinet," Johnson said on Thursday night. "There's a strong possibility that we will have a solution much more like Australian relationship with the EU than a Canadian relationship with the EU," he said.

An Australia-style agreement effectively means no trade agreement and the two sides would then be trading on World Trade Organisation (WTO) norms, with considerable barriers to movement of goods as well as people. With the UK no longer signed up to the EU rules, it would also mean travel restrictions for Britons travelling to and from the EU at the end of the Brexit transition period on December 31, given the coronavirus pandemic lockdown rules. —PTI



Fishermen sort and load trays of salmon heads to be used as bait for crab and lobster pots as they prepare for their next voyage to sea, on the South Pier of Bridlington Harbour fishing port in Bridlington, north east England on Friday. Trade talks between the UK and the EU continue in Brussels with EU members' future access to Britain's rich fishing waters remaining a major sticking point. —AFP

## EU leaders agree on climate deal

**Brussels, Dec. 11:** EU leaders on Friday agreed an ambitious target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions after unlocking the bloc's landmark budget and Coronavirus recovery fund at a marathon summit.

The 27 member states struck a deal on a binding target to slash emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030 following an entire night of intense wrangling in Brussels.

● **TURKEY ON Friday** called on the European Union to act as an 'honest mediator' in its dispute with EU members Greece and Cyprus over the exploration of gas reserves in the Mediterranean, after European leaders approved expanding sanctions against Ankara.

The fight was over how the cost of the effort should be shared across the countries: highly dependent on coal, Poland — allied with several Eastern European countries — fears serious economic consequences and demanded details on the aid it would receive.

"Europe is the leader in the fight against climate change," European Council president and summit host Charles Michel

declared on Twitter.

French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted an appeal for action now the target was agreed, insisting: "Let's do everything to succeed. Now. All together. Because there is no plan B!" As part of its commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement, the EU has pledged to become climate-neutral by 2050, the date when it would offset or capture more greenhouse gas than it emits. —AFP

## Germany plans for tougher lockdown

**Berlin, Dec. 11:** Calls grew on Friday for tougher lockdown measures in Germany as the country's disease control center reported record daily increases in both Coronavirus cases and deaths.

The Robert Koch Institute said the country's 16 states reported 29,875 new cases of Covid-19, breaking the previous daily record of 23,679 cases reported the day before.

The number of deaths from the virus rose by 598, to a total of 20,970. The previous daily record of deaths was 590, set on Wednesday. "The only chance we have to get in control of the situation is a lockdown, but it needs to be immediate," Interior Minister Horst Seehofer told Der Spiegel magazine. "If we wait until Christmas, we'll have to continue fighting these numbers for months."

Under current restrictions implemented at the beginning of November as numbers were growing exponentially, restaurants, bars, leisure and sports facilities have been closed and hotels are closed to tourists, but schools and nonessential shops have remained open.

The numbers had plateaued — but at high daily levels — and have again been rising in recent days. That prompted Chancellor Angela Merkel this week to call on state governments, which are responsible for imposing and lifting restrictions, to consider closing schools early before Christmas and other measures. —AP

US experts okay  
Pfizer's vaccine

**Washington, Dec. 11:** US experts voted on Thursday to recommend granting emergency approval for Pfizer-BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine, paving the way for America to become the next country to move ahead with mass immunisation.

It comes as the worst-hit country in the world logged more than 3,000 virus deaths in one day and its overall toll was approaching 3,00,000.

With northern hemisphere countries hit by a pandemic winter surge, Britain this week became the first Western country to roll out the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Canada, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have also approved it.

EU countries eagerly awaited a greenlight for

vaccines that the bloc's own watchdog said remained on track for approval despite a two-week-long cyberattack, which is under investigation.

Independent experts convened by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) voted 17 in favor, four against and with one abstention for emergency approval of the two-dose regimen in over-16s.

The vote is non-binding, but a formal emergency use authorisation (EUA) is expected within days.

Momentum was building as the New England Journal of Medicine published full results of a clinical trial of the vaccine involving nearly 44,000 people, which confirmed it was 95 percent effective with no serious safety issues. —AFP

S. Korean director Kim Ki-Duk  
passes away at 59 due to Covid

**London, Dec. 11:** South Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-Duk, known for films such as "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring", "The Isle" and "Pieta", has died due to complications from Coronavirus. He was 59.

The filmmaker passed away at a hospital in Latvia, where he had

arrived last month to buy a house, reported local outlet Delfi.

The news of his death was confirmed by Russian director Vitalij Manskis to Delfi. Ki-Duk was known for his peculiar movies, which were often laced with provocative themes like sex, violence and animal cruelty.

UK BUSINESSES  
WANT BREXIT  
DISCUSSIONS

**London, Dec. 11:** British trucking firms, supermarkets and other businesses on Friday implored the government to strike a last-minute trade deal with the European Union, as the two sides' leaders told their citizens to brace for New Year upheaval in the UK-EU trading relationship.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said there is a "strong possibility" that negotiations on a new economic relationship to take effect Jan. 1 will fail. Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen have set a Sunday deadline to decide whether to keep talking or prepare for a no-deal break.

"We have not yet found the solutions to bridge our differences," von der Leyen said Friday at an EU summit in Brussels. "We will decide on Sunday whether we have the conditions for an agreement or not." Either way, she said, "in less than three weeks, it will be new beginnings for old friends."

Britain left the EU on January 31 but has continued to follow the bloc's rules during a transition period that lasts until the end of the year. Months of talks on a future trade deal have failed to bridge the gaps on three issues — fishing rights. —AP



Joe Biden

BIDEN'S CABINET  
GIVES DISTINCT  
OBAMA FEEL

**Washington, Dec. 11:** President-elect Joe Biden is getting the old gang back together. Increasingly deep into the process of selecting Cabinet members and other senior staff, the incoming Biden administration has a distinctly Obama feel.

There's Denis McDonough, former President Barack Obama's chief of staff who Biden announced on Thursday would be nominated as the secretary of veterans affairs. Susan Rice, Obama's former national security adviser, was named the director of Biden's White House Domestic Policy Council.

That's on top of Biden already tapping Obama's agriculture secretary, Tom Vilsack, to head the department once again, former Secretary of State John Kerry to serve as special envoy on climate and Kerry's Obama-era deputy Antony Blinken to lead the State Department. Jeff Zients, who did stints as acting Office of Management and Budget director and a top economic adviser in the Obama White House, will return as Biden's coronavirus response coordinator. —PTI

OZ ENDS VACCINE  
TRIAL DUE TO HIV  
+VE ANTIBODIES

**Melbourne, Dec. 11:** Australia on Friday stopped the further development of a Covid-19 vaccine candidate as several participants in the early-stage trials generated antibodies for HIV after receiving the potential therapeutic.

There were no serious adverse events or safety concerns reported in the 216 participants of the phase 1 trial of the v451 Covid-19 vaccine candidate being developed by the University of Queensland (UQ) in collaboration with biotech company CSL, according to a statement. However, data showed that some patients developed antibodies towards fragments of a HIV protein (gp41), which was used to stabilise the vaccine, it said. —PTI

GSK, SANOFI SHOT  
WON'T BE READY  
UNTIL LATE 2021

**London, Dec. 11:** Drugmakers GlaxoSmith-Kline and Sanofi say their potential Covid-19 vaccine won't be ready until late next year as they seek to improve the shot's effectiveness in older people.

The companies said on Friday that early-stage trials showed the vaccine produced an "insufficient" immune response in older adults, demonstrating the need to refine the product so it protects people of all ages. They said they now expect the vaccine to be available in the fourth quarter of 2021.

GSK and Sanofi, based in London and Paris, respectively, said they were confident of the vaccine's ultimate success due to positive results from other tests. In adults 18 to 49, the vaccine produced an immune response comparable to patients who had recovered from Covid-19, the companies said.

In addition, they reported positive results from a "challenge study" in which non-human primates were intentionally exposed to the virus. "We have identified the path forward and remain confident and committed to bringing a safe and efficacious Covid-19 vaccine," Thomas Triomphe, head of Sanofi's vaccine unit, said. —AP

## GREEN | REPORT

Estimated 2.4 billion-ton fall is larger than previous record

## Carbon emission down 7% in Covid

**Paris, Dec. 11:** Carbon emissions fell a record seven percent in 2020 as countries imposed lockdowns and restrictions on movement during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Global Carbon Project said Friday in its annual assessment.

The fall of an estimated 2.4 billion tonnes is considerably larger than previous annual record declines, such as 0.9 billion tonnes at the end of World War II or 0.5 billion tonnes in 2009 at the height of the financial crisis.

The international team

of researchers behind the report said emissions from fossil fuels and industry would be around 34 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent this year — still a significant chunk of Earth's remaining "carbon budget".

Emissions reductions were most pronounced in the United States (down 12 percent) and the European Union (down 11 percent), the Global Carbon Project said.

In China, however, it said emissions would likely fall in 2020 just 1.7 percent as Beijing superpowered its

economic recovery.

By sector, emissions from transport accounted for the largest share of the global decrease, with emissions from car journeys falling by roughly half at the peak of the first Covid-19 wave in April.

By December emissions from road transport had fallen 10 percent year-on-year and emissions from aviation were down 40 percent. Emissions from industry — 22 percent of the global total — were down 30 percent in some countries with the strongest lockdown measures. —AFP



Emissions from aviation fell some 40 percent in 2020, the research showed. —AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,099.01	0.30
Nifty 50	13,513.85	0.26
S&P 500*	3,639.00	-0.79
Dollar (₹)	73.64	0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.75	0.35
Euro (₹)	89.31	-0.17
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,594	102 0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.03	-0.22
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.956	0.040
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.883	-0.025

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

US retailers urge shoppers to hurry before rush

Many retailers, including JC Penney, Lowe's and Kohl's, are telling shoppers they need to place their online orders soon or else pay expedited shipping fees if they want to get their packages delivered in time for the holidays. The early deadlines come as more people turn to online shopping this time, creating a logjam for shipping firms and delivery delays. For some retailers, like H&M and Lego, the deadlines have passed.

Gems & jewellery sector pares debt by 26% to \$7.7 bn



The gems & jewellery sector has cut its outstanding debt by 26 per cent to \$7.75 bn in 18 months. The industry has faced difficulties in securing credit in the wake of a few bank fraud cases, Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council chairman Colin Shah said. "The gross bank debt of India's gems and jewellery industry has reduced by a healthy rate of 26 per cent from \$10.44 bn in March 2019 to \$7.75 bn in October 2020."

Auto firms hit by semiconductor shortage

Auto components industry body Acma said it is still not clear about the extent of impact of a shortage of semiconductors on vehicle production in India, after supplier Bosch said it has been impacted severely by supply shortage for imported micro-processors. Acma president Deepak Jain said, "Any stoppage of vehicle lines has a resonating effect on the entire auto component manufacturing ecosystem."

Trust Group enters mutual fund business

Financial services provider Trust Group has announced their foray into mutual fund/asset management business under the brand name Trust Mutual Fund. The asset management company has appointed Sandeep Bagla as its chief executive officer and rating agency Crisil as knowledge partner. There will be periodic review by Crisil of the universe, portfolio and performance, Trust Group said.

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■ Carlsberg, SABMiller, UB in the dock Beer cartel faces hefty CCI penalty

ADITYA KALRA  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Top executives of Carlsberg, SABMiller and United Breweries (UB) exchanged commercially sensitive information and colluded to fix beer prices in India for over 11 years, according to a government antitrust investigation report seen by Reuters.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) in 2018 raided the offices of the three brewers and started an inquiry. The investigation's findings—which are not a final judgment of wrongdoing—cast a shadow on the brewers, which account for 88 per cent of the country's \$7 billion beer market.

Senior CCI members will consider the report, drafted in March, as they decide on fines, which could exceed \$250 million, two sources familiar with the case said. The CCI members could agree with or dispute the findings of its investigation team.

Executives' conversations, WhatsApp messages and e-mails contained in the report show the companies regularly and collectively strategised in seeking price increases in "several states", forging a cartel the CCI said gave them more bargaining power with state authorities.

The companies also used the All-India Brewers Association (Aiba) as a "common platform" to decide collectively on prices; and the local group then lobbied on the compa-



nies' behalf for price increases, the CCI report found.

At least thrice executives exchanged messages urging one another to keep their plans quiet, the report showed.

"We should avoid getting caught," Aiba's director general wrote in an e-mail in 2016 to executives of the three companies.

The brewers coordinated to "manipulate the government machinery" and "were well-aware that their collective approach through the association (Aiba) was violating" competition law, the 248-page CCI report said. The report concluded the cartel existed between 2007 and October 2018.

The CCI did not respond to Reuters queries. Aiba and Carlsberg declined to comment, citing ongoing CCI proceedings.

United Breweries, part-owned by Heineken, said it had cooperated with authorities and would make submissions to the CCI. Heineken didn't comment.

The world's largest brew-

er, Anheuser-Busch InBev, which acquired SABMiller in 2016, said it takes "antitrust compliance very seriously".

The CCI raids in 2018 seized hundreds of files and more than 2 terabytes of data from laptops, pen drives and smartphones.

The case was triggered when AB InBev used CCI's "leniency programme" to disclose that it had detected a cartel while integrating SABMiller's operations in India. Later in 2018, UB and Carlsberg also filed leniency applications.

Under the programme, the CCI can reduce the penalties it imposes on companies depending on the cooperation they provide. In this case, 19 beer executives engaged in anti-competitive practices, the report says.

"The collusion... has been mostly through the highest level of management in these companies," the report said, including managing directors, vice presidents, and sales and marketing heads.

— Reuters

UAE's Lulu Group to set up food unit in J&K

Dubai, Dec. 11: The UAE-based Lulu Group International plans to set up a food processing centre in Sri-nagar for sourcing agri products from Jammu and Kashmir.

The plan was revealed by Lulu Group chairman Yusufali M.A. on Thursday to a Jammu and Kashmir delegation led by principal secretary (agriculture production & horticulture) Navin Kumar Choudhary.

"As per the commitment made during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the UAE in 2019, Lulu Group is fully focused on sourcing a wide range of agri products from J&K," Yusufali said.

Currently, Lulu imports apples and saffron from Kashmir and imports will significantly increase in the coming years. The group imported more than 400 tonne of Kashmiri apples till date, according to an official statement.

Yusufali said the Lulu group is one of the leading importers of food and non-food products from India and setting up a new food processing and logistics centre will further boost export of Kashmiri products to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other countries.

Choudhary welcomed the Lulu Group initiative to host a J&K special fortnight at its super markets across the Gulf region on the occasion of Republic Day-2021. —PTI

Industrial output rises 3.6% in October

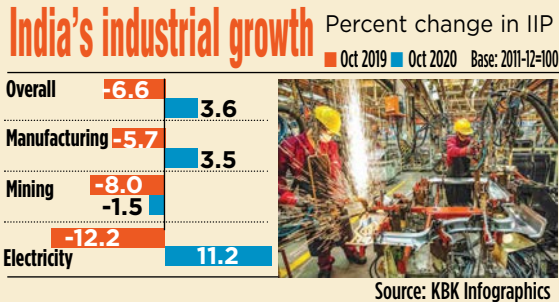
FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

With an upward growth in most sectors, especially manufacturing, electricity and consumer durables, the industrial output, or the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), for October registered 3.6 per cent growth, according to government data released on Friday.

This is the second consecutive month when IIP data remained in positive territory after six months of contraction. The IIP was up 0.5 per cent in September.

The manufacturing sector, which has a weightage of 77.6 per cent in the IIP, recorded a growth of 3.5 per cent in October.

In line with the Reserve



Bank of India's expectation, the October IIP number showed a sign of healing the economy. However, for the April-October period, industrial production contracted 17.5 per cent against 0.1 per cent growth in the year-ago period.

The October IIP growth was mostly driven by the electricity and manufac-

turing sector. The electricity sector grew 11.2 per cent, while the manufacturing sector jumped by 3.5 per cent year-on-year.

The output of capital goods—a barometer of investment—grew 3.3 per cent in October. There was a contraction of 22.4 per cent in the year-ago month.

Home prices fall 2.4% in India

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 11

Home have become more affordable in the Indian market in the last one year, with prices dropping by 2.4 per cent. The demand for housing units have also gone up during the period.

Property consultants Knight Frank India says India has come down seven places in the Global House Price Index, as residential prices have dropped 2.4 per cent for the 12-month period and six-month period to September end. Prices were down 0.5 per cent for

the September quarter compared to June quarter. This led to India moving down to 54th place on the index in Q3 2020 against 47th rank in Q3 2019.

The demand for housing units jumped in India as well. Home sales volume jumped in top eight cities by 2.5 times to 33,403 units in Q3 2020 compared to 9,632 in Q2 2020. New residential unit launches increased by 4.5 times to 31,106 units in Q3 2020, compared to 5,584 units in the previous quarter.

Knight Frank said mainstream residential prices across 56 countries and territories worldwide saw

an average 4.5 per cent price correction in the September quarter. Around 16 per cent of the surveyed global countries and territories registered a decline in yearly price growth.

In Q3 2020, India, Ireland, Spain and Hong Kong witnessed the weakest price growth year-on-year.

Turkey led the index for the third consecutive quarter with annual price growth of 27 per cent. New Zealand with 15 per cent price rise jumped from 11th to second place between Q2 and Q3 as the country saw demand increase post-lockdown.

Hyundai buys 80% in robotics company Boston Dynamics

KYUNGHEE PARK  
DEC. 11

Hyundai Motor Group agreed to buy a controlling stake in Boston Dynamics Inc in a deal that values the mobile robot firm at \$1.1 billion.

Hyundai Motor Group, along with some associated companies and chairman Euisun Chung, will acquire an 80 per cent interest in the US robotics company from SoftBank Group Corp, leaving the Japanese firm with a 20 per cent share, the companies said in a statement on Friday.

Hyundai Motor Group has been beefing up its research in robotics as it expands further into electric and autonomous vehicles. Carmaker Hyundai Motor Co plans to spend over 60 trillion won (\$55 billion) in the next five years in these areas to become one of the world's leading auto manufacturers. The broader empire is also exploring practical uses for industrial robots.

"The combination of the highly complementary technologies of Hyundai



Motor Group and Boston Dynamics, and the continued partnership of SoftBank, will propel development and commercialisation of advanced robots," the companies said, helping to create a "robotics value chain ranging from robot component manufacturing to smart logistics solutions."

Other Hyundai entities that will participate include auto-parts maker Hyundai Mobis Co and Hyundai Glovis Co, which provides international and domestic logistics services. Along with Hyundai Motor the trio will spend around 717 billion won, with Hyundai Motor taking 30 per cent, Mobis 20 per cent and Glovis 10 per cent. The transaction is expected to close by June.

—Bloomberg

PSU stocks gain on sectoral rotation

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, DEC. 11

The Union government's divestment plan has got a boost from a bullish equity market. PSU stocks on Friday rallied to catch up with the rest of the market as investors resorted to sectoral rotation.

As the Sensex made a new all-time high of 46,309.63 on Friday, the main contribution came from the BSE CPSE Index, which gained 2.25 per cent

and the BSE PSU Index, which gained 1.89 per cent. PSU banks also gained.

IRCTC's offer for sale got a good response, with the OFS getting subscribed 2.28 times. Government has got over Rs 4,374.4 crore from the IRCTC divestment at the floor price of Rs 1,367 per share.

"Market mood remains positive with sectoral rotation. Expect 13,000 to act as major support for the Nifty-50 in the near future with 14,000 as the next hur-

dle," said Rusmik Oza, head of fundamental research, Kotak Securities.

Top gainers on the BSE included ONGC (5.68 per cent), NTPC (5.30 per cent), GAIL (4.92 per cent), Punjab National Bank (5.61 per cent), NBCC (5.33 per cent), MMTC (4.26 per cent) and SAIL (3.59 per cent). Other PSU gainers were Coal India (2.52 per cent), PFC (2.45 per cent), NMDC (2.83 per cent) and OIL (4.48 per cent).

Petroleum to boost central tax kitty by 25%

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 11

Petroleum taxes' share in central government tax revenues is likely to touch 25 per cent in FY21. However, with higher oil prices feeding into inflation, a likely rebound in global oil prices could push inflation up further.

In FY15, the share of petroleum taxes in the central tax revenues stood at 12.2 per cent and this has doubled to 25 per cent as of FY21. In absolute terms, the petroleum tax

revenues have almost tripled from Rs 1.26 lakh crore to Rs 4.5 lakh crore during the period, finds Barclays.

The state government taxes on petroleum products too have moved up during the period, but at a slower pace. In FY15, state governments collected Rs 1.37 lakh crore as petroleum tax revenues and this has moved up to Rs 2.1 lakh crore as of FY21. Till FY15, both the taxes have been moving in tandem.

Taxes now account for 60 per cent of the pump price

versus 35 per cent in 2014. Now that the crude prices have started rebounding, the fuel prices will further exert pressure on inflation.

"We estimate that a \$10 per barrel increase in price of crude oil to \$55 per barrel will increase Indian fuel prices by Rs 5.8 per litre at the pump. This would add 34 basis points to headline inflation over three to six months, assuming no change to petroleum taxes," said Rahul Bajoria, chief India economist, Barclays.

MORGAN STANLEY INDIA'S AISHA DE SEQUEIRA DIES AT 51



Mumbai, Dec. 11: Morgan Stanley's co-head in India, Aisha de Sequeira died after a prolonged illness in New York, her family announced on Friday. She was 51.

Sequeira, who was head of investment banking for the American institution in India, is survived by three children and husband, who announced her death on social media platforms.

She was involved in many marquee transactions, including investments by Facebook and Google into Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Jio. She also played an active role in other deals. —PTI

STREAMING | STRENGTH Firm expects 350 million subscribers worldwide by 2024

Disney+ to get flood of new shows

CHRISTOPHER PALMERI  
DEC. 11

Walt Disney Co issued a bold forecast for its new streaming services, projecting a Netflix-like trajectory that could bring the company as many as 350 million subscribers worldwide by 2024 thanks to an onslaught of programming from Marvel, Star Wars and Pixar.

In a presentation to investors on Thursday, the world's largest entertainment company outlined plans for dozens of new movies and TV shows from those major brands, with an eye toward becoming a streaming behemoth in four years. The company expects its programme spending to reach \$14 bil-

lion to \$16 billion annually by then.

Disney+, the entertainment giant's flagship streaming platform, also is getting a price hike. The US monthly rate will climb by \$1 to \$8 in a move that executives telegraphed earlier this year. In Europe, the price will rise 29 per cent to 9 euros (\$11) a month, although there it is getting additional content aimed at adults.

"The enormous success of Disney+ inspired us to be even more ambitious," executive chairman Bob Iger said at the event. "Our pipeline is much more robust than we initially anticipated," he said, adding that the Disney+ cadence should soon hit 100 new titles per year.



Disney, like other Hollywood studios, is reorienting its film and TV business toward home entertainment, and has leapfrogged many competitors with its fast subscriber growth. Yet with its new subscriber goals—including hopes for as many as 260 million

Disney+ customers—the company would surpass where industry pioneer Netflix Inc is today.

Shares of Disney rose as much as 4.7 per cent to \$162 in extended trading. The has about doubled since March on the strength of the streaming business.

As part of the presentation, CEO Bob Chapek said Disney+ has soared past 86.8 million subscribers in a little over a year. The company closed the last quarter with almost 74 million.

Disney executives outlined aggressive plans to stock the Disney+ service with new programming to keep the subscriber pipeline growing over the next few years.

Future plans include 10

series from the Marvel division, 10 Star Wars TV series, and another 15 programs from Disney live action, Disney animation and Pixar.

The programming slate also includes feature-length films, such as the Disney animation picture "Raya and the Last Dragon," which will debut on Disney+—at any extra charge—the same time as in theaters.

Chapek said that 80 per cent of projects are now headed to streaming, rather than the big screen. But the company's biggest films will be saved for theaters exclusively at first. That includes movies such as "Black Widow," a Marvel film slated for May.

— Bloomberg

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The two-wheeler industry saw an increase of 13 per cent during November to 1.6 million units as against 1.41 million units clocked in the same month last year.



## SHORT TAKES

## Verstappen is at maximum speed

**Yas Island (Abu Dhabi):** Max Verstappen posted the fastest time Friday in the first practice for the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The Red Bull driver was 0.34 seconds ahead of Mercedes rival Valtteri Bottas and 1.14 seconds quicker than Renault driver Esteban Ocon. Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton returned for Mercedes after recovering from the Coronavirus and had the fifth fastest time. He struggled early in the session with a brake sensor issue which needed fixing in the team garage. A second practice will be held later Friday at the Yas Marina circuit. — AP

## Joshua, Pulev on the boil at weigh-in

**London:** Anthony Joshua warned Kubrat Pulev he faces “the real one” in Saturday’s world heavyweight title bout in London as the pair almost came to blows at the weigh-in. Former Olympic champion Joshua defends his IBF, WBA and WBO belts at Wembley Arena against the veteran Bulgarian in front of 1,000 fans due to Coronavirus restrictions. The two men have been scheduled to fight twice before but both times the bout was postponed — in 2017 Pulev was injured and Covid-19 put paid to a planned fight in June. But the 39-year-old, nicknamed “The Cobra”, boasts an impressive 28-1 record — his only defeat came in a world title fight against Wladimir Klitschko in 2014. — AFP

## Tennis great Alex dies at 84

**Santa Monica, USA:** Alex Olmedo, who won the Wimbledon and Australian Championships singles titles in 1959 and was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1987, has died. He was 84. Citing Olmedo’s son, Alejandro Jr., the Hall of Fame said Thursday that Olmedo died of brain cancer on Wednesday. Alejandro Alex Olmedo was born in Peru in 1936 and moved to the United States as a teenager. He went to the University of Southern California, where he won NCAA tennis championships in singles and doubles in both 1956 and 1958. Olmedo played in the Davis Cup for the United States and led the team to the trophy in 1958, when he also paired with Ham Richardson to win the doubles title at the U.S. National Championships, the tournament now known as the U.S. Open. — AP

## Hyderabad hold Mohun Bagan 1-1

**Margao:** Hyderabad FC rode on Joao Victor’s second half penalty to hold ATK Mohun Bagan to a 1-1 draw, maintaining their unbeaten run in the Indian Super League, here on Friday. Manvir Singh broke the deadlock in the 54th minute capitalising on a defensive lapse by Odeji Onaibia. But the Mariners’ joy lasted just over 10 minutes as they conceded a soft penalty after Nikhil Poojary was brought down by Manvir with a faint touch. — PTI

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Australia ‘A’ vs India:** Day 2 from 9 am on Sony Six, HD

**Big Bash League:** Melbourne Stars vs Sydney Thunder from 10.35 am; Melbourne Renegades vs Perth Scorchers from 1.45 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Wolverhampton vs Aston Villa from 6 pm; Newcastle vs West Brom from 8.30 pm; Manchester United vs Manchester City from 11 pm; Everton vs Chelsea from 1.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

**Italian League:** Crotone vs Spezia from 7.30 pm; Torino vs Udinese from 10.30 pm; Lazio vs Verona from 1.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

**Indian Super League:** Odisha vs Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

## FORMULA ONE

**Abu Dhabi Grand Prix:** Practice 3 from 3.25 pm; Qualifying from 6.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

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## Hitman is fit, set for Tests

Rohit clears fitness test at NCA, to leave for Australia on Dec. 14

**New Delhi, Dec. 11:** Senior India batsman Rohit Sharma on Friday cleared an eagerly-watched fitness test at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru and will leave for Australia on December 14, three days before the start of the marquee Test series against the world’s number one team.

Rohit had sustained a hamstring injury during the IPL, which led to him missing the white-ball leg of the ongoing tour. He is also out of reckoning for the first two Tests but can now be there for the last two games. “Rohit has cleared the fitness Test and will soon

be flying out to Australia,” a senior BCCI official said on conditions of anonymity.

Rohit’s fitness test took place under the supervision of NCA director Rahul Dravid, who is entrusted with the responsibility of giving him his fitness certificate.

As per the Australian government’s rules, the star batsman will have to undergo a mandatory 14 days of hard quarantine before being able to train for the last two Tests in Sydney (January 7 to 11) and Brisbane (January 15 to 19).

He is flying straight to Sydney and will get a



Rohit Sharma

week’s training there.

There had been confusion around Rohit’s status over the past few weeks. Captain Virat Kohli spoke about a lack of clarity on the issue that has been

full of intrigue ever since he injured his left hamstring during a league match while playing for Mumbai Indians in the IPL.

The injury, which forced him out of four IPL games, prompted the national selectors to not consider him for the Australian tour.

Omitted from the squad for the much-anticipated tour, he soon returned to lead his franchise in the remainder of the lucrative league, adding to the curiosity.

On November 9, the BCCI provided an update on his status, saying the selectors had kept Rohit

out of only the limited-overs leg for him to “regain full fitness” for the Test series.

But the white-ball vice-captain came to Mumbai instead of travelling straight to Australia with his national teammates after leading Indians to IPL title triumph in the UAE.

The BCCI then issued another press release on November 26, a day after Kohli claimed he did not know why Rohit had not done his rehab in Australia, stating that the reason behind the opener coming back to India was his father’s illness.

— PTI



Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli in this file photo.

## Virat, Indian with Aussie trait: Greg

**Adelaide, Dec. 11:** Batting great and former India coach Greg Chappell has called Virat Kohli the “most Australian non-Australian” cricketer of all time and thanked the sport’s “most important” figure for championing the cause of the Test format with his “all-out aggression”.

Chappell invoked Mahatma Gandhi before crediting Kohli’s intensity for bringing about a paradigm shift in Indian cricket.

“Many previous Indian cricket teams tended to play with undue deference to their opponents, as if in accord with the Gandhian principle. Sourav Ganguly was the first Indian captain to try to change that approach. It worked to a degree in India, but usually hit a hurdle overseas,” Chappell wrote in *Sydney Morning Herald*.

“Virat Kohli does not believe in passive resistance. He is a proponent of all-out aggression. His idea is to dominate the opposition.”

“Kohli is the most Australian non-Australian cricketer of all time. He embodies the new India. As the premier player and captain of the world’s pre-eminent cricket power, he feels an abiding responsibility

to the wider game,” he added.

India take on Australia in a much-awaited four-match Test series from December 17 but their talisman will leave for home after the first game for the birth of his first child.

“The fact that Kohli champions Test cricket is a huge plus for a format under pressure for time and space in a crowded schedule,” Chappell said.

“Test cricket has always been the pinnacle for him and it has driven him to be fitter and stronger to cope with its demands. It is why he drives his team in these areas because he wants India to be respected in the most demanding format.”

“If the captain of India is ambivalent towards Test cricket, some administrators would be happy for it to slide into ignominy, as they are seduced by the newer, shinier models,” he said.

On Kohli’s standing in world cricket, Chappell said the batting maestro is aware of that but not obsessed with it.

“Winning games for India is way more important to him and he sees it as his prime objective...he is aware of his status in the game and how he can impact others,” he further added.

— PTI

## Task cut out for India, says Anil

**New Delhi, Dec. 11:** If India don’t land the first punch by clinching the opening day-night Test against Australia, the going will get very tough for the visitors in the absence of talismanic skipper Virat Kohli, feels former national coach Anil Kumble.

India will start the much-awaited Border-Gavaskar Test series with the day-nighter at Adelaide, from December 17, and Kumble feels that the match will be the “biggest challenge” for the visitors.

Skipper Kohli will return home after the opening Test for the birth of his first child.

“If we can stay ahead in the first Test match then India has a great chance to repeat what they did in the last Australia tour,” the

spin legend said.

“Although with (Steven) Smith and (David) Warner coming back, and then Virat (Kohli) missing the three Test matches will obviously be a big factor for India. But having said that, there’s enough ability within the team, be it batting or bowling,” he added.

Kumble feels India’s fast bowling arsenal is at par with Australia, while the visitors are ahead of the hosts in batting but it will all boil down to the result of the first Test.

Also, Rahul Dravid said India will have to find someone who can amass 500-odd runs in the series like Cheteshwar Pujara did the last time around.

— PTI

## Coded messages smart: Donald

BY BIPIN DANI

Former South African pace bowler Allan Donald believes that England computer analyst’s idea of sending coded messages to the team captain Eoin Morgan on the field of play during the 3rd ODI against South Africa was “harmless” to the game.

England analyst Nathan Leamon was seen hanging a series of coded messages from the team balcony — in combinations of letters and numbers — for the players out in the middle.

Speaking exclusively over the telephone from South Africa, he said, “the idea has come from the game of rugby and I don’t see anything wrong in it. I don’t think these coded messages had anything to do with the referrals.”

“Two decorative gentlemen (Donald was referring to Sunil Gavaskar and VVS Laxman) have criticised the innovation but I am sure these coded messages had no influence on the referrals.”

In fact, Donald himself admitted that there was an attempt by his coach to use technology to help the players on the field.

“In the 1999 World Cup in the UK, our coach (Bob Woolmer) was in contact with our captain (Hansie Cronje) and myself in cer-



England analyst Nathan Leamon hangs a coded message to the side from the team balcony during the series against South Africa.

## MCC MONITORING

Following the relaying of signals from the dressing room balcony during the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has been monitoring the situation as guardians of the laws of the game.

“Currently, there is no provision for this in the Laws and at this stage, MCC sees the issue as falling under International Cricket Council (ICC) jurisdiction in terms of their Playing

Conditions, as relaying information from coaching staff is not an event that will take place at all levels of the game,” Fraser Stewart, Lord’s Indoor Cricket Centre Manager, told this correspondent.

“The event will be discussed in due course by the MCC Laws sub-committee, and by the Club’s Cricket committee and World Cricket committee next year,” he further added.

## Maradona stadium for Napoli

**Naples (Italy), Dec. 11:** Napoli kicked off a new era, playing the first game in their stadium since it was renamed in honour of club legend Diego Maradona.

The match at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona was a Europa League clash against Spanish club Real Sociedad.

Argentinian football great and former Napoli star Maradona died two weeks ago aged 60. He lead the club to their only league titles in 1987 and 1990 and the UEFA Cup in 1989.

“Being here, inside the Diego Armando Maradona stadium, is a great honour,” Napoli sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli said before kick-off.

“It’s a responsibility to play for qualification. It is a difficult match, but we will try to do our best and honour his name,” he added.

A minute’s silence was



A shot of the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium in Naples, Italy, before the start of Napoli’s Europa League match against Real Sociedad on Thursday.

— AP

also held before the game in memory of Italy 1982 World Cup winner Paolo Rossi who died early Thursday aged 64 years.

Rossi inspired Italy in the 1982 tournament in Spain where he was the top scorer with six goals, including a hat-trick in the 3-2 defeat of Brazil.

He also scored twice against Poland in the semi-finals and the open-

ing goal in the 3-1 win over West Germany in the final.

“Paolo Rossi was a great point of reference for me,” said Giuntoli.

“In ‘82 I saw the match against Brazil with my uncle and my father in Viareggio, they were extraordinary moments,” he added.

City authorities and the club’s president had pro-

posed renaming the San Paolo Stadium within hours of Maradona’s death. Napoli have already paid homage to Maradona, who played for the club from 1984 to 1991, in two home games.

The players wore his number ten for a minute’s silence in a Europa League game the day after the legendary Maradona’s death.— AFP

## Young Boys, Maccabi and Molde advance in Europa

**Paris, Dec. 11:** Real Sociedad snatched qualification for the last 32 of the Europa League in the final seconds on Thursday after William Jose’s late leveller in a 1-1 draw at Napoli and AZ Alkmaar’s shock 2-1 defeat at Rijeka allowed the Spanish side to progress.

Young Boys, Molde, Wolfsburg and Maccabi Tel-Aviv rounded off the group stage by making Monday’s draw in Nyon, where they join the 18 already-qualified teams and will be met by eight drop-outs from the Champions League.

La Liga high-fliers Sociedad were heading out of Europe as the final two matches of Group ‘F’ headed into stoppage time, with Alkmaar set to go through in second place as the Dutch side were drawing at bottom side Rijeka and Napoli led in Naples thanks to Piotr Zielinski’s fine first

THE RESULTS			
<b>Napoli</b> (Zielinski 35)	1	<b>Leicester City</b> (Under 12, Barnes 14)	2
<b>Real Sociedad</b> (William Jose 90+2)	1	<b>AEK Athens</b>	0
<b>Tottenham Hotspur</b> (Carlos Vinicius 57, Lo Celso 71)	2	<b>CSKA Sofia</b> (Tiago Rodrigues 5, Rowe 34, 55)	3
<b>Antwerp</b>	0	<b>Roma</b> (Milanese 22)	1
<b>Wolfsberg</b> (Joveljic 31)	1	<b>AC Milan</b> (Hauge 23)	1
<b>Feyenoord</b>	0	<b>Sparta Prague</b>	0

half strike.

However Jose’s thumping finish to level the scores at a soaking Stadio Diego Armando Maradona put the Basque outfit back into second place, and Ivan Tomecak’s 93rd-minute winner for Rijeka in Croatia confirmed Alkmaar’s elimination.

Napoli finish top of the group on 11 points, two ahead of Sociedad in second who end the group stage a further point ahead of Alkmaar.

Wolfsberg are through to the knockouts thanks to a 1-0 win over Feyenoord which also knocks out the Dutch giants.

— AFP