

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2020



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Most important challenge facing region is terrorism: India at SCO virtual meet



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Biden chooses Neera Tanden, an Indian American, as head of OMB, a key economic post

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MP minister refutes reports claiming he halted Vidya's shoot over dinner invite



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WINDOWS



Cher waits to greet Asian elephant Kaavan upon his arrival in Cambodia from Pakistan at Siem Reap International Airport on Monday. — AFP

Moderna seeks US, Europe regulatory nod for its vaccine

New York: Biotechnology company Moderna said on Monday that it will request the United States and European regulators to issue an emergency authorisation for its coronavirus vaccine, which it said is 100 per cent effective against severe Covid-19 cases. Moderna said the primary efficacy analysis of the Phase-3 study of its vaccine candidate mRNA-1273 conducted on 196 cases indicates a vaccine efficacy of 94.1 per cent. — PTI

Hyderabad civic body polls today

Hyderabad: The stage is set for polling on Tuesday in the Hyderabad civic polls which witnessed a high decibel campaign resembling an Assembly or parliamentary election with top leaders from different parties participating in the electioneering. As many as 74,44,260 voters would exercise their franchise. Full report on Page 4

3 French military bases hit in Mali

Bamako: Al Qaeda-linked Islamist fighters rocketed French military bases in Kidal, Menaka and Gao in Mali within the space of a few hours on Monday morning, a rare sign of coordinated raids on international forces. — Reuters

COUNTERPOINT



Believe me, these are local elections not Lok Sabha!

WEATHER

Max: 33°C
Min: 26°C
RH: 68%
Rain: 10%

Forecast: Mostly sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula
Padyami till 4.49 pm
Star: Rohini till 8.28 am
Variyam: 2.34 pm to 4.18 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.46 am to 9.31 am; 10.47 pm to 11.39 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.56 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 6.10 PM
MOONSET TODAY 7.35 AM

■ Delhi food supplies to be hit ■ Haryana 'khaps' to join stir

Farmers dig in at borders, Centre calls for talks today

SANJAY KAW and BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, NOV. 30

Refusing to budge, the farmers protesting against the Centre's new laws on agricultural reforms at the Delhi-Haryana border said on Monday that they were in the nation's capital for a "decisive battle" and that their agitation will continue until their demands are met. Thousands of protesters who have been spending cold nights at the Singhu and Tikri borders for the past five days got a shot in the arm with some Haryana khap panchayats deciding to join their agitation from Tuesday.

Late Monday night, the BJP government at the Centre finally gave in to the farmers' demand for unconditional talks and invited their unions for talks on Tuesday, December 1. Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar invited the protest-



Farmers gather at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Monday during their ongoing "Delhi Chalo" protest against the Centre's new farm laws. — PTI

ers to a meeting at Vigyan Bhavan at 3 pm. Mr Tomar's offer came after he met home minister Amit Shah for the second time in 24 hours. Mr Shah earlier said the talks with the protesters could be held only after they moved to a designated site in the national capital.

The farmers' protests have not only affected vehicular movement across the Delhi-NCR

region, but also hit the supply of essential commodities to the national capital. The blockade of National Highway 1 and NH 10, the two main links between Haryana and Delhi, at Singhu and Tikri border points for the past three days, has hit the supply of vegetables, fruits and milk to the city.

Soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi

■ Turn to Page 4

Cong plans pro-farmer campaign on social media

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 30

Throwing its weight behind protesting farmers, the Congress launched a social media campaign Monday in their support as former party chief Rahul Gandhi said when farmers raise their voice, it resonates across the country.

"The Modi government has persecuted the farmer: first it brought black laws and then used lathis against them, but it forgot that when the farmer raises his voice, it resonates throughout the country. You also raise your voice against the exploitation of farmers and join the #SpeakUpForFarmers campaign," Mr Gandhi tweeted.

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BJP's Rajasthan ally threatens it may leave NDA

Jaipur, Nov. 30: Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal, an alliance partner of NDA, on Monday said he will have to reconsider his party's support to the Centre if the new agricultural reform laws are not withdrawn.

Mr Beniwal, the convenor of Rashtriya Loktantarik Party, appealed to Union home minister Amit Shah to withdraw the three farm laws immediately and implement all the recommendations made by the Swaminathan Commission. — PTI

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Farmers are being misled by Opposition, says Modi

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 30

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, facing nationwide protests by farmers across the country against the recently introduced farm laws, on Monday blamed the Opposition's sustained misinformation campaign which, he said, was making farmers suspicious of the reformist laws introduced by his NDA government.

Attacking the previous Congress-led governments for misleading farmers over the years, Mr Modi, while inaugurating the six-lane project of

Varanasi-Allahabad highway in Varanasi, where he was on a day-long visit, said, "I know that decades of falsehood do put apprehensions in the minds of farmers. I want to say this from the bank of Mother Ganga — we are not working with the intention of deceiving. Our intentions are as holy as the water of river Ganga."

Mr Modi's clarification has come at a time when farmers from several states have launched massive protests against the three farm laws, demanding that they be scrapped. Alleging that these laws are anti-farmers and pro-

corporate, thousands of farmers have been camping outside the five entry points of the national capital as a mark of a peaceful protest against the legislations even as Union home minister Amit Shah and agriculture minister Narendra Tomar have been holding parleys to resolve the crisis.

The farmers, who refused to accept Mr Shah's proposal to meet in New Delhi's Burari ground, have threatened to gherao Delhi if the laws are not scrapped, and said that the government should not speak to them with "preconditions".

EYE ON BENGAL POLLS

Jolt to BJP: 'Matua' MP warns delay on CAA may be costly

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, NOV. 30

Soon after its "Gorkhaland" card in poll-bound West Bengal suffered a rude jolt, the BJP has landed in a fresh soup after its own MP and the party's face in the Matua community, Shantanu Thakur, complained of delay in the implementation of a key promise, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), made to the sizeable vote-bank of Hindu refugees who had supported the saffron party in the last Lok Sabha election in the hope of benefiting from the law.

While reminding the BJP leadership to fulfil their promise ahead of the CAA's first anniversary, the Bongaon parliamentary from North 24 Parganas highlighted his community's growing anger due to the prolonged wait.

"Our community is still deprived. The Matuas' aspirations are not being met. They have stood up without any other community's help," alleged Mr Thakur, the joint president of the commu-

■ **BONGAON PARLIAMENTARIAN** Shantanu Thakur highlighted his community's growing anger due to the delay in the implementation of Citizenship Amendment Act

nity's apex forum, All India Matua Mahasangha, after his month-long campaign in the state for immediate CAA implementation by the Centre.

Mounting pressure on the BJP and warning them of Matuas' alienation from the party in next year's Assembly election, Mr Thakur, who is the grandson of Matua matriarch, the late Binapani Devi, asked, "So why will it be unusual for the Matuas to have a political stand in future? CAA is our right. We are also occupants and residents of India like others. We have demanded citizenship. Why isn't the CAA being implemented?"

His dissent assumes significance as the Matua community accounts for

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Fresh cyclone likely to affect TN and Kerala

New Delhi, Nov. 30: Less than a week after Cyclone Nivar battered Tamil Nadu, another storm is expected to affect the southern state, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday.

The cyclone will cross the Sri Lanka coast on December 2 and will bring heavy rain over Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it said.

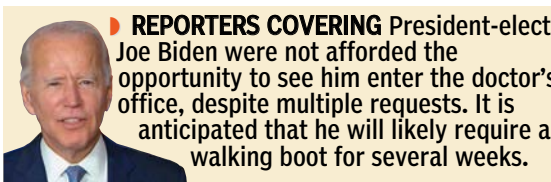
Last week, "very severe" cyclonic storm Nivar had hit Tamil Nadu. — PTI

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A view of the snow-covered Teling and Koksar village after fresh snowfall in Lahaul-Spiti district on Monday. — PTI

Biden fractures leg while playing with dog



▶ **REPORTERS COVERING** President-elect Joe Biden were not afforded the opportunity to see him enter the doctor's office, despite multiple requests. It is anticipated that he will likely require a walking boot for several weeks.

O'Connor, said in a statement. The subsequent scan found tiny fractures of two small bones in the middle of his right foot, Dr O'Connor said.

"It is anticipated that he will likely require a walking boot for several weeks," Dr O'Connor said. Fractures are a concern

generally as people age, but Mr Biden's appears to be a relatively mild one based on his doctor's statement and the planned treatment. At 78 he will become the oldest President when he's inaugurated in January; he often dismissed questions about his age during the cam-

paign. Reporters covering the President-elect were not afforded the opportunity to see Mr Biden enter the doctor's office Sunday, despite multiple requests. Leaving the doctor's office to head to an imaging center for his CT scan, Biden was visibly limping, though he walked without a crutch or other aid.

Mr Biden sustained the injury playing with Major, one of the Bidens' two dogs. They adopted Major in 2018, and acquired their first dog, Champ, after the 2008 election. — AP

■ **States/UTs told to list docs, others for vaccine drive**

Covid: Modi will hold all-party meet Friday

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, NOV. 30

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a discussion on the Covid-19 pandemic situation in the country with the floor leaders of all political parties of both Houses of Parliament on Friday.

The parliamentary affairs ministry is coordinating the meeting, which will be held virtually on Friday from 10.30 am. This will be the second all-party meeting called by the government to discuss the Covid-19 situation since the pandemic's outbreak. The first one was held April 20 amid a nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the virus.

The government is likely to brief parliamentarians about various steps it has taken to deal with the pandemic and may also touch on the advances in vaccine development and distribution. The PM held a virtual meeting on Monday with three teams working on developing and manufacturing the Covid-19 vaccine. He had

Kejri govt reduces RT-PCR test prices in Delhi to ₹800

New Delhi, Nov. 30: The Arvind Kejriwal government on Monday ordered all private laboratories to reduce the price of RT-PCR tests in the national capital to ₹800 from ₹2,400.

According to an order issued by the health department, private laboratories have also been asked to charge Rs 800 for testing samples collected by government

teams and collected from collection sites by private sector labs as requisitioned by districts and hospitals.

However, the testing of samples collected through home visit will cost ₹1,200.

All labs and hospitals have also been asked to display the revised rates at a prominent place within 24 hours.

■ More on Page 2

also visited pharmaceutical companies in Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Pune on Saturday to review coronavirus vaccine development work there.

India till Monday had a total of 91.32 lakh coronavirus cases, of which 38,772 were detected in the past 24 hours. The total deaths due to the virus have crossed 1.37 lakh, out of which 443 fatalities were new.

Kerala, Maharashtra, Delhi and West Bengal continue to report a high number of cases. The cases in Delhi have started reducing a bit after the government enforced stringent measures and increased RT-PCR testing.

The Centre has, meanwhile, also asked states/UTs to identify healthcare workers, including doctors, pharmacists as well as MBBS

■ Turn to Page 4

'Pandemic' emerges as Word of Year 2020

New York, Nov. 30: On December 31, China reported a cluster of pneumonia cases of unknown origin to the World Health Organisation. By January 31, WHO declared an outbreak of a novel coronavirus a global health emergency. Come March 11, the world was facing down the Covid-19 pandemic.

Parents sat children down to explain what a pandemic is. Related terms usually restricted to medicine and science stormed into everyday conversation. Over time, we were pandemic baking and pandemic dating and rescuing pandemic puppies from shelters.

All of which led Dictionary.com on Monday to declare "pandemic" its 2020 word of the year.

Searches on the site for the word spiked more than 13,500 per cent on March 11, senior research editor John Kelly told the Associated Press in an interview ahead of the announcement. — AP

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SHORT TAKES

Noida records 100 new Covid-19 cases

Noida: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar recorded one more fatality linked to Covid that pushed the death toll to 83, while 100 new cases pushed the infection tally to 22,697 on Monday, official data showed. Active cases in the district came down to 1,136 from 1,193 the previous day, according to the data released by the UP health department or a 24-hour period. The number of active cases in Gautam Buddh Nagar is the fifth highest in the state. On the bright side, 161 more patients got discharged during the period, taking the overall recoveries to 21,478, the fifth highest in the state. With the death toll reaching 83, the district has a mortality rate of 0.36 per cent. The recovery rate of patients has reached 94.62 per cent, the statistics showed. Meanwhile, the number of active cases in UP came down to 24,099 from 24,575 on Sunday, while the overall recoveries reached 5,12,028 and the death toll linked to coronavirus climbed to 7,761, the data showed. — PTI

Noida: 2 criminals held after gunfight

Noida: Two notorious criminals were held in Noida on Monday after they suffered injuries in a shootout with the police, officials said. The accused have a combined over 50 FIRs lodged against them, with one having over three dozen cases, including those in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, of loot and robbery, a senior official said. "The two were on a motorcycle and intercepted at 7.20 am at an underpass near the Adobe roundabout. Instead of stopping for inquiry, they sped away and opened fire on the police party. They were chased and hit on their legs during retaliatory police firing," additional DCP (Law and Order) Ashutosh Dwivedi said. He said after the gunfight the accused were taken to a hospital for treatment. "One of the accused has been identified as Monu alias Rahul alias Rohit (32) and the other as Anil alias Annu. Both are Gautam Buddh Nagar locals," Mr Dwivedi said. The police have recovered two chains of yellow-coloured metal from the duo and seized two country-made pistols along with some ammunition from them, he said.

3 men ferrying cattle arrested for cruelty

Noida: Over three dozen cattle being ferried in a truck were rescued and three people arrested for alleged cruelty against animals in Greater Noida on Monday, police said. The truck, which bore a registration number of Haryana's Rewari district, was intercepted at the Eastern Peripheral Expressway in the Ecotech 1 police station area, the police said. "The truck was intercepted following a tip-off from a Haryana-based person. When checked, 36 buffaloes and one bull were found on the truck being ferried in a cruel condition," a police spokesperson said. Those held have been identified as Waseem Kaddooos from Rajasthan's Ajmer, Ruddar, who hails from Rajasthan's Bharatpur, and Mohammad Murtaza, a native of Poonch district in Jammu and Kashmir, the police said. An FIR has been lodged at the Ecotech 1 police station in connection with the case under provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, the police added. — PTI

Undertrial prisoner killed in Tihar jail

New Delhi: A 23-year-old undertrial prisoner was killed after he was allegedly attacked with a sharp object by three other inmates in Tihar jail on Monday morning, officials said. The deceased has been identified as Dilsher Singh. He was lodged in Tihar jail's central jail number three in connection with three different cases including murder, they said. According to a senior jail official, the man was attacked with an improvised sharp object by three other undertrial prisoners lodged in the same barrack with him. He succumbed to injuries and was declared dead by the duty doctor, the official said. All those concerned have been informed and further legal action is being taken, said Sandeep Goel, director general (Delhi Prisons).



Police stand guard as Bharatiya Kisan Union members protest at Ghazipur border during their 'Delhi Chalo' march against the new farm laws in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

Delhi govt caps Covid RT-PCR test at ₹800

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 30

The Arvind Kejriwal government on Monday ordered all private laboratories to reduce the price of RT-PCR tests in the national capital to ₹800 from ₹2,400.

According to an order issued by the health department, private laboratories have been asked to charge ₹800 for testing "samples collected by government teams and collected from collection sites by private sector labs as requisitioned by districts and hospitals".

However, the testing of samples collected through home visit will cost ₹1,200. All labs and hospitals have also been asked to display the revised rates at a prominent place within 24 hours.

The private laboratories have also been asked to process samples, share the reports with the client (government or individual) and update all reports on the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) portal within 24 hours of collection of samples.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain had said that labs are finding it difficult to release results of

Delhi records 108 Covid deaths, 3,726 new cases

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 30

Delhi recorded 3,726 fresh Covid cases on Monday, the lowest in 15 days, while the daily death toll crossed the 100-mark again and stood at 108.

While a total of 50,670 tests for the detection of coronavirus cases were conducted the previous day, the number of RT-PCR tests surpassed that of rapid antigen ones, according to a bulletin by the Delhi health department on Monday.

As many as 26,645 RT-PCR tests and 24,025 rapid antigen tests were conducted on Sunday. A record 69,051 tests, including 33,147 RT-PCR ones, the highest till date, were

conducted on Friday. However, the number of deaths crossed the 100-mark again and stood at 108, Delhi had reported 68 deaths on Sunday, the lowest since November 6 when the city recorded 64 fatalities.

As many as 131 Covid-related deaths were recorded on November 18, the highest till date.

The positivity rate was 7.35 per cent on Monday. It was 7.64 per cent on Sunday, 7.24 per cent on Saturday, the lowest since October 23; 8.51 per cent on Friday, 8.65 per cent on Thursday and 8.49 per cent on Wednesday.

The city had recorded its highest single-day spike of 8,593 cases on November 11.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister said that he had issued directives to reduce the price of the RT-PCR test in the national capital, saying it will help those going to private labs for Covid tests.

"I have directed that the rates of RT PCR tests be reduced in Delhi. Whereas tests are being conducted free of cost in govt establishments, however this will help those who get their tests done in pvt labs," Mr Kejriwal tweeted. Mr Jain in reply to the chief minister's

tweet said orders for this will be issued immediately. Private laboratories said they fully support the step.

Releasing a three-page letter addressed to the Director General of Police at a press conference here, Shora claimed that he is facing a threat to his life from Ms Shehla, her security guard, sister and her mother.

Ms Shehla termed her father's statement "absolutely disgusting and baseless" and said this was his reaction after a court barred him entry into their Srinagar house on November 17 in response to a complaint filed by the family against him under domestic violence.

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Shehla Rashid's dad alleges death threat from daughter

JNU leader terms allegation disgusting

Jammu, Nov. 30: Abdul Rashid Shora, the estranged father of student activist Shehla Rashid, on Monday levelled serious allegations against her, demanding that a probe be initiated into her NGOs and also accused her of having taken a huge amount of money for joining politics in Kashmir valley, a charge denied by her.

Ms Shehla termed her father's statement "absolutely disgusting and baseless" and said this was his reaction after a court barred him entry into their Srinagar house on November 17 in response to a complaint filed by the family against him under domestic violence.

Releasing a three-page letter addressed to the Director General of Police at a press conference here, Shora claimed that he is facing a threat to his life from Ms Shehla, her security guard, sister and her mother.

Delhiites should extend all help to protesting farmers: Kejri

New Delhi, Nov. 30: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday appealed to the people of Delhi to extend all possible help to the farmers protesting against the new farm laws at the Singhu and Tikri border points of the national capital and urged the Centre to hold talks with them at the earliest.

Mr Kejriwal wished everyone on the occasion of Gurupurab, also known as Guru Nanak Jayanti, and said AAP volunteers and MLAs are helping the farmers, who have been braving the cold weather to hold the protest, in any possible way they can.

Thousands of farmers continued to protest against the new agri laws for the fifth consecutive day on Monday, staying put at the Singhu and Tikri border points of the national capital, even as the Delhi Police enhanced security at the Ghazipur border with Uttar Pradesh as the number of protesting farmers swelled there. — PTI

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SHORT TAKES

5 booked for Rajkot hospital fire

Ahmedabad: Five persons were booked on Sunday on the charge of causing death by negligence, two days after a fire at a designated private Covid-19 hospital in Gujarat's Rajkot killed five patients, police said, adding that probe revealed violation of multiple norms by management of the hospital. The accused included chairman, executive director, and other officials of Gokul Healthcare Pvt Limited which operates Uday Shivanand Covid Hospital, where the five deaths had occurred. "The five persons, including top officials of Gokul Healthcare, have been booked under section 304-A (Causing death by negligence) of the IPC after probe revealed gross negligence on their part. Norms were flouted to run the hospital. There was also absence of fire safety facilities," Rajkot DCP Manoharsinh Jadeja told reporters. — PTI

3-time Raj BJP MLA dies of Covid

Jaipur: BJP leader and MLA from Rajsamand in Rajasthan Kiran Maheshwari, who had tested positive for coronavirus, died at a hospital in Gurgaon. She was 59. Maheshwari, a three-time MLA, was undergoing treatment at Medanta hospital for the past few days. She passed away late Sunday night. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot, state Speaker C.P. Joshi, BJP state chief Satish Poonia and other leaders condoled her demise. "Saddened to know of the untimely demise of BJP leader & Rajsamand MLA Kiran Maheshwari ji. My heartfelt condolences to her family members & supporters in this most difficult time," Mr Gehlot tweeted. — PTI

3 held for killing scribe, his friend

Balrampur, UP: Three persons have been arrested in connection with the murder of a 35-year-old journalist and his friend here. Lalit Mishra, Keshvanand Mishra alias Rinku and Akram Ali were arrested for the murder of journalist Rakesh Singh and his friend Pintu Sahu from a jungle near Bahadurpur crossing, superintendent of police, Balrampur, Devranjan Verma said. The trio has confessed to their crime, he added. Mr Verma said Keshvanand's mother was a village head and Singh had exposed siphoning off of funds under her. The accused hold a grudge against Singh over it. They went to his house on the pretext of some talks. They made Singh and his friends consume alcohol and later committed the crime, the SP said. — PTI

SHIV SENA TO ORGANISE AZAN COMPETITION

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, NOV. 30

In a bid to woo Muslims, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena has decided to organise an 'Azan Recitation Competition' in Mumbai. The move is seen as an attempt to neutralise its anti-Muslim image after breaking ties with the BJP and forming the MVA government with the NCP and Congress. The competition has been announced by Shiv Sena South Mumbai division head Pandurang Sakpal. He said, "Azan is held just on the lines of Maha Aarti and it also provides peace of mind. Hence, a competition will be held to encourage Muslim children to recite Azan. Shiv Sena will reward the winners of the contest." The BJP has slammed the move, saying that competition is a sign that the Sena has abandoned its ideology for the sake of power. Praveen Darekar, BJP leader and a leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Vidhan Parishad, said, "Late Balasaheb Thackeray had always criticised the use of loudspeakers for offering Namaz. But Shiv Sena has now given up its Hindutva." However, NCP spokesperson Nawab Malik has hit back at Mr Darekar saying it was not always proper to look at arts and performance through the eyes of religion. In political circles, the move has been seen as Shiv Sena's attempt to dilute its hard core pro-Hindutva image and woo the Muslim community in the state.

BJP asserts MSP, mandis will continue

Ruling party urges farmers not to have misconceptions about agri laws ■ Big companies won't be able to exploit farmers, says minister

New Delhi, Nov. 30: With farmers, especially from Punjab, protesting against new agri laws, the BJP on Monday urged them not to have "misconceptions" about these reforms which, it asserted, have nothing to do with the mechanism of minimum support price (MSP) and 'mandi' that will continue along with the government's purchase of grains. The BJP also attacked Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party government for backing protests against the three farm laws, noting that it has already notified these Acts and begun implementing them.

In a series of tweets in Hindi, BJP leader and Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad sought to refute criticism of these bills by some farmer bodies and Opposition parties. "New agri laws do not end APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) mandis. Mandis will continue to operate as they have been. New laws have given farmers the freedom to sell their produce anywhere. Whoever gives farmers the best price will get to buy their produce be it inside the mandis or outside," he said. Many misconceptions like the farm bills are a conspiracy to not offer farmers MSP, are being spread, he said, adding

that the reality is that these legislations have nothing to do with the minimum support price. "The MSP has been in force and will remain in force," he said.

Big companies will not be able to exploit farmers following these laws, as farmers can walk out of contract anytime without paying any penalty, the Union minister asserted.

Contracts under the new laws will in fact ensure that farmers get the assured price, he said.

Another senior BJP leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar said, "Don't have misconceptions about the farm laws. Farmers of Punjab have sold more paddy in mandi than they did last year and at a higher MSP. MSP is alive and so is mandi. And government purchase is also taking place."

BJP leader Anurag Thakur said the agri sector reforms are opening up new opportunities for farmers to increase their profitability and opportunities.

Amit Malviya, who heads the party's IT wing, took a swipe at Delhi chief minister Kejriwal over his party's opposition to these laws, accusing him of doing politics over the issue despite notifying these legislations that allow farmers to sell their produce outside mandis.



Farmers light candles on the occasion of birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Monday during their ongoing Delhi Chalo protest against the new farm laws. — PTI

"Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government has already notified the new Farm Laws on 23 Nov and had started implementing them. But now that the Khalistanis and Maoists have stepped in to oppose, he sees an opportunity to burn down Delhi. It was never about farmers. Just

politics..." he said. The farmers are protesting against the three laws — Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020

and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020 — that took effect from September 27 after President Ram Nath Kovind's assent.

The farmers have expressed apprehension that the Centre's farm laws would pave the way

for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporates.

The government has maintained that the new laws will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture. — PTI

Listen to people, Capt tells Centre

Sultanpur Lodhi, Nov. 30: Terming their fight against farm laws "just", Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Monday asked the Centre why it was not listening to farmers and was being adamant on the issue. He asserted that his government's would stand firmly with farmers in their fight against the black laws.

"It is the job of the government to listen to its people. If farmers are joining the agitation from so many states, then they must be really upset," said the CM while interacting with the media during his visit to historic towns of Sultanpur Lodhi and Dera Baba Nanak.

On Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stand that the new laws were beneficial to farmers, the CM said Mr Modi had been maintaining this since the beginning and it was the reason why Punjab came out with its own bills.

He questioned the governor's decision to "sit" on those bills instead of forwarding them to the President. — PTI

No social distancing at protest sites Farmer leaders says laws bigger threat than Covid

Sonapat, Nov. 30: Amid fears that the "Delhi Chalo" protests by farmers will lead to coronavirus spreading faster, their leaders said the black laws enacted at the Centre are a bigger threat than the contagion.

There had been few signs of social distancing as thousands of farmers from Punjab and Haryana began their protest last week against the three new agro-marketing laws, setting off on a march to the national capital.

On the way, they skirmished with police at barricades and since Friday are massed at Delhi's entry points, many of them sheltering inside tractor-trolleys. Masks appear to be a rarity and there is little attempt at keeping distance from each other, safeguards meant to prevent the infection from spreading.

The new farm laws are a bigger threat than coronavirus as farmers fear they will lose their livelihood with the implementation of these laws,



Bharatiya Kisan Union members protest at Ghazipur border in New Delhi. — PTI

Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) president Joginder Singh Ugrahan told PTI over the phone.

Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher asked why coronavirus posed a serious threat to life only during the farmers' agitation, and not during the recent Bihar Assembly polls.

When Bihar elections took place, where was Covid-19? When any political gathering takes place, where is coronavirus, he asked, in an apparent ref-

erence to election rallies. A spokesperson for the BKU's Haryana unit led by Gurnam Singh Charuni claimed that farmers are trying their best to keep Covid-19 at bay.

As much as we can, we are trying to follow the guidelines. But at the moment thousands of farmers are saying that getting the Centre's farm laws rolled back is the first priority as these will anyway destroy them, he said.

He said it is now up to the Centre to accept their demands. — PTI

Rahul, Priyanka urge people to join protest

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 30

Throwing its weight behind the protesting farmers, the Congress on Monday launched a social media campaign in their support even as former party president Rahul Gandhi said when farmers raise their voice it resonates across the country.

"The Modi government has persecuted the farmer — first it brought black laws and then used lathis against them, but it forgot that when the farmer raises his voice, it resonates throughout the country. You also raise your voice against the exploitation of farmers and join the #SpeakUpForFarmers campaign," Mr Gandhi tweeted.

The Wayanad MP further said: "The farmer of the country has come to Delhi in the cold, leaving his home and fields, to voice his protest against the black agriculture laws. In this battle of truth and untruth, with whom do you stand - the 'Annadata' (food-giving) farmer or the PM's capitalist friends?"

Asking people to provide the protesting farmers food whenever they can, he said the question is why is the farmer is out on the roads, travelling thousands of kilometers and is stalling traffic.

"PM Modi says the three farm laws are in favour of the farmer, but if these laws are in the farmer's favour, why is he not happy and why is he protesting," asked the Congress leader.

Congress general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also joined the #SpeakUpForFarmers campaign and shared a video highlighting the plight of the farmers.

"In the name of farm laws, all billionaire friends are benefitting. How can farm laws be framed without even talking to farmers? How can the interests of farmers be ignored?" she said in a tweet.

The party also demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi announce the suspension of the three farm laws and take back all 12,000 FIRs filed against farmers without any pre-conditions.

Haryana MLA backs stir, quits livestock board

Chandigarh, Nov. 30: Extending his support to the farmers gathered at Delhi's borders protesting the Centre's new farm laws, Haryana MLA Sombir Sangwan on Monday tendered his resignation as chairman of the State Livestock Development Board. Mr Sangwan is an Independent MLA supporting the BJP-JJP coalition government in the state. In the letter to chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar; he said, "I have resigned from my post in support of farmers. Like the entire country, farmers from my assembly constituency Dadri are also protesting against these laws. In this situation, extending my full support to them is a priority for me and my moral duty too." — PTI

NDA ally RLP says govt must scrap new laws

Jaipur, Nov. 30: Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal, an alliance partner of NDA, on Monday said he will have to reconsider his party's support to the Centre if the new agricultural reform laws are not withdrawn.

Beniwal, the convener of Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP), appealed to Union home minister Amit Shah to withdraw the three farm laws immediately and implement all the recommendations made by the Swaminathan Commission.

Mr Beniwal is the only MP of RLP party which has three MLAs in Rajasthan. — PTI

Yechury slams PM Modi for defending laws

New Delhi, Nov. 30: Criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for defending the farm laws, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury alleged the government was bringing in policies which resulted in the destruction of the economy.

"Pro-people! We have heard you, PM Modi, saying demonetisation, GST, national lockdown are all 'pro-people'. Result: raging pandemic; economy destroyed; growing misery, unemployment, hunger, deprivation.... Do not destroy Indian agriculture and kisans. Withdraw Agri laws," he said in a tweet. — PTI

Heavy rain forecast likely in TN, Kerala

Chennai, Nov. 30: A depression formed over the Bay of Bengal on Monday and it is very likely to intensify into a deep depression and progress as a cyclonic storm, bringing heavy rainfall in south Tamil Nadu and south Kerala between December 2 and 3, the India meteorological department said.

The storm is likely to cross the Sri Lankan coast on December 2 evening or night and then emerge into the Comorin area — around Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu — the next day morning.

Rainfall is likely over Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe, south coastal Andhra Pradesh and Lakshadweep from December 1 to 4, the department said. On Monday, showers are likely at a few and isolated

places in all such regions. In south Tamil Nadu and south Kerala, heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely at a few places and extremely heavy showers at isolated places on December 3. Similar spells could be expected on the preceding and following day as well in the southern parts of the two states including Kanyakumari and Tiruvananthapuram, the IMD said. "A depression formed over southeast Bay of Bengal in the early morning of today..it moved west-northwestwards and lay about 710 km east-southeast of Trincomalee (Sri Lanka) and 1120 km east-southeast of Kanyakumari." It is very likely to intensify further into a deep depression during the next 12 hours and into a cyclonic storm during subsequent 24 hours. — PTI

Prof in Assam rescues turtle

Guwahati, Nov. 30: A turtle belonging to a vulnerable species has been saved from being sold in a fish market in Assam on Monday, thanks to the initiative of an academician, an official said.

INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi

TENDER NOTICE FOR FOOD CATERING SERVICES

Applications are invited from Delhi/ NCR based reputed and experienced Caterers for providing food catering service at Indian Council of World Affairs. The last date of submitting the application is 23.12.2020 upto 3.00 PM. For details and terms and conditions, log on to "TENDERS & NOTICES" column on Homepage of <http://icwa.in>.



Kedar Ghat in Varanasi decorated with earthen lamps on the occasion of Dev Deepawali festival on Monday. — PTI

Elementary schools in Assam to reopen Jan. 1

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, NOV. 30

In a significant move, Assam education and health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday announced that the state government has decided to reopen classes for students of nursery to Class 6 from January 1, 2021. The detailed standard operating procedure (SOPs) regarding the opening of elementary school will be released soon.

Informing that in view of significant improvement in the Covid-19 sce-

nario, all the temporary testing centres have been closed, the minister told reporters that state government has decided to reopen both government and private schools elementary schools but it will be left to parents if they want to send their children to school or not.

Earlier, this month the state government had allowed schools to be reopened for students of Class 6 and above.

He also announced that the government has also allowed the college hostels to re-open from December 15.

Herd of 60 jumbos create havoc in Odisha's Sonepur

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 30

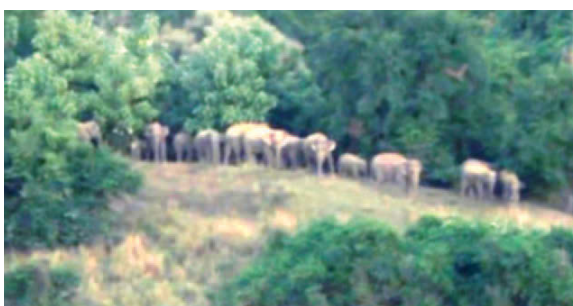
A herd of around 60 wild elephants have reportedly been creating havoc in Binika area of Sonepur district, reportedly for two weeks now causing damage to property and destroying standing paddy crops in several acres of land.

Locals said that due to the fear of the jumbos, they were forced to sleep on the terraces of their houses even as the night temperature in the district

continuously plummeted below 15 degrees Celsius.

According to reports, the elephants sneaked into Jharapada village under Binika block last night and damaged three houses. They also ate up over three quintals of rice stored inside one villager's house.

"The herd of elephants has been tormenting us for the past two weeks now. We are forced to sleep on the terrace of our neighbour. The animals barged into the house last night after damaging the walls and ate over three



The herd elephants seen in Odisha's Sonepur district

quintals of rice. We request the district administration to take measures to drive the elephant away

from the region," said a villager of Jharapada.

"It's been over 12 days, the jumbos are entering

the village repeatedly from the forest and have been damaging property and standing paddy crops in the area," said another villager.

The elephants have caused extensive damage to the crops and thatched houses at Jharapada Sindurpur, Ganeshpur, Keutapada villages under Binika block of the district, added reports.

The pachyderms are seen staying in Ulunda forest in the daytime and entering human habitation after sunset, locals added.

SHORT TAKES

MP lost 290 tigers in 19 years: Official

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh has lost 290 tigers over the last 19 years but the central Indian state still has more than 675 tigers, including 125 cubs, in the designated reserves and in the wild, a top forest department official said on Monday. Claiming that the population of tigers has actually “gone up”, he said Madhya Pradesh will continue to remain the “tiger state of India”.

The official said only five per cent of the deaths of big cats had occurred due to poaching or in man-animal conflicts. Most of the deaths of the tigers occurred either in territorial fights or due to natural causes, he added.

“Madhya Pradesh has lost 290 tigers so far since 2002,” Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Alok Kumar said. However, there are 550 big cats in tiger reserves in Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura, Panna and Sanjay Gandhi reserve and in the wild, he said. — *PTI*

London road to be named after Nanak

London: A west London council said that it has been agreed to rename a road in its heavily Punjabi suburb of Southall as Guru Nanak Road, with the announcement coinciding with Guru Nanak's 551st birth anniversary being marked as Gurburab across the world on Monday. The proposal to rename Havelock Road after the founder of the Sikh faith came to the fore in the wake of London Mayor Sadiq Khan's new Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm to review the UK capital's landmarks in response to the Black Lives Matter protests, which have targeted memorials to historical figures with links to slavery and colonialism. — *PTI*

UP gangster's land attached: Police

Noida: The Gautam Buddha Nagar Police on Monday said it has attached a property worth ₹25 crore of a key aide of mafia Sundar Bhati operating in western Uttar Pradesh. The action has been taken under the Gangsters Act against Nizamuddin alias Nizam alias Munim, an active member of the Sundar Bhati gang, a senior officer said. Officials said the clampdown on the mafia here in western UP started in July in line with chief minister Yogi Adityanath's directives which came close on the heels of the killing of eight policemen in Kanpur by henchmen of history-sheeter Vikas Dubey, who was eventually killed in an encounter by the Special Task Force. An ill-gotten land piece measuring 2.98 hectare and estimated worth ₹25 crore of Nizamuddin has been attached. — *PTI*

RAJNI: DECISION ON POLITICAL PLUNGE SOON

Chennai: After brainstorming with his followers here for about two hours, Tamil superstar Rajinikanth on Monday said that he would make known his decision on entering politics as soon as possible. The top star, refraining from making any categorical assertion, said he met the district secretaries of his 'Rajini Makkal Mandram' and deliberated the possibility of his political foray. While the office-bearers expressed their opinions, he conveyed his views on the matter to them, he told reporters outside his Poes Garden residence after winding up consultations with RMM secretaries at Raghavendra Kalyana Mandapam. “They (functionaries) told me that they are with me whatever may be my decision. I will make known by decision (on political foray) as soon as possible,” he said and raised both his hands gesturing ‘Vanakkam’ in his inimitable style. Assembly elections are due in Tamil Nadu during April-May 2021. A section of office bearers who attended the meet, later told reporters that they urged Rajinikanth to take the political plunge since Tamil Nadu people “need a honest, true leader” to lead them. The top actor listened to their views and assured them that he would announce his decision soon, they said. DMK women's wing secretary and MP Kanimozhi wondered what impact could be expected following the actor's consultations with his supporters and added that in a democracy anyone could aspire to enter politics. — *PTI*

Granddaughter of Baba Amte commits suicide

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 30

Sheetal Amte, a renowned social worker and granddaughter of legendary Baba Amte, on Monday committed suicide by injecting poison. She was in the news recently after she made allegations against trustees and activists of the leprosy service committee of Anandwan. Her family had refuted allegations and said she was suffering from depression.

Dr Sheetal, daughter of social worker Dr Vikas Amte, was reportedly under stress for the last few days. According to reports, a few days ago, she had made serious allegations about the work, trustees, and activists of the leprosy service committee in Anandwan through a Facebook Live. Within two hours, the

Facebook Live was deleted. Later, a statement issued by the Amte family refuted the allegations.

Dr Sheetal had been serving leprosy patients with her husband and family for the past several years.

Three generations of the Amte family are into social work in the far-flung rural and tribal areas of Chandrapur through the Anandwan Ashram and Hemalkasa Ashram in Gadchiroli, tending to people deprived of medical facilities in the Maoist-infested areas.

Dr Sheetal completed her degree from Government Medical College, Nagpur. After becoming a doctor, she joined her family at Anandwan. In addition to her MBBS degree, she also had completed her masters from Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

■ ‘Adversity brings out true innate character’

PM: For India, 2020 will be year of internal discovery

New Delhi, Nov. 30: The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore India's national character for the entire world to behold and 2020 will be known as a year of internal discovery rather than of external disruption, according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Across the world, people have expressed wonder at the way in which Indians, whether poor or rich, young or old, rural or urban, have shown the ability to be responsible, disciplined, focused, law-abiding, patient and composed during a crisis of unprecedented proportions, he said.

“Some may call the year 2020 as a year of external disruptions due to the pandemic. But I firmly believe that 2020 will be known, not as a year of external disruption, but as a year of internal discovery, for our society and for our nation,” Modi wrote in an exclusive article in the Manorama Yearbook 2021.

“Adversity not only builds strength but also brings out our true innate character. This global pandemic has brought to the fore India's national character for the entire world

This global pandemic has brought to the fore India's national character for the entire world to behold, as a resilient and united nation.

— **Narendra Modi,**
Prime Minister

to behold, as a resilient and united nation,” the write-up titled “Aatmanirbhar Bharat: Transforming India” said. Many Indian pharma companies are working to develop a vaccine against coronavirus.

As on Monday, the number of Covid-19 cases in the country crossed 94 lakh and the recoveries' figure neared 88,50,000, according to Union health ministry data. The official toll in the morning stood at 1,37,139.

In the article, Modi also said that in the face of trying circumstances, India has not only stayed firm but also helped the world.

“India emerged as a pharmacy to the world, sending life-saving drugs and medicines far and

At SCO meet, India tears into Pak over its support to terror

Bringing bilateral issues to the SCO violates its charter: Naidu

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, NOV. 30

In a sharp but veiled reference to Pakistan while chairing the “successful” 19th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government hosted by India in virtual format on Monday, vice-president Venkaiah Naidu said that the most important challenge facing the region is cross-border terrorism, while expressing “particular concern about States that leverage terrorism as an instrument of state policy”. He said such an approach is entirely against the spirit and ideals and the Charter of the SCO. Firing another thinly-veiled salvo at Pakistan, the Mr Naidu



India condemns terrorism in all its manifestations. We remain concerned about threats emerging from ungoverned spaces and are particularly concerned about States that leverage terrorism as an instrument of state policy.

— Venkaiah Naidu, vice-president

noted that is “unfortunate to note that there have been attempts to deliberately bring bilateral issues into the SCO and blatantly violate the well-established principles and norms of SCO Charter safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of SCO Member States”. He pointed out that “such acts are counter-productive to the spirit of consensus and cooperation that define the SCO as an organisation”.

Pakistan was represented at the meeting by its parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs while the rest of the SCO member-nations — Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — were represented by their Prime Ministers. The Summit on Monday largely focused on the SCO's trade and economic agenda, with a Joint communiqué stating that “the Heads of delegations in a constructive

and business-like spirit examined the state and prospects of economic development in the world-wide and the region, discussed priority measures to promote trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation in the interests of the peoples of the SCO Member States”.

In a testimony to China's powerful influence in the SCO, all SCO member-nations barring India — in the joint communiqué issued after the meeting — “reaffirmed their support for China's ‘One Belt, One Road’ (OBOR) Initiative (also known as the Belt and Road initiative or BRI)”, noting “the ongoing work on joint implementation of this project, including efforts to bridge construction (of) the Eurasian Economic Union and OBOR”.



Ram Gopal Yadav and Neeraj Shekhar (left) from Uttar Pradesh before taking oath as RS members. Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri (right) signs a register after taking oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha in New Delhi on Monday. — *PTI*

■ ‘Only inclusive regionalism will counter BJP's Hindutva’
‘Bengali Pride’ to be TMC's poll plank

Kolkata, Nov. 30: Buoyed by the “positive” response to its “insider versus outsider” campaign, the TMC leadership has decided to embrace ‘Bengali pride’ as its main poll plank for the 2021 Assembly polls to counter the BJP's aggressive Hindutva campaign in West Bengal.

The Mamata Banerjee-led party, which has often been mocked by opponents for not having a well-defined ideological plank, seems to have finally found one in Bengali sub-nationalism, as a section of top party leaders feels only an “inclusive message of regionalism, which the Bengalis can identify with, will counter

the aggressive nationalism and Hindutva practised by the saffron camp”.

“During the next assembly polls, apart from development, Bengali pride will be our main poll plank. Bengali pride is not just about Bengal, it appeals to all sons of the soil. This philosophy will help counter BJP's attempts to import leaders from outside to control the people of the state,” senior TMC leader and MP Sougata Roy said.

According to TMC sources, much like the regional parties of Tamil Nadu, which are proponents of Tamil pride, and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, which

▶ **ACCORDING TO TMC sources, much like the regional parties of Tamil Nadu, which are proponents of Tamil pride, and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, which harps on Marathi ‘Ashmita’ (pride), the TMC plans to emerge as the protector of Bengali culture and identity**

harps on Marathi ‘Ashmita’ (pride), the TMC plans to emerge as the protector of Bengali culture and identity.

“The JD(U) in Bihar had talked about ‘Bihari versus Bahari’. Even the BJP, which boasts of national-

ism, had campaigned on the poll plank of Gujarat ‘Ashmita’ during the 2007 Gujarat elections. So if we do the same, we think no one should complain about it,” another TMC leader said.

A senior leader of the Mamata Banerjee-led party, who was a part of a select group of the members that formulated this ideological plank, said “divisive politics and religious polarisation could never be countered with development politics. Only sub-nationalism and regionalism can do that.”

The party tasted success in 2011 and continued its winning streak in 2016 Assembly polls. — *PTI*

Murder of Odisha girl: Patra knocks NCPDR door

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 30

The fight for justice for the five-year-old girl Amrita Sneha Sahoo alias Pari which began in the Jadupur village in Odisha's Nayagarh district reached to New Delhi on Monday with the BJP national spokesperson Dr Sambit Patra submitting a memorandum to the National Commission for Child Rights (NCPDR) for an independent inquiry into the kidnapping and murder of the little girl.

In the memorandum submitted to the NCPDR chairperson Priyan Kanoongo, Dr Patra sought an independent probe into Pari's murder case and urged the N a y a g a r h Superintendent of Police (SP) to Delhi by the Commission to brief the Commission about the progress of the investigation so far.

“I prayed to the Commission for an independent probe and requested him to ask the Nayagarh SP to appear before the child rights body and apprise the latter the progress of the investigation so far. I also briefed the Commission how Pari's parents — Ashok Sahoo and Soudamini Sahoo — were harassed by the police and local goons while seeking justice for the brutal murder of their daughter.



R.N. Ravi

Kohima, Nov. 30: Nagaland governor R.N. Ravi on Monday made it clear that there would be no separate flag and constitution, amid persistent demand for these by the NSCN(IM) to achieve a solution to the Naga political issue.

In his message to the people on the eve of 58th statehood Day, Mr Ravi, the interlocutor for the Naga peace process, said the essence of India is its unity in diversity, on the demand for integration of Naga inhabited areas in other states, especially Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

“The Indian national flag and Constitution are the pride of the people of India. The Government of India is absolutely clear that there is and there shall be only one national flag and Constitution in India,” said Mr Ravi.

Anyone talking anything contrary is peddling preposterous lies, he said.

“They are trying to confuse and mislead the people,” he added. Multitudes of ethnicities, languages, cultures and cuisine enrich this beautiful country — from Kerala to Kashmir and Kohima to Kutch, he said.

“The territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Union of India are supreme. The Government of India has never ever talked, much less negotiated with any-

one on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. Any misadventure to disintegrate this great nation shall not be tolerated,” he asserted.

Maintaining that Nagaland currently stands at the crossroads of history, Ravi said the right decision taken will determine the future and the destiny of the coming generations.

With common understanding having been reached on all the issues and conclusion of talks on October 31, 2019, the people of Nagaland are anxiously waiting for the new dawn, he said.

Mr Ravi, without taking any names, lamented that there are some people who are standing as a roadblock to the aspirations of the people of Nagaland.

See the writings on the wall, come out of the make-believe echo-chamber and listen to the voice of the people and in a true democratic spirit respect their wishes, he urged them. — *PTI*

Farmers dig in at borders...

Continued from Page 1
spoke in defence of the farm laws in Varanasi on Monday, a representative of the protesting farmers said they want him to listen to their “mann ki baat”.

“Our demands are non-negotiable,” he added. The representative went on to say that the ruling party “will have to pay a heavy price” if it does not pay heed to their concerns. “We have come here to fight a decisive battle,” he said.

Farmers' leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni said around 31 cases have been registered against the protesters so far to “suppress”

their agitation. He said that the farmers will continue their agitation until their demands are met.

Reaching out to the farmers — who have accused the government of bringing in the new laws for the benefit of corporate groups — Mr Modi said: “I know that decades of falsehood do put apprehensions in the minds of farmers... I want to say this from the banks of Mother Ganga... we are not working with the intention of deceiving. Our intentions are as holy as the water of the river Ganga”.

“If someone thinks that the earlier system is better,

how is this law stopping anyone, bhai?” he added, in a bid to reassure farmers that the new open market system will not mean the end to the traditional mandis and the minimum support prices fixed by the government.

The Centre once again reached out to the farmers Monday, with Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad assuring them that the new farm laws do not abolish the APMC mandis. He said these mandis will continue to operate as before. Highlighting that these recently introduced farm laws give farmers the freedom to sell their crops

anywhere, the minister said that now farmers will be able to sell their products to those who give the best price.

The Delhi police, meanwhile, placed concrete barriers at the Delhi-Ghaziabad border at Ghaziabad after the farmers' leaders said they will block more highways connecting the national capital, besides the Singhu and Tikri borders where they have been camping since Friday. The police said a close watch was being maintained on the situation at the Delhi-Gurgaon, Delhi-Noida and Delhi-Faridabad border areas.

Jolt to BJP: ‘Matua’ MP warns...

Continued from Page 1
16.33 per cent of the state population spread across four districts — North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Nadia, Malda and Coochbehar — and commands influence in around 70 Assembly constituencies out of the total 294.

During his recent visit to West Bengal, Union home minister Amit Shah had dinner at the house of a tribal and a Matua — a Bengali Dalit or Namasudra. The community that suffered immensely due to Partition and migrated from what was then East Pakistan.

State food and supplies minister and Trinamul Congress North 24

▶ **During his recent visit to West Bengal, Union home minister Amit Shah had dinner at the house of a tribal and a Matua — a Bengali Dalit or Namasudra.**

Parganas district president Jyotipriyo Mullick said, “I thank Shantanu for speaking the truth finally. What he said is right. The BJP really did not do anything for the Matuas other than making false promises. If Shantanu quits the BJP, he can join us. I will ask Mamatabala Thakur (former TMC MP who lost to his nephew, Shantanu) to fight shoulder to shoulder with him.”

PM will hold all-party meet on Covid

Continued from Page 1
and BDS interns, who will carry out a Covid-19 inoculation drive once a vaccine is available.

In a letter to the states and UTs, the Centre said MBBS and BDS doctors and interns, staff nurses, auxiliary nurse midwives and pharmacists will be considered as potential vaccinators, provided that they are actively involved in day-to-day provision of clinical care and have experience in administering injections.

“Further, the states may also consider retired personnel from these categories that may be utilised to meet the demand for vaccinators,” the letter written earlier this month by health ministry additional secretary Vandana Gurnani

said. The health ministry has said the recovery rate in the country is good as 45,333 fresh recoveries were recorded in the last 24 hours, ensuring a net reduction of 7,004 active cases. “The contraction of India's active caseload has ensured India's present active caseload of 4,46,952 consists of just 4.74 per cent of India's total positive cases. The difference in new recoveries outnumbering new cases has also improved the recovery rate to 93.81 per cent today. The total recovered cases stand at 88,47,600. The gap between recovered cases and active cases, that is steadily increasing, stands at 84,00,648 — 19.8 times active cases,” the health ministry said.

THE ASIAN AGE

1 DECEMBER 2020

Mend ties in region, try to counter China

We are glad of the flurry of in-person, “non-virtual” diplomacy effected by India in recent weeks in order to pay greater attention to neighbourhood contours that have been allowed to languish of late for want of foresight, although it is time to ponder how this will be rated on the adequacy scale.

India’s immediate neighbourhood is “Saarc Plus” if we take into account Myanmar to the east, China to the north, and Iran and the Gulf Arab states to the west. Of these, the prickly or difficult ties have traditionally been with Pakistan and China, which too need engagement of another kind. Regrettably, however, for some time we have lost sight of the value of ties within Saarc, Afghanistan being the exception, and the neighbourhood too if Iran and the Gulf are excluded.

The relationship with Beijing has now grown tense, with China having militarily encroached into our territory in Ladakh this summer, with India responding to save face by amassing forces inside our own borders to face the People’s Liberation Army. Our northern neighbour’s repeated attempts to encircle us on the Bhutan and Sikkim side has added gravity to the way we think about China.

China’s military incursion into Indian territory adds many layers of complexity to an already complicated dynamic, whose key characteristic was persistent Chinese efforts over a fairly long period to cut us off from our South Asian neighbours, one by one, by lavishing vast sums of money on these countries in the form of investments and infrastructural installations, besides buildup of defence facilities. It’s no exaggeration to say that Beijing has got pretty far in that game, and it is to this reality that the Narendra Modi government has finally woken up.

Thus, we had the foreign secretary heading to Bangladesh in August. A few weeks later, in early October, he was in Myanmar along with the Army Chief. In October-November there has been a cluster of visits. The external affairs minister headed to Bahrain, the UAE and Seychelles in the Indian Ocean. The Army Chief and the RAW chief showed up in Kathmandu, followed up by the foreign secretary. Relations with Nepal have dipped with Kathmandu eating into Indian territory, redrawing boundary maps and getting this endorsed by its legislature. There is considerable lost political ground to cover even as India is going about promising development aid for infrastructure, connectivity and education. The national security adviser was in Colombo for the fourth meeting of the India, Sri Lanka, Maldives trilateral maritime security conference, which had been dormant for some time.

On the whole, however, there is a sense that these are bit moves to compensate for lost time in which the Chinese have made deft manoeuvres. Even as our foreign secretary left Kathmandu, the Chinese defence minister landed there for follow-up action. Our eastern Himalayan neighbours are extremely valuable in dealing with the Chinese. In the Narendra Modi government’s six years, foreign policy has mainly meant being worshipful of the US to the extent of showing partisanship with President Donald Trump in domestic US politics. This is not just amateurish but also harmful. The neglect of neighbours, breaching the first principles of diplomacy, has been another feature of our recent policy. It is time to rethink priorities and have a few good, grand ideas in a rapidly changing environment.

A long way still to go

India’s economy, according to a set of numbers released by the government last week, has shrunk by 7.5 per cent in the quarter that ended on September 30. The contraction in the size of the economy for the second successive quarter has technically got the Indian economy into recession for the first time in its history. A decline in economic growth for two consecutive quarters indicates a recession, or economic stagnation. The silver lining, however, was that the degree of contraction in the economy has reduced in the July-September quarter, compared to the April-June quarter.

While economic activity picked up pace in the second quarter of financial year 2020-21, there is no consensus about the durability of this economic growth. Industrial activity witnessed in the July-September quarter could be to address pent-up demand during the festive season. While people have slowly started resuming their normal activities, business transactions in the touch-heavy sectors have still not reached their pre-Covid levels — a key prerequisite for India’s economic growth re-entering the positive territory.

According to data released by the ministry of statistics, key indicators such as cargo handled at seaports and airports, production of cement, sale of commercial vehicles, and exports continued to underperform and remain in a two-digit contraction. The inter-city movement of people — as shown by data of airports and the railways — has not reached normal levels yet. Unless such a big component of the GDP does not resume its activity, the real economic growth will not be seen.

The government, which was expected to step in to restore demand normality in the economy, has in fact reduced its revenue expenditure. The government’s final consumption expenditure, according to the ministry of statistics, has come down by over ₹1 lakh crore at ₹3.62 lakh crores in the second quarter of fiscal 2020-21 compared ₹4.65 lakh crores in the second quarter of fiscal 2019-20. In a scenario, where the government tries to escape its responsibility by blaming an act of God, one could only hope that God gives Indians strength to beat the coronavirus and help them resuscitate the ailing economy.

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T. VENKATRAM REDDY
Editor in Chief

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Subhani



Will our farmers force arrogant govt to yield?



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The march of the Punjab farmers to New Delhi, accompanied by their counterparts from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and other parts of northern India, despite all the attempts by the BJP-ruled Haryana government, and the refusal of the leaders of the farmers’ unions to abide by the conditions laid down by Union home minister Amit Shah to move to a specified protest site before talks with the government could begin, and more basically rejecting the home ministry’s intervention and insisting that the talks will be held with the agriculture ministry, is a clear rebuff to the self-righteous and arrogant Narendra Modi government one-and-a-half years into its second term. The farmers are not willing to buy the spin of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet and party colleagues that the three farm reform laws rushed through the two Houses of Parliament during the Monsoon Session in September through a voice vote was to strengthen the position of farmers.

The issue is no longer about the merits and demerits of the laws shaking off the shackles of the local mandis and apparently freeing the farmers to sell where they choose, of giving a backdoor entry to corporates into engaging farmers to grow what they need for their commercial purposes and lifting the “essential commodities” tag from food-grains and other commodities, enabling corporate groups to store the produce.

There is enough to discuss there, and the government may have a point or two, but it does not matter if the people affected by them remain suspi-

cious and hostile, and the government do not have any convincing arguments.

What is at issue is the Modi government’s conviction that it can do no wrong, and that the farmers in this case should grasp the good being done for them. The attitude is not that of a democratically elected government, but that of a paternalist state which believes that people should accept the government’s decisions in good faith and not raise impertinent questions.

The Modi government has been getting its way in the last six-and-a-half years, but now it has come up against the farmers’ formidable barricades. The Haryana and Delhi police, with the latter falling under the Union home ministry, have tried to barricade the farmers’ march but there was no stopping the farmers. The Union government had to get off its high horse, and Mr Shah was forced to plead with the farmers that the government was ready to talk to them and that they should move to the Nirankari Grounds at Burari on the outskirts of the national capital. It appears that Mr Shah has no option but to yield further ground.

There is of course the fact that this is also a political tussle between the BJP and its erstwhile ally in Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal. The farmers form the core

By freeing the mandis, the Centre is not enabling the farmers to sell their produce where they want to because 90 per cent of them are marginal farmers

There is enough to discuss there, and the government may have a point or two, but it does not matter if the people affected by them remain suspicious and hostile, and the government do not have any convincing arguments.

constituency of the Akali Dal, and it is alleged that the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committees (APMC), or the mandi committees in the state, are controlled by the first family of the party, Prakash Singh Badal and his son Sukhbir Singh Badal.

The BJP under Mr Modi has been on the warpath of weakening its allies in the National Democratic Alliance — the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the Akali Dal in Punjab, and Janata Dal (United) in Bihar. The Shiv Sena and Akali Dal have sensed the danger and they are hitting back, though the JD(U) is not in a position to do so now.

Prime Minister Modi seems to have miscalculated the horse sense of the farmers. The hard-nosed men and women of the soil are not going to be overwhelmed by the PM’s rhetoric and sweet talk. His “one nation, one farm market” idea does not fool them.

They know their problem is different from that of their counterparts in other parts of the country, and they know the problems they face on the ground more than any government which pretends that it knows best. The issue of minimum support price is only one part of the problem. By freeing the mandis or grain markets, the Centre is not enabling the farmers to sell their produce where they want to because 90 per cent of them are small and marginal farmers owning not more than two acres of land, but it is enabling the corporates to enter the mandis.

The Prime Minister’s

positive spin turns out to be a bluff, and the farmers have seen through this. The Prime Minister and the government have been forced on to the backfoot. They will have to take greater pains to explain the hidden benefits to the farmers that would flow from the new laws, or they will have to promise to address the concerns of the farmers and incorporate them into the laws through necessary amendments.

More than anything else, Mr Modi and his colleagues need to learn, quickly, that they are not infallible, that they mean to do the right thing but yet go wrong, and that even without any evil intention they may do things that harm people more than benefiting them. Their desire to change the country overnight based on a parliamentary majority reveals political immaturity. Farm reforms may be necessary but for them to be successful it is not enough to pass new laws. There is need to connect with the people and win their trust and consent, or at least of a majority of them. The BJP has come to believe in the mantra of “Modi hai toh mumkin hai”. It is not. Even Mr Modi must persuade and convince the people. He cannot simply have his own way. Mr Modi and the BJP might chomp at the reins of democratic controls exerted by the people. But they must learn to hold back and reconsider all issues. There is an urgent need to change the style of governance from that of the presidential to the parliamentary. Had the government sent the bills for review by a joint select committee, as the Akalis and the Opposition parties had so vociferously urged, there would have been time and scope enough to respond to the concerns of the farmers and to incorporate the necessary changes before they became law.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

BRAZEN DISPLAY

It is despicable that an acutely debt-ridden Goa government has decided to merrily squander a whopping ₹100 crore to celebrate 60 years of Goa’s liberation. Ironically, what Goa is witnessing today is another liberation movement by way of a people’s uprising against ill-conceived projects that are sought to be bulldozed against their wishes. With the Mhadei waters issue haunting us apart from other frauds, it is inappropriate for the government to even have thought of this celebration and at a time when the pandemic is raging.

Aires Rodrigues Ribander, Goa

FARMERS: GOVT IN FIX

THIS REFERS TO THE editorial “Farmers have its ear...” (November 30). The Centre is blowing hot and cold on the farmers’ strike. By all accounts it is now in a Catch-22 situation. If it rolls back the new laws, it will set a wrong precedent and derail its ambition to introduce reforms in various other sectors. How the government proves its mettle by ending the impasse remains to be seen. Not to mention the overlooked fact that the big farmers of Punjab and Haryana are in fact a most pampered lot, who enjoy subsidies, free electricity, etc. They comprise the *adhatis*, who clearly stand to lose.

Deepak Singhal Noida

WILL HE, WON’T HE?

ACTOR RAJINIKANTH CONTINUES TO maintain suspense over his political entry in Tamil Nadu. On Monday he asked his Rajini Makkal Mandram (RMM) functionaries to continue their efforts to strengthen the mandram while he would announce his final decision on taking the political plunge soon. Only a while ago, it seemed that he had given up on these plans after keeping his supporters on tenterhooks for several years. A true leader does not betray the hopes of his people.

Sankar Paul Chakdaha, West Bengal

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to R. Narayanan (Nov. 23). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com

Aakar Patel



Looking at the future in fear as economy goes into ‘de-growth’

India’s economy had contracted for another three months, we were told late last week. Meaning that, as a nation, we produced less in goods and services than we did in the same period last year. Meaning also that Indian families in the numbers of lakhs and perhaps crores got pulled into poverty. India’s economy has contracted for six months since Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for the harshest lockdown in the world. This has brought the nation into what economists call a recession, whose definition is two straight quarters of de-growth.

We know we are in a recession because of the media. The Prime Minister has not tweeted out the numbers his government has put out. The finance minister has not done so either. The Niti Aayog’s head says he was “pleasantly surprised” that the numbers were not worse than had been expected. The chief economic adviser professes “cautious optimism” about the data. He had previously predicted growth in the two quarter from April to September. It turned out that instead of growth we had a contraction of 23.9 per cent. He describes himself as inter-

ested in “deep thinking and research”. In the economic survey, he used Wikipedia as a source. News about the third quarter is not good. Bank credit is lower in the current period than it was in the one when the economy contracted. The core sectors (steel, cement, electricity, coal, oil, refining and fertilisers) shrunk in October. If you do not know this, it might be because the Prime Minister and the finance minister have not tweeted about it. If they ignore something, then it doesn’t exist. The data is all from the corporate sector. We have no idea what is happening to the unorganised and small sectors where most Indians are employed. The weak and the poor cannot “work from home”. They must toil every day to eat. We do know that the lockdown, like the earlier demonetisation, like GST, has taken work away from the small and the poor and given it to the corporate sector. The stock market is at a historic high for this reason.

Elsewhere, the capital of our nation is facing farmers’ protests. They want the government to take back the laws that will gut procurement and affect their livelihood. The government’s agents have said

the protesters are anti-national and separatists. The standard line that is used for anyone — academics, minorities, farmers, dissident industrialists — who points out that what the government is doing is wrong. It is like children and name-calling. That is the level of maturity in our national debate.

On the Ladakh front, China has refused to go back from the spaces they have occupied on our border and the Indian Army has to spend the winter in spaces that have not been prepared for such an eventuality. Our jawans were issued sleeping bags that have been previously found to be “unfit for use in glacier and super higher altitude areas”. But they must make do because the political establishment has decided it does not want to deal with the problem. The Prime Minister tweeted that he had an “excellent discussion with my friend Boris Johnson”, the British Prime Minister, about climate change and other matters. He has not found the time to have a discussion with his friend Xi Jinping about his Army going back from our borders. Again, if you don’t talk about the problem, it doesn’t exist. His right hand man, the home

minister of India, has said that the implementation of his pet project, the Citizenship Amendment Act, has been postponed for now. He says this is because of Covid-19 and he will only implement the CAA after the pandemic ends. Why Covid-19 should affect India’s giving citizenship to those non-Muslims who came to India illegally before December 2014 is not known. No other law has been paused because of it. But after an aggressive campaign against those he called “termites”, Amit Shah is now hesitant to take India down the road of religious discrimination. It might help to understand why by looking at what our ambassador in the United States is up to.

He has spent the last two weeks sweet talking those American leaders who had previously condemned India’s actions on the CAA, the National Register of Citizens and on Kashmir.

He has been tweeting out the details of the meetings without saying why India was now engaging with those who did not like the actions of the Narendra Modi government. The reason of course is that Mr Modi’s friend Donald Trump has been defeated in the

presidential election and a Democrat will become America’s new President in two months’ time. The Democratic Party has been very vocal about its concern that India is heading in the wrong direction under Mr Modi and is damaging itself by indulging in overt majoritarianism and harassing and bullying its own minorities. We will see what the effect of India’s outreach to the Democrats is soon enough.

Meanwhile, there has been no let-up in the conduct of the ruling party. In Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere, laws have been passed that will jail Muslim men for 10 years if they marry Hindu women. In Hyderabad, the BJP has said in the campaign for the local elections that a vote for Muslims is a vote against India. Ten years ago, this would have produced outrage, but today it is normal and is accepted because it has become normalised. This is what is going on in our country today. It is hard to see any of it without a sense of dread and fear for what is happening and what may lie ahead.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

SHORT TAKES

NEPAL INTEGRITY
SAFEGUARD GETS
CHINA THUMBS UP

Beijing, Nov. 30: China's Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe has lauded Nepal's leadership for resolutely pursuing the 'one-China' policy and offered firm support to the Himalayan country in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, the defence ministry said here on Monday.

Wei, who is also a State Counsellor, met Nepal PM K P Sharma Oli and exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and held talks with Army chief Gen. Purna Chandra Thapa on ways to resume military cooperation and training impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic during his one-day visit to Nepal on Sunday.

According to a Chinese defence ministry statement, Wei told the Nepalese leaders that China highly appreciates Nepal for resolutely pursuing the 'one-China' policy, and also firmly supports Nepal to safeguard its national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Under the 'one-China' policy, Beijing emphasises other countries to recognise Taiwan and Tibet as part of China, the statement said.

As China firmed up its ties with Nepal, which shares borders with Tibet, with heavy investments besides loans and financial assistance, Beijing wants Kathmandu to stop the free-flow of Tibetans to travel to Dharamshala in India to meet Tibet's highest spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, the statement said.

EXTRADITION
HEARING FOR
RANA ON FEB. 12

Washington, Nov. 30: A US court has set February 12 as the date of hearing for extradition of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, who has been declared a fugitive by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack case. Rana, 59, a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, was re-arrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed.

Rana was earlier arrested in October 2009 by US police soon after Headley's arrest at Chicago O'Hare airport. US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chelonian said in her order on November 13 that the Extradition Hearing in this case is scheduled for February 12, 2021, at 10:00 am. Rana has time till December 21 to file his opposition to the request for extradition. The United States Government will have another month's time to file its reply.

In its motion on September 28, the US government supported Rana's extradition to India where he has been charged with the offences of conspiracy to wage war, commit a terrorist act, the waging of war, the commission of murder, and a terrorist act. Rana has argued that the US decision not to extradite his co-conspirator, David Headley, to India is inconsistent and bars his extradition.

FORCES KILL
GHAZNI ATTACK
MASTERMIND

Kabul, Nov. 30: Afghan forces have killed the Taliban mastermind of a suicide car bomb attack that left at least 30 security personnel dead, officials said Monday. Hamza Waziristani was killed in an air strike overnight in the eastern province of Ghazni where the bomber struck an Afghan military base on Sunday.

"The mastermind behind yesterday's terrorist attack on the (Ghazni) base was killed along with seven other terrorists," the defence ministry said in a statement. Ministry spokesman Fawad Aman said that Waziristani was a Taliban militant from the Pakistani border region of Waziristan. The attack was one of the deadliest in months targeting government forces in Afghanistan, where violence has surged since the start of peace talks between President Ashraf Ghani's administration and the Taliban in Qatar. No group has claimed the attack.

The insurgents have launched near daily attacks against Afghan forces, primarily in rural areas, since signing a deal with Washington in February that paved the way for the withdrawal of foreign troops by May 2021.

Health officials in Ghazni said 30 people died in Sunday's attack, but the defence ministry — which is known to downplay tolls in attacks against its forces — said 10 were killed.

China, Pak talk
regional security

Islamabad, Nov. 30: China's Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe on Monday held talks with Pakistan Army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa and discussed regional security issues and signed an agreement to deepen defence cooperation between the all-weather allies.

"During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security and enhanced bilateral defence collaboration were discussed," said the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of Pakistan's Army, after the meeting between the two generals.

An MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) was also signed for enhancement of defence cooperation between both the Armies," the statement said. The details of the MoU were not shared.

Gen Bajwa thanked Gen Wei for China's unwavering support to Pakistan on all key issues at regional and international forums, saying that the Pakistan Army greatly values the "time-tested and brotherly relations" with China.

● GEN WEI acknowledged and appreciated the Pakistan Army's sincere efforts towards maintaining regional peace and providing a secure environment to the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects.

"We have been standing together all along, and our relations will be no different in wake of future challenges," Gen Bajwa said.

Gen Wei acknowledged and appreciated the Pakistan Army's sincere efforts towards maintaining regional peace and providing a secure environment to the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects, the ISPR statement said.

Earlier on arrival at GHQ, Gen Wei laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada. The Pakistan Army presented a Guard of Honour to the visiting dignitary.

— PTI

Navalny poisoning
pressure on Russia

The Hague, Nov. 30: Russia came under renewed pressure Monday to explain the nerve agent attack on opposition figure Alexei Navalny as the annual meeting of the global chemical weapons watchdog got underway amid measures aimed at reining in the spread of Covid-19.

Navalny fell ill on August 20 during a domestic flight in Russia, and was flown to Germany for treatment two days later. His allies accused the Kremlin of poisoning its fiercest opponent.

Tests carried out by labs in Germany, France and Sweden and by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons established that Navalny was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

The organisation's director-general, Fernando Arias, told Monday's meeting that according to the Chemical Weapons Convention, "the poisoning of an individual through the

use of a nerve agent is a use of a chemical weapon." A group of 56 nations issued a statement as the start of the annual meeting of the OPCW's member states urging Moscow to disclose "in a swift and transparent manner the circumstances of this chemical weapons attack."

Russia, which denies involvement in Navalny's poisoning, reacted bullishly in its written statement to the conference.

"Instead of trying to look into what had happened, Germany and its allies resorted to megaphone diplomacy, unleashed a mass disinformation campaign against Russia and started to demand some 'independent international investigation' under the auspices of the OPCW," Moscow's statement said.

In October, Moscow asked for OPCW experts to visit Russia to provide "technical assistance" in its investigations.

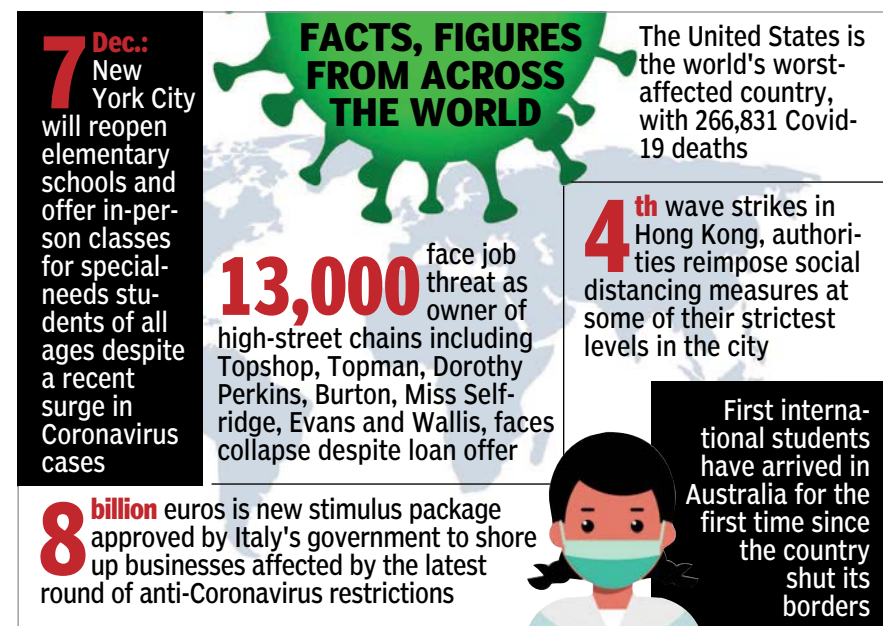
— AP

Lankan prison riot: Eight inmates killed, 37 hurt

Colombo, Nov. 30: At least eight prisoners were killed and 37 others injured when a riot broke out on Sunday at a prison on the outskirts of Sri Lanka's capital when some inmates tried to force open a door and escape, prompting the authorities to use force, police said on Monday.

Police spokesman Ajith Rohana said inmates created "unrest" at the Mahara prison located about 15 kilometres north of Colombo and prison officials took steps to control the situation. The incident comes as pandemic-related unrest has been growing in Sri Lanka's overcrowded prisons.

Inmates have staged protests in recent weeks in several prisons as the number of confirmed Covid-19 positive cases spiked in the country's overcrowded jails. "The incident was started by a set of remand prisoners when they tried to force open a door and



escape following which the authorities had to use force," Rohana said. He said during the entire incident at least 37 more, including two jailors, were

Yellen is Biden's Treasury
Secy, Tanden head of OMB

Prez-elect announces economic team members, to introduce them today

Washington, Nov. 30: US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday named Janet Yellen as his Treasury Secretary and Indian-American Neera Tanden as Director of Office of Management and Budget, as he announced key members of his economic team. If confirmed by the US Senate, Yellen, 74, will be the first woman to lead the Treasury Department in its 231-year history, and the first person to have served as Treasury Secretary, Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, and Chair of the Federal Reserve. She has previously been confirmed by the Senate on four separate occasions. Tanden, 50, if confirmed by the Senate, would be the first woman of colour and first Indian-American to lead the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Tanden's career has focused on pursuing policies designed to support working families, foster broad-based economic growth, and curb rampant inequality. "Another proud day for Indian Americans to see Neera Tanden be nominated for a Cabinet level position in the next administration. This position at OMB is a wide-ranging role with broad powers to manage trillions of dollars of the US budget. If anyone had any doubts that our community has arrived politically, this election cycle is proof enough," Indiaspora founder M R Rangaswami, and an eminent philanthropist and venture capitalist, said.

Announcing key members of his economic team, Biden also named Wally Adeyemo, as Deputy Secretary of the Treasury; Cecilia Rouse as Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers; and Jared Bernstein and Heather Boushey, as members of the Council of Economic Advisers. Biden would formally introduce his team on Tuesday. This crisis-tested team will help Biden administration lift America out of the current economic downturn and build back better — creating an economy that gives every single person across America a fair shot and an equal chance to get ahead, the transition said.



Neapolitan nativity statuettes artisan Gennaro Di Virgilio shows one of the latest addition to his gallery of figures: President-elect Joe Biden, in his shop in San Gregorio Armeno, Naples, on Monday.

Completed Wisconsin recount
confirms Biden's win over Don

Madison (US), Nov. 30: Wisconsin finished a recount of its presidential results on Sunday, confirming Democrat Joe Biden's victory over President Donald Trump in the key battleground state. Trump vowed to challenge the outcome in court even before the recount concluded.

Dane County was the second and last county to finish its recount, reporting a 45-vote gain for Trump. Milwaukee County, the state's other big and overwhelmingly liberal

county targeted in a recount that Trump paid \$3 million for, reported its results Friday, a 132-vote gain for Biden.

Taken together, the two counties barely budged Biden's winning margin of about 20,600 votes, giving the winner a net gain of 87 votes.

"As we have said, the recount only served to reaffirm Joe Biden's victory in Wisconsin," Danielle Meli, who led Biden's campaign in Wisconsin, said. Trump campaign spokeswo-

man Jenna Ellis said in a statement that the Wisconsin recounts have "revealed serious issues" about whether the ballots were legal, but she offered no specific details to validate her claim.

"As we have said from the very beginning, we want every legal vote, and only legal votes to be counted, and we will continue to uphold our promise to the American people to fight for a free and fair election," Ellis said.

— AP

INAUGURAL COMMITTEE: ALLEN CEO,
VARGHESE IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Washington, Nov. 30: President-elect Joe Biden is taking the first formal preparations for his January 20 inauguration, unveiling the inaugural committee that will lead arrangements for the day he and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris assume their posts.

Biden is naming Delaware State University president Tony Allen to serve as chief executive officer of his presidential inaugural committee and campaign chief operating officer Maju Varghese as the group's executive director.

— AP

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS MAY ENTER
BRAIN THROUGH NOSE, STUDY SAYS

Berlin, Nov. 30: The novel Coronavirus may enter the brain of people through the nose, according to a study published on Monday that may help explain some of the neurological symptoms observed in Covid-19 patients, and inform diagnosis and measures to prevent infection.

The research, published in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, noted that SARS-CoV-2 not only affects the respiratory tract but also impacts the central nervous system (CNS), resulting in neurological symptoms such as loss of smell, taste, headache, fatigue and nausea.

Although recent research has described the presence of viral RNA in the brain and cerebrospinal fluid, it remains unclear where the virus enters

and how it is distributed within the brain. The researchers from Charité – Universitätsmedizin, Berlin, Germany examined the nasopharynx — the upper part of the throat that connects to the nasal cavity — a likely first site of viral infection and replication, and the brains of 33 patients — 22 males and 11 females — who died with Covid-19.

The median age at the time of death was 71.6 years, and the time from onset of Covid-19 symptoms to death was a median of 31 days, they said. The researchers said that they found the presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA, the genetic material of the virus, and protein in the brain and nasopharynx, adding intact virus particles were also detected in the nasopharynx. — PTI

VIRUS | EFFECT Deadly term started trending in Jan. when 1st US deaths, ship outbreaks happened

Merriam-Webster's top '20 word: Pandemic

New York, Nov. 30: If you were to choose a word that rose above most in 2020, which word would it be? Ding, ding, ding: Merriam-Webster on Monday announced "pandemic" as its 2020 word of the year. "That probably isn't a big shock," Peter Sokolowski, editor at large for Merriam-Webster, said.

"Often the big news story has a technical word that's associated with it and in this case, the word pandemic is not just technical but has become general. It's probably the word by

which we'll refer to this period in the future," he said. The word took on urgent specificity in March, when the Coronavirus crisis was designated a pandemic, but it started to trend up on Merriam-Webster.com as early January and again in February when the first US deaths and outbreaks on cruise ships occurred.

On March 11, when the World Health Organisation declared the novel Coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic, lookups on the site for pandemic spiked

hugely. Site interest for the word has remained significantly high through the year, Sokolowski said.

By huge, Sokolowski means searches for pandemic on March 11 were 115,806 per cent higher than lookups experienced on the same date last year. Pandemic, with roots in Latin and Greek, is a combination of "pan," for all, and "demos," for people or population. The latter is the same root of "democracy," Sokolowski noted.

The word pandemic dates to the mid-1600s, used

● ON MARCH 11, when the World Health Organisation declared the novel Coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic, lookups on the site for pandemic spiked hugely.

broadly for "universal" and more specifically to disease in a medical text in the 1660s, he said. That was after the plagues of the Middle Ages, Sokolowski said. He attributes the lookup traffic for pandemic not entirely to searchers

who didn't know what it meant but also to those on the hunt for more detail, or for inspiration or comfort. "We see that the word love is looked up around Valentine's Day and the word cornucopia is looked up at Thanksgiving," Sokolowski said.

"We see a word like surreal spiking when a moment of national tragedy or shock occurs. It's the idea of dictionaries being the beginning of putting your thoughts in order." Merriam-Webster acted quickly in March to add and

update entries on its site for words related to the pandemic. While "Coronavirus" had been in the dictionary for decades, "Covid-19" was coined in February. Thirty-four days later, Merriam-Webster had it up online, along with a couple dozen other entries that were revised to reflect the health emergency. "That's the shortest period of time we've ever seen a word go from coinage to entry," Sokolowski said. "The word had this urgency."

— AP

MASSACRE IN
NIGERIA LEAVES
OVER 100 DEAD

Maiduguri, Nigeria, Nov. 30: At least 110 people were killed in a weekend attack on farm workers in northeast Nigeria blamed on jihadists, the UN humanitarian coordinator in the country said on Sunday, making it the deadliest raid on civilians this year.

The attack, in a state gripped by a jihadist insurgency for more than 10 years, took place the same day as long-delayed local elections in the state.

"I am outraged and horrified by the gruesome attack against civilians carried out by non-state armed groups in villages near Borno State capital Maiduguri," Edward Kallon said in a statement.

"At least 110 civilians were ruthlessly killed and many others were wounded in this attack." Initial tolls indicated 43 and then at least 70 dead from Saturday's massacre. Some locals blamed the attack on Boko Haram fighters, but Bulama Bukarti, an analyst with the Tony Blair Institute, said the rival IS-affiliated Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) were more active in the area.

"ISWAP is the likely culprit," he tweeted. Kallon, in his statement, said: "The incident is the most violent direct attack against innocent civilians this year."

"I call for the perpetrators of this heinous and senseless act to be brought to justice," he added.

One pro-government anti-jihadist militia said the assailants tied up the labourers and slit their throats.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,149.72	-0.25
Nifty 50	12,968.95	-0.14
S&P 500*	3,612.84	-0.70
Dollar (₹)	74.03	-0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.84	-0.12
Euro (₹)	88.14	-0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,483.142	0.29
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	47.53	-0.65
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.911	0.039
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.847	0.005

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Penalty for QR code violation waived till March

A CBIC notification has waived the penalty for non-compliance with QR code provisions for B2C invoices generated by businesses for four months till March 31, 2021. Business with a turnover exceeding Rs 500 crore would have to issue B2C invoices with dynamic QR code from April 1, 2021 to avail of this penalty waiver. The rule requiring printing of dynamic QR code on B2C invoices is being implemented from December 1.

Ex-GM executive to head Ola's global electric biz



Ola said it has appointed former General Motors executive Jose Pinheiro, who managed 16 GM industrial complexes in nine countries, as head of global manufacturing and operations for its electric business. In this role, Pinheiro will spearhead Ola's ambitions to build world-class manufacturing facilities, starting with the world's largest scooter factory, and then expanding to multiple such facilities across India.

China's factory output surges to 3-year high

An official gauge of activity in China's manufacturing sector rose faster than expected in November, suggesting the economy's recovery is gathering pace toward the end of the year. The manufacturing purchasing managers' index rose to 52.1 in November from 51.4 in October, data released by the National Bureau of Statistics showed. That was the highest since September 2017 and beat analysts' estimates.

Yotta lays stone for ₹7,000-cr data centre park

Hiranandani Group firm Yotta Infrastructure laid the foundation of a 20-acre Delhi-NCR data centre park in Greater Noida amid the virtual presence of UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath. The firm had earlier announced plans to invest Rs 6,000-Rs 7,000 crore in this facility. The park will consist of six interconnected data centre buildings, which will offer 30,000 racks capacity and require 200 MW of power.

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All-stock deal biggest after Refinitiv's S&P to acquire IHS Markit for \$39 bn

MATTHEW MONKS, ISHIKA MOOKERJEE & VIREN VAGHELA NOV. 30

S&P Global Inc has agreed to buy IHS Markit Ltd for about \$39 billion in stock, a deal that accelerates the wave of consolidation among Wall Street's biggest data providers. S&P is offering 0.2838 shares for each IHS Markit share, at about 4.7 per cent premium to IHS Markit's last close. After the deal, S&P shareholders will own about 67.75 per cent of the combined company on a fully diluted basis.

The tie-up of S&P with IHS Markit, a research firm with more than 5,000 analysts, data scientists, financial experts and industry specialists, is part of a race for scale as the industry's largest players try to capitalise on surging demand for data and analytics in increasingly computerised financial markets. This follows London Stock Exchange Group Plc's \$27 billion agreement last year to acquire Refinitiv.

A statement said Douglas Peterson, chief executive officer of S&P, will serve as CEO of the combined company. Lance Uggla, CEO of IHS Markit, will stay on as a special advisor to the company for one year after the deal is closed.

The acquisition has an enterprise value of about \$44 billion, including the assumption of \$4.8 billion in net debt.

"This is a huge consoli-



S&P RETAINS FY21 GROWTH AT -9%

New Delhi, Nov. 30: S&P Global Ratings on Monday retained its forecast of 9 per cent contraction in the Indian economy for the current fiscal, saying though there are now upside risks to growth but it will wait for more signs that Covid infections have stabilised or fallen.

dation of financial databases and services," said Gary Dugan, chief executive officer of the Global CIO Office, an investment firm in Singapore. "S&P probably gathered that expansion incrementally wouldn't work and instead has gone for a major acquisition, which will deepen their product range and relevance."

Bloomberg LP, the parent of Bloomberg News, competes with IHS Markit and S&P Global in providing financial analytics and information.

The deal would be the world's second-largest

acquisition of 2020, second only to the \$56 billion set of transactions among China's biggest oil and gas companies to sell their pipeline networks to a new national carrier, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Markit was famously founded in a UK barn by Uggla, a Canadian who spotted an opportunity to provide pricing for the opaque world of credit default swaps just as trading of the derivatives was taking off in the early 2000s. Uggla built up the company through a break-neck series of acquisitions, culminating in the 2016 merger with IHS. A 2014 IPO of Markit valued it at about \$4.5 billion.

Regulatory scrutiny could pose one risk for the tie-up, given the overlap between the firms' data offerings, according to Craig A. Huber, founder of Huber Research Partners. The LSE is still negotiating with EU regulators over its deal for Refinitiv, with competition authorities expressing concerns over how some companies' control of data can make them gatekeepers for an industry.

Trump to add SMIC, CNOOC to defence blacklist

ALEXANDRA ALPER, HUMEYRA PAMUK WASHINGTON, NOV. 30

The Trump administration is poised to add China's top chipmaker SMIC and national offshore oil and gas producer CNOOC to a blacklist of alleged Chinese military companies, according to a document and sources, curbing their access to US investors and escalating tensions with Beijing weeks before President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

Reuters reported earlier this month that the Department of Defense (DOD) was planning to designate four more Chinese companies as owned or controlled by the Chinese military, bringing the number of Chinese companies affected to 35. A recent executive order issued by President Donald Trump would prevent US investors from buying securities of the listed firms starting late next year.

It was not immediately clear when the new tranche, would be published in the Federal Register. But the list comprises China Construction Technology Co Ltd and China International Engineering Consulting Corp, in addition to Semi-conductor Manufacturing International Corp (SMIC) and China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC), according to the document and three sources.

Upward revision in growth to force rate pause this time

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 30

Early economic recovery amidst stubbornly high inflation may make the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to keep interest rates on hold on Friday while continuing with an accommodative monetary policy stance. Economists have ruled out a rate cut for the remaining part of the fiscal and expect the central bank to revise up the GDP and inflation numbers for the rest of the year.

The six-member rate setting panel headed by RBI governor is scheduled to meet for two days starting December 2, and the resolution of which would be announced on December 4. This is the fourth bi-monthly monetary policy for the current financial year and the second meet under the newly formed MPC.

The country's economic growth outturn so far has evolved much stronger than the RBI projections (of -9.8 per cent year-on-year in Q3 and -5.6 per cent in Q4). The GDP growth rate was (-) 7.5 per cent in Q2 FY21, a notable improvement from the (-) 24 per cent fall in Q1 FY21, suggesting that the resumption of economic activity has been gathering pace. Economic growth was however sharply lower than the 4.4 per cent growth in Q2 FY20, being in the negative zone. The gains in the domestic economy in Q2 FY21 was powered by the manufacturing, electricity, and agriculture sectors, all of which witnessed positive growth rates.



On the other hand, inflation has also surprised on the upside, remaining above the upper tolerance level of 6 per cent every month (barring March 20) this year, accompanied by sticky core inflation. Food added the most to the headline, however, it was not the only source of price pressures. Inflation was high mainly due to supply-side factors, such as unseasonal rains (resulting in high prices for vegetables and pulses), labour shortages, higher services prices, higher oil, and higher taxes. Retail inflation rose to a nine-month high of 7.6 per cent in October 2020, supported by a sustained broad-based increase across the various segments of the Consumer Price Index. Core inflation (excluding food and fuel) for October stood at 5.7 per cent, which was the highest level in two years and 16 basis points higher than month ago.

"In light of this upside surprise, we expect the RBI to revise up its inflation projection by more than one percentage point to 5.5-6.9 per cent in H2 FY21 (from 4.5-5.4 per cent) and a new H1 FY22

forecast of 4.2-4.8 per cent. In view of these upward revisions, the MPC is likely to vote unanimously to remain in wait-and-see mode. Despite the growth recovery, we expect the RBI to adopt a cautious tone, flagging uncertainty about the resilience of demand after the festive season and downside risks due to rising infection cases in developed economies and parts of India," said Sonal Varma chief India economist at Nomura Holdings.

"We now expect the RBI to stay on hold through 2021 (vs our previous forecast of a 50 bp cut), as inflation has remained stubbornly high, closing the window for policy easing...we expect the RBI to revise upwards both its growth and inflation projections, but retain the dovish forward guidance," added Varma.

"Rates are likely to be on hold in rest of FY21. We expect the RBI MPC to stay focused on anchoring rates through reiteration of strong forward guidance and path ahead for open market operations, including for state developmental loans," said DBS India.

IIT Madras sees growth in pre-placement offers

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 30

Notwithstanding the pandemic impact, Indian Institute of Technology Madras continued to see a growth in pre-placement offers this year.

Ahead of phase-1 of campus placements starting on December 1, as many as 182 pre-placement offers were received by IIT Madras students this academic year compared to 170 offers last year. IIT-M students have been witnessing a rising trend in pre-placement offers for the past few years. The pandemic did not disturb that.

In 2017-18, the institute saw PPOs almost doubling to 114 against 73 in the previous year. In 2018-19, it further grew to 135.

Information Technology accounted for 46 per cent of PPOs, core sectors and R&D, 29 per cent, analytics, consulting and finance, 19 per cent and FMCG, 6 per cent.

Texas Instruments, Microsoft, Qualcomm, Goldman Sachs and

American Express are some of the key companies that offered higher numbers of PPOs.

According to IIT Madras, a major factor behind the rise in PPOs is the internship programme, which was conducted completely online this year, for the first time in its history, to overcome the logistical restrictions.

"We have been observing a direct correlation between internships and pre-placement offers ever since the internship office was created. Internships provide an excellent opportunity for students to understand the working culture and expectations of the companies that they work for and for the companies to realise the potential of our students during that short period. When interests and expectations of interns and companies match, it culminates in pre-placement offers," said N.V. Ravi Kumar, advisor (internships), IIT Madras.

As many as 93 companies had provided 415 offers for internships this year.

A new bond route opens for polluting firms

TOM FREKE NOV. 30

The next thing in green investing is a new kind of debt designed to help fund the trillions of dollars needed to wean the world from carbon.

Transition bonds are being developed for fossil-fuel companies and other heavy corporate emitters, which have largely been shut out of a booming green market. So-called brown industries would have to use proceeds from the sales to fund their clean-energy transformation.

Next year "will be a ramp-

up phase for transition instruments," said Marisa Drew, Credit Suisse Group AG's chief sustainability officer. "We'll have some experimental issuers take the market and then we'll see many investors lining up."

The UN estimates the cost to decarbonise the world will be \$35 trillion, and capital markets will have to play a role. Corporations such as Citigroup Inc and Verizon Communications Inc and governments from Chile to Sweden raised a record \$235 billion this year in green bonds, used to fund environmentally friendly

projects.

Such financing is likely to get another boost next year from the European Union's plans to start green bonds and from US President-elect Joe Biden's prioritisation of climate policies. The coronavirus pandemic is also spurring an explosion in social bonds to fund projects that benefit society as a whole.

Behind the scenes, bankers and investors are now writing rules for transition finance.

Heavy polluters are facing the threat of tougher rules, as countries try to meet long-term emissions targets. Many banks and

investors are planning to cut financing for laggards, likely raising their cost of capital.

Transition bonds aim to provide a solution by tying funds to strict targets, aligning borrowers' interests with wider policies such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Only a handful of companies have so far sold transition bonds, given the lack of consensus on what they should be. One of the first was from a Brazilian beef producer, Marfrig Global Foods, which said proceeds from the \$500 million bond

would be used to buy cattle from ranchers in the Amazon who comply with non-deforestation and other sustainable criteria.

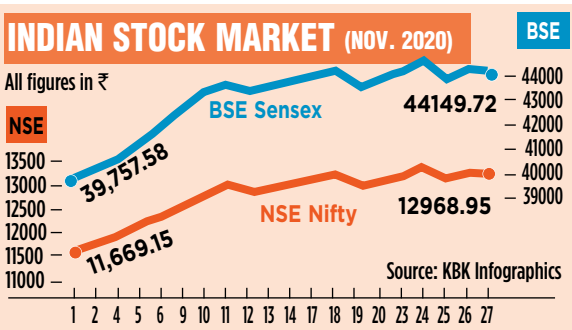
Other deals include a 500 million-euro (\$595 mn) bond from Italian gas pipeline operator Snam SpA. Total, France's largest oil company, announced plans last month to sell a "very large" transition bond. LafargeHolcim raised 850 million euros of sustainability-linked bonds earlier this month that will pay a 0.75 per cent higher interest rate if the company misses a carbon-emissions target.

—Bloomberg

Equity investors take stock of best month ever

London, Nov. 30: World shares paused on Monday to assess a record-breaking month as the prospect of a vaccine-driven economic recovery next year and yet more free money from central banks eclipsed immediate concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

At the same time, oil, industrial commodities and other risk assets have surged, with emerging-market currencies posting their largest gains in almost two years, while safe-havens such as the



dollar and gold slipped. "It has been a very, very strong month for mar-

kets'," said Rabobank's head of macro strategy, Elwin de Groot.

The positive developments on vaccines and the swiftness with which they are likely to be rolled out have been key drivers.

MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe shed 0.39 per cent following modest declines in Asia and mixed trading in Europe. Many European markets are boasting their best month ever, with France up 21 per cent and Italy almost 26 per cent. The Nikkei's 15 per cent leap in Japan was its best month since 1994.

E-com to push warehousing, data centre demand in 2021



SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 30

Warehousing and data centre demand driven by e-commerce will keep commercial realty market stable in 2021. Co-working segment will support the demand for office leasing space.

Despite the ongoing pandemic, the warehousing sector is expected to remain comparatively less impacted due to rising e-commerce demand, which is expected to grow from \$70 billion in FY19 to an estimated \$160 billion by 2022, finds Knight Frank.

"Logistics and warehousing have shown resilience in the primary and secondary markets. As India at a steady pace adopts the new normal for various businesses, the sentiments of stakeholders and investors are moving in a positive direction across key cities," said Shishir Baijal, chairman and managing director at Knight Frank India.

GREEN | FUTURE New rules require more responsible sourcing of raw materials EU seeks tougher standards for batteries

EWA KRUKOWSKA NOV. 30

Europe plans to impose stricter environmental requirements for batteries as it begins a radical economic overhaul set to boost electric vehicles and clean energy.

The European Union will aim at setting a global standard in the fast-growing market when it proposes next month regulations to ensure all batteries marketed in the region are greener throughout their life cycle.

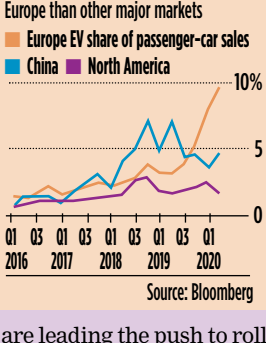
"In our assessment, the EU will become the second-biggest global market for batteries," EU environment commissioner

Virginijus Sinkevicius said in an interview. "The number of batteries placed on the EU market and their importance will only grow in the coming years. Their sustainability should not lag behind."

The EU has already invested billions in its Battery Alliance project to compete with Asia, currently Europe's only provider of EV batteries. The region's battery market value will reach 250 billion euros (\$300 billion) by 2025, with production capacity able to meet auto industry demand, according to European Commission estimated.

Germany and France, home to major car makers,

giant companies like BASF SE and carmakers BMW AG and PSA Group.



are leading the push to roll out a European battery industry. Last year, the EU approved 3.2 billion euros in aid for a project spanning seven nations and including industrial

"To make batteries greener, the EU will require more responsible sourcing of raw materials, using clean energy in production, cutting the share of hazardous substances, boosting energy efficiency and improving their durability," according to Sinkevicius.

The new rules will affect batteries manufactured in the 27-nation bloc and brought from abroad, he said. "The new framework should apply to all types of batteries and all kinds of battery chemistry, whether sold apart or contained in products," Sinkevicius

said. "It will ensure that various battery types are subject to similar but differentiated obligations."

The increasingly electric future of the region is part of the Green Deal. To meet its goal of zeroing-out greenhouse gases by 2050, the EU needs to cut emissions from transport by 90 per cent.

Europe's growing EV market is starting to lure battery makers. China's SVolt Energy Technology Co said this month it will join Contemporary Amperex Technology Ltd in opening a factory in Germany, while Tesla supplier Panasonic Corp may start up a battery business in Norway.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

NorthEast United frustrate FC Goa

Goa: NorthEast United extended their unbeaten run to three games after frustrating FC Goa in a 1-1 draw in their Indian Super League Season 7 encounter at the Fatorda Stadium on Monday. Goa are yet to record three points this season. Idrissa Sylla (40') scored the opening goal before Igor Angulo (43') equalised just before the break. Brandon Fernandes was handed his first start of the season along with Albianbha Kupar Dohling as Goa boss Juan Ferrando made three changes to the side which had suffered a defeat to Mumbai City FC. Jorge Ortiz Mendoza started with James Donachie benched. NorthEast made as many as five changes to the side which came from behind to hold Kerala in a thrilling 2-2 draw. — *Agencies*

Rajnigandha lift Baroda Polo Cup

New Delhi: Rajnigandha Achievers beat Achievers ONN by 8 goals to 3 in the final match to emerge the winners of the Baroda Cup at the Jaipur Polo Ground here on Sunday. The Rajnigandha Achievers comprising of Daniel Otamendi, Kuldeep Singh Rathore, Sawai Padmanabh Singh and Allan Shuan Michael demonstrated brilliant teamwork and strategic moves to bring home the prestigious Cup. This is the fourth consecutive time the Rajnigandha Achievers have lifted the Baroda Cup. Otamendi scored two goals against Achievers ONN's one goal in the 1st chukker. In the 2nd chukker, both teams scored one goal each. As the match progressed, Otamendi splendidly achieved two more goals. In the 4th Chukker Otamendi, Michael and Rathore posted a goal each while Achievers ONN scored only one goal, making the final score in favour of Rajnigandha Achievers.

Clash of heads as Wolves win

London: The sound of the thud from a clash of heads just added to concern. The game was only five minutes old when Wolverhampton forward Raul Jimenez and Arsenal defender David Luiz collided while jumping for the ball. Concerns grew as Jimenez appeared motionless and was eventually wheeled off the field with an oxygen mask on. "I knew straight away that something was wrong," Wolves manager Nuno Espirito Santo said. "Everyone called 'red, red,' which means it's a bad situation. You see the panic in their eyes." By the time the game ended with Wolves beating Arsenal 2-1 there was a more encouraging update from the hospital with Jimenez said to be conscious and talking. — *AP*

Liverpool, Man U look to advance

Washington: Chelsea and Manchester City are already through to the Champions League knockout phase with two games to spare. Now it's the turn of Manchester United and Liverpool off the back of a challenging weekend in the Premier League. Liverpool on Tuesday host Ajax, with a two-point advantage on the Dutch club in Group D, with a packed program, fixture scheduling and James Milner adding to the injury headaches. Old Trafford will still be shut to supporters despite United hosting Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday when the national lockdown ends. — *AP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

South Africa vs England: Third T20 from 9.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Mumbai City vs East Bengal from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Champions League: Shakhtar Donetsk vs Real Madrid from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Monchengladbach vs Inter Milan from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 3; Atletico Madrid vs Bayern Munich from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1; Liverpool vs Ajax from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2; Porto vs Manchester City from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Six, HD

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WARNING BELL

Setback for Oz as injured David out of ODI, T20 series

Sydney, Nov. 30: Star opening batsman David Warner faces a battle to be fit for the India Test series after Cricket Australia said Monday he will miss the last one-day international and the three-match Twenty20 series next month.

Warner limped out of Sunday's one-day international against India after straining his groin while fielding as Australia secured the series 2-0 in Sydney.

After a typically swash-buckling innings of 83 on Sunday, Warner fell awkwardly and had to be helped from the field.

Warner will miss Wednesday's final ODI and all three Twenty20 internationals beginning Friday in Canberra to undergo rehab in an effort to ready for the Test series which begins on December 17 in Adelaide.

Opening batsman D'Arcy Short has been called up to the Twenty20 international squad as a replacement.

Cricket Australia also announced that leading pace bowler Pat Cummins will be rested for the remainder of the white-ball matches against India, putting pressure on an out-of-form Mitchell Starc.

"Pat and Davie are critical to our plans for the Test Series," head coach Justin Langer said.

"Davie will work through his injury rehab and in Pat's case it is important all of our players are managed well to keep them mentally and physically fit throughout what is a challenging summer."

"The priority for both is being fully prepared for one of the biggest and most important home Test Series we have played in recent years, especially with World Test Championship points up for grabs."

Left-hander Short plays cricket for Western Australia and was the Twenty20 Big Bash League's leading run-scorer in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

No replacement has been announced for Cummins, with Australia to rely on Josh Hazlewood, Starc and allrounder Marcus Stoinis to provide the main seam bowling options. — *AFP*



Australia's David Warner (centre) is assisted from the Sydney Cricket Ground after injuring himself while fielding during the second one-day international match against India in Sydney on Sunday. — *AP*

Marnus feels Oz have advantage

Sydney, Nov. 30: Australia's rising star Marnus Labuschagne believes that the home team will enjoy a slight advantage going into the Test series against India as most of their top-order players will be coming in after having played a fair amount of first-class cricket.

Labuschagne, who contributed a solid 70 off 61 balls in the second ODI which Australia won by 51 runs on Sunday, has scored two hundreds in three Sheffield Shield matches.

"It definitely helps to have a few games under your belt just to get the pace and the timing of the game from T20s to one-dayers to four-day cricket," he replied to a query from PTI during a virtual media interaction

SMITH SCORED 2ND TON DESPITE ACUTE VERTIGO

Sydney, Nov. 30: Top Australian batsman Steve Smith has revealed that he suffered a "bad dose of vertigo" ahead of the second one-dayer against India and was not sure of playing the game in which he struck a series-clinching hundred.

"I didn't know I was playing today. I had a really bad dose of vertigo this morning and I was struggling until ... I came down early to have a hit and a bit of a run around," Smith told *cricket.com.au* after receiving his second successive Man of the match award.

Smith said it was team doctor Leigh Golding, who relieved him of the symptoms by performing Epley maneuver which involves a series of head movements used to treat benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), a condition caused by a problem in the inner ear. — *PTI*

facilitated by series' official broadcaster Sony. The Indian players, who

had played IPL and now ODIs, last played red-ball cricket in New Zealand

and will only have two three-day games to get into the groove.

"But a lot of these (Indian) players we're talking about, they've been doing it for a long time, they're not new to the changes of format. I'd be surprised if they didn't shift back into gear very quickly."

"I will say that it's a slight advantage, four out of our top six have been playing Shield cricket and got that rhythm as a batting group."

With David Warner ruled out of the last ODI as well as the upcoming T20 series, Labuschagne won't mind a chance to open the innings if he is asked about it. "Certainly, if I got asked to open the batting absolutely. It's an opportunity that I would enjoy taking." — *PTI*

KIWIS POCKET SERIES AS 3RD T20 CALLED OFF

Mount Maunganui (New Zealand), Nov. 30: New Zealand on Monday claimed the T20 series against the West Indies 2-0 after the third and final match of the rubber was washed out here.

Persistent rain played spoilsport to left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner's debut as New Zealand's T20I captain and the final match of the series was called off after just 2.2 overs.

The Kiwis were without Tim Southee, Ross Taylor and Kyle Jamieson, who had been given a break for the third game and were replaced by Daryl Mitchell, Scott Kuggeleijn and Hamish Bennett.

Sent into bat, West Indies were off to a brisk start with openers Andre Fletcher and Brandon King scoring 12 runs off the first over. — *AFP*

World Cup hero Diop dies at 42

Washington, Nov. 30: Papa Bouba Diop, the tall Senegal midfielder who scored the goal that delivered one of the greatest upsets in World Cup history, has died.

He was 42. "FIFA is saddened to learn of the passing of Senegal legend Papa Bouba Diop," the sport's governing body said on Sunday.

Diop was the hero when Senegal shocked defending champion France 1-0 in the opening game of the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea.

It was Senegal's World Cup debut and the win sent the West Africans on a run to the quarterfinals to match the best performance at the tournament by an African team.

"Once a World Cup hero, always a World Cup hero," FIFA said in its tribute on Twitter.

Diop was first called up to play for his country at the age of 21 and made more than 60 appearances for Senegal from 2001-08.

He played club soccer in Switzerland, France and Greece and for four teams in England: Fulham, Portsmouth, West Ham

● **Papa Bouba Diop was first called up to play for Senegal at the age of 21 and made more than 60 appearances for his country between 2001 and 2008.**

and Birmingham.

Diop was 6-foot-5 (1.96 meters) and nicknamed "Wardrobe" because of his commanding presence. He was loved in Senegal because of that goal against the French, the former colonizers of Senegal, but also for his likeable personality off the field along with his skill on it.

The 2002 Senegal team is still loved at home and Liverpool's Senegalese forward Sadio Mane wrote of Diop on his official Twitter page: "It was with a broken heart that we learned of your departure. Know that you will remain in our hearts forever, even if you left without saying goodbye to us."

The Premier League expressed its condolences, as did Diop's former clubs, "Rest well, Wardrobe," Fulham said. — *AP*



Maradona's doc under scanner

Buenos Aires, Nov. 30: Diego Maradona's surgeon responded to the launch of an investigation for involuntary manslaughter by saying he "everything he could, up to the impossible" for an "unmanageable" patient.

Earlier in the day prosecutors in San Isidro, near Buenos Aires, said they were investigating Leopoldo Luque while Argentine television showed police raiding the doctor's surgery and home. The probe was triggered by concerns raised by Maradona's daughters Dalma, Gianinna and Jana over the treatment he received for his heart condition at his home in Tigre, north of Buenos Aires, judicial sources said.

Maradona died of a heart attack on Wednesday aged 60, and was buried on Thursday at the Jardin de Paz cemetery on the outskirts of the Argentine capital.

"Our investigations are ongoing, we are talking to witnesses including mem-

bers of the family" of Maradona, a source close to the San Isidro inquiry said.

"The clinic had recommended that he go elsewhere to be hospitalised, but the family decided otherwise. His daughters signed for him to be discharged from the hospital," said a family member, on the condition of anonymity.

Later in the day, Luque, who is no relation to Maradona's former Argentine team-mate of the same name, gave an emotional televised news conference.

"You want to know what I am responsible for?" the 39-year-old doctor asked between sobs. "For having loved him, for having taken care of him, for having extended his life, for having improved it to the end."

Luque said he did "everything he could, up to the impossible" and considered himself a "friend" of Maradona and saw him "as a father, not as a patient". — *AFP*

NAPOLI DRUB ROMA IN TRIBUTE TO MARADONA

Milan, Nov. 30: Napoli beat Roma 4-0 in an emotional match in the Italian league as the team paid tribute to Diego Maradona.

It was Napoli's first Serie A game since Maradona died on Wednesday in his native Argentina. Maradona led Napoli to their only two Serie A titles in 1987 and 1990 and is considered a god-like figure in the southern city.

"Certainly I played with an extra motivation, so did all my teammates," Napoli captain Lorenzo Insigne said. "We've lost our idol and it hurts."

"Today without doubt we wanted even more than normal to get a result, for Diego, for our city which is suffering this loss. We dedicate the victory to him."

The victory saw Napoli move level with Roma and Juventus, six points below leader AC Milan, which beat Fiorentina 2-0 earlier in the day.

There was a touching moment before the game when Insigne placed bouquets of flowers under banners dedicated to Maradona, displayed in the empty stands at either end of the stadium. — *AP*

Grosjean to miss next race after fiery crash

Sakhir (Bahrain), Nov. 30: French driver Romain Grosjean will sit out next weekend's Formula One race after escaping a fiery high-speed crash in the Bahrain Grand Prix with just burns to his hands, his team Haas said on Monday.

Grosjean walked away from the wreckage after he collided with Daniil Kyvat's Alpha Tauri on the first lap of Sunday's race, causing the Haas car to split in half and burst into flames as it smashed through the safety barriers at 225kph.

Haas said treatment for the burns that 34-year-old

Grosjean suffered was "going well" and he was expected to be discharged from hospital on Tuesday.

Grosjean escaped alive thanks to the integrity of his car's survival cell, his 'halo' device, which deflected the ruptured Armco metal barriers away from his head, his own presence of mind in remaining calm as he extricated himself and the rapid skilled assistance of F1's medical staff and track marshals.

"Hello everyone, I just wanted to say I'm okay, well, sort of okay," the Frenchman said in an Instagram post. — *AFP*



A steward reacts as officials put out a fire on Haas F1 driver Romain Grosjean's car following a crash during the Bahrain Grand Prix in Sakhir on Sunday. — *AFP*