



AVOID ACTIONS THAT
MAY COMPLICATE
SITUATION, CHINA TOLD



LEBANON CARETAKER
PM INDICTED
OVER PORT BLAST

P4



POST-BREXIT TRADE
TALKS FACE
MOMENT OF FINALITY

P9



HOW CHESS SURGED
AMID LOCKDOWN
AS COVID-19 SPIKE

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with very light rain/thundershowers towards night. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 28 and 12 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 45%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 28.3°C (+4) Min: 10.9°C (+2)

SUN RISES

07:05 hrs

MOON RISES

04:10 hrs

SUN SETS

17:26 hrs

MOON SETS

14:51hrs

THUMBNAILS



Astad Deboo dead: Contemporary Indian dancer Aastad Deboo, known for amalgamating Indian and western dance techniques, died in Mumbai on Thursday, his family said. He was 73. He was suffering from lymphoma, a type of blood cancer that develops when white blood cells called lymphocytes grow out of control, a close family friend said. Deboo employed his training in Indian classical dance forms of Kathak as well as Kathakali to create a dance-theatre style which successfully assimilates Indian and Western techniques. In a dance career spanning half a century, he performed in over 70 countries.

Israel-Morocco ties: Israel and Morocco have agreed to normalise relations, US President Donald Trump announced on Thursday, marking the fourth Arab-Israel agreement in four months. As part of the deal, the US will recognise Morocco's claim over the disputed Western Sahara region. As his time in office winds down, Trump said Israel and Morocco would restore diplomatic and other relations, including the immediate reopening of liaison offices in Rabat and Tel Aviv and the eventual opening of embassies. US officials said it would also include joint overflight rights for airlines.

India, Nepal to resume flight services under air bubble arrangement

IN NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

India and Nepal have decided to resume flight services under a bilateral air bubble arrangement, authoritative sources said on Thursday, in reflection of efforts to restore normality in ties that came under severe strain following a bitter border row. Initially, the service will start with one flight daily from each side between Delhi and Kathmandu, they said.

The decision to resume the flight service comes two weeks after Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla visited Kathmandu during which he held extensive talks with the political brass. Nepalese Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali is likely to visit India in the next three weeks. "India and Nepal have decided to open flights under a bilateral bubble arrangement, as we have done with several countries," said a source.

The flights between the two countries were suspended following the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic. "We had proposed to Nepal some time back and Nepal has cleared it now," said a source. It is not immediately known when the flight service will be started.

Virtually ruling out repealing of the new farm laws, the government on Thursday asked farmer groups to consider its proposals for amending the Acts to address their concerns and said it is open to discussing its offer further whenever the unions want, but protesters remained defiant and threatened to block railway tracks too in addition to highways.

As the issue remained deadlocked with both sides sticking to their respective positions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while laying the foundation stone for a new Parliament building, invoked Guru Nanak to underscore the importance of dialogue.

A day after protesting farmers rejected the government's offer for a written assurance on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and amend few provisions in the new farm laws, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar (photo) said at a press conference that union leaders must consider the proposals and said he is ready for further discussions with them, but left it to the farmer groups to propose a date for the next round of talks. At least five rounds of formal talks have

taken place between the central government and representatives of thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab and Haryana, protesting on various borders of the national capital for about two weeks, but the deadlock has continued with the unions continuing to their main demand for the repeal of the three contentious laws and repeatedly rejecting the Centre's offer to make some changes in the laws and give written assurances or clarifications on issues such as MSP and mandi systems.

Addressing reporters along with Food, Railways and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, Tomar said he is still hopeful of a resolution. "The government is keen and ready for further discussions with protesting farmers... To clear their apprehensions, we have sent our proposal to farmer unions. I want to urge them to fix a date for discussion as early as possible. If they

have any issue, the government is ready for discussion," the agriculture minister said. He said it was not proper on the part of unions to announce the next stage of agitation when talks were continuing and urged them to return to the discussion table.

"We gave our proposals to farmers after meeting them and therefore we urge them to consider those. If they want to discuss those proposals also, we are ready for that too," he said.

Asked whether there was some other force behind the protest, Tomar did not give any direct reply and said: "Media's eyes are sharp and we will leave it to it to find out." "We believe that the farmers had certain issues. We respect farmers and discussed with us. We tried to address the issues that came up during the course of discussion. If there are other issues which are to be discussed or need clarification on the current proposal, we

are ready for that. Whether there is any other reason holding them back, we will leave that to your wise counsel," Goyal said.

Rejecting the government's proposal, the farmer unions had on Wednesday said they will intensify their agitation and start blocking all highways linking the national capital as there was nothing new in the offer. After the press conference of the ministers, farmer leaders on Thursday threatened to block railway tracks also if the government does not repeal the three laws, which they claim were aimed at benefiting corporates by weakening the mandi system and the minimum support price (MSP) regime for procurement of farm produce.

When asked whether the government would consider a new bill on the MSP system, Tomar said the new laws do not impact the MSP system and that will continue.

Earlier, Mr Ghosh had alleged a security lapse at a BJP event attended by Mr Nadda on Wednesday, following which the Union home ministry sought a report from the state government.

Today, as the convoys of Mr Nadda and Mr Vijayvargiya were headed towards Diamond Harbour, stones were also hurled at Mr Vijayvargiya's vehicle.

Mr Vijayvargiya shared a video clip showing the cracked windshield of the car he was travelling in.

He said that he received injuries on his hand. "Trinamul workers sporting party flags and armed with lathis attacked our convoy at multiple places. Stone and bricks were hurled by TMC workers. Several cars sustained damage. Police were

mutto spectators in some places and missing elsewhere," he said. Media vehicles with the convoy also sustained damage.

State chief minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee insinuated the attack was staged, PTI reported. "Every day they (BJP activists) are coming out (for rallies) with firearms. They are slapping themselves and blaming it on the Trinamul Congress. Just think of the situation. They are roaming around with the BSF, CRPF, Army, CISF... then why are you so scared," she was reported as having said.

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alleged a security lapse at a BJP event attended by Mr Nadda on Wednesday, following which the Union home ministry sought a report from the state government.

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Diamond Harbour, stones were also hurled at them.

During the attack on the convoy of BJP national president J.P. Nadda at Sirakol, Diamond Harbour, in South 24-Parganas on Thursday. ■ ARUN LODH

cles out of the area.

Mr Ghosh said, "On our way to Diamond Harbour, TMC supporters blocked the road and pelted Nadajai's vehicle and other cars in the convoy with stones. This only shows the true colour of the TMC."

Reacting to the charges, senior TMC leader and MP Sougata Roy said, "It was the spontaneous outburst of the local people against the BJP leaders as people are vehemently opposing the anti-farmer laws." He denied any involvement of the party in the attack and said the protests by locals were a "people's revolt".

(With PTI inputs)

PM breaks ground for new Parl building

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER



Prime Minister Modi on Thursday laid the foundation stone and performed Bhumi Pujan for the new Parliament House. ■ IANS

sic part' of the vision of a self-reliant or 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat'. He said it would give the people a landmark opportunity 'to build a people's Parliament for the first time after Independence, one which will match the needs and aspirations of 'New India' in the 75th anniversary of independence in 2022.' Describing

the new Parliament building an epitome of the 'aspirations of 21st century India', the Prime Minister said that it 'will increase the efficiency of the MPs and modernise their work culture.'

'If the old Parliament House gave direction to post-independence India, the new building would become a witness to the making of a 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat,' he said. He said the laws made inside the old Parliament building and the debates that took

place there are a part of the country's democratic heritage, but it is important to accept reality as this building is now nearly 100 years old and has been upgraded from time to time. 'But one thing is clear, it needs to be modernised,' the Prime Minister said.

Mr Modi said the members

who would enter the new Parliament building through their dedication, service, conduct, thought and behaviour would add life to it. 'Their efforts towards the unity and integrity of India will become the energy that gives life to this temple... when each public representative will offer his knowledge, intelligence, education and experience fully here, then this new Parliament House will gain sanctity,' he added.

Union ministers, ambassadors, leaders of different parties, including former Lok Sabha speaker Shivraj Patil and representatives of the YSR Congress, AIADMK, BJD and the TRS, were in the audience. However, some opposition leaders gave the event a miss.

Covid tally rises to 97.67L

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER



Sisodia house attacked by BJP goons in police presence: AAP

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

The AAP today charged that the house of Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia was "attacked by BJP goons".

CM Arvind Kejriwal also condemned the incident and wondered why the BJP was getting so desperate by the day in Delhi.

The Delhi BJP, however, refuted the allegations, saying their protest was peaceful.

The BJP workers earlier staged a protest near Sisodia's residence.

SEE PAGE 2

Capital's Covid positivity rate plummets to 2.46 pc

Third corona wave is waning in Delhi but not over yet, says health minister Jain; caseload tops 6L

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

The national capital today recorded 1,575 coronavirus infections (Covid-19), which took its caseload to 6,01,150, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

These cases were identified from 64,069 tests, with the positivity rate coming down to 2.46 per cent from yesterday's 3.42 per cent.

Delhi reported 61 fresh Covid fatalities, which pushed its toll to 9,874, the health bulletin said.

The city's coronavirus patients who recovered during the past 24 hours numbered 3,307, which raised the cumulative count of such recoveries to 5,72,523.

Delhi now had 18,753 active coronavirus cases, which include 11,541 patients getting treatment under home isolation.

The number of containment zones in the city stood at 6,430, the bulletin added.

Meanwhile, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain said the Covid positivity rate had been less than 5 per cent for the past seven days, which



was a sign of relief as it indicated that the third wave of coronavirus was on the decline in the city.

Delhi's positivity rate has seen a reduction of 80 per cent since 7 November. Thanking everyone concerned, especially the frontline and healthcare workers, Jain said Delhi would not have been able to

achieve this without their support.

The minister said there were 2,463 coronavirus cases in Delhi yesterday and the positivity rate was 3.42 per cent. The positivity rate has been constantly declining.

There were 50 deaths yesterday, which was the lowest figure since 1 November.

The positivity rate of RT-PCR tests was hovering around 6-6.5 per cent. The overall positivity rate has come down to less than 3 per cent as compared to 15.26 per cent on 7 November, he added.

"We can say that the third wave in Delhi is fading away. However, it is not over yet.

sincerely thank all the frontline and health workers who have been rigorously active in the course of this pandemic, putting their lives at stake to provide service to citizens. I applaud Delhi's citizens for their continued support. I request all Delhiites to continue taking all the necessary precautions to successfully combat the third wave," Jain said.

On Covid vaccines, he said, "More than 2 lakh registrations had been done for the first trial of the vaccine in Delhi. The priority will be healthcare and frontline workers. After which the focus will be on the old and subsequently the entire population of Delhi. The Delhi government is fully capable of rolling out the vaccine to the entire population of the city. We are prepared with storage facilities too."

Delhi's Covid positivity rate has been declining over the last couple of weeks. It was reportedly 8.65 per cent on 26 November. It stood at 4.96 per cent, 4.78 per cent, 4.2 per cent, and 3.68 per cent and 3.15 per cent on 3 December, 4 December, 5 December, 6 December and 7 December.

The AAP on Thursday claimed that the house of Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was "attacked by BJP goons".

The Delhi BJP, however, refuted the allegations, saying their protest was peaceful.

The BJP workers earlier staged a protest near Sisodia's residence over an alleged conspiracy to kill mayors and leaders of the party-ruled municipal corporations, staging an indefinite dharna demanding payment of dues from the Kejriwal government.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also condemned the incident and wondered why the BJP was getting so desperate by the day in Delhi.

"I strongly condemn the systematic, organised and violent attack on Dy CM Manish Sisodia's home. The goons entered his house in police presence when he was away. Why is BJP so desperate by the day in Delhi?" he tweeted.

Addressing a press conference, AAP spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj alleged that the police did not stop the goons from entering Sisodia's residence and even removed the barricades around the house.

He also played a purposed video of the outside area of Sisodia's residence where a group of people can be seen



Delhi BJP leaders and workers demonstrating outside Deputy CM Manish Sisodia's house in the Capital on Thursday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

forcefully entering inside.

"BJP goons attacked the house of deputy chief minister while he was not at home. The Delhi Police helped the BJP goons in this act," Bhardwaj added.

No immediate reaction was available from the city police.

AAP leader Atishi called it a "black day" in Delhi's political history.

The Delhi BJP had on Wednesday lodged a police complaint against Sisodia and AAP leader Durgesh Pathak, alleging that they were conspiring to kill leaders of the party-ruled municipal corporations.

Pathak had rubbished the allegation, saying the BJP has a habit of mixing random audios with random videos to "defame and malign" the image of people.

Reacting to the charges,

Delhi BJP vice president Ashok Goel Devraha claimed AAP leaders were trying to divert attention from the 'conspiracy' to kill BJP mayors and other corporation leaders.

"We protested outside Sisodia's residence to make it clear that the BJP workers are capable of answering any form of challenge," he said.

The Delhi BJP had on Wednesday lodged a police complaint against Sisodia and AAP leader Durgesh Pathak, alleging that they were conspiring to kill leaders of the party-ruled municipal corporations.

Pathak had rubbished the allegation, saying the BJP has a habit of mixing random audios with random videos to "defame and malign" the image of people.

Appointment due to this 80 per cent women reservation policy.

The petition contended that this reservation by AIIMS violates the 50 per cent overall ceiling contemplated for reservation in public employment and it cannot be exceeded.

In the present case, the purported object of reservation is patient comfort and care'. It is thus apparent that the object had nothing to do with bettering women by way of better employment opportunities. The reservation is apparently only for the purpose of patient's comfort. Hence, the reserva-

tion cannot be justified under Article 15(3), it said.

It further said when discrimination lacks intelligible nexus between object and the classification, it is violative of Article 14 (equality before law) of the Constitution.

There is no intelligible nexus between patient care and the gender of the nurse. The belief that women are better suited as nurses is without any basis, survey, study or scientific evidence. AIIMS has not shown any data in pleadings or filed any document supportive of its belief that women are better nurses, per se, the plea said.

AIIMS nursing posts: Reservation for women long overdue, says HC

PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

of the CAT's judgement and setting aside the reservation of 80 per cent of over 4,600 posts in favour of women.

Reservation for women under Article 15(3) of the Constitution has been a long overdue. In the present case, this relates to nursing staff which has traditionally been a long hold of women, a bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Talwanti Singh observed.

Article 15 provides that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. Article 15(3) states however that nothing in

Article 15 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

The high court also issued notice on the application for

subject post shall abide with further orders that may be passed in the present proceedings, said the bench.

Advocate Anand Varma, representing AIIMS, accepted the notice and prayed for time to file reply to the petition.

Petitioners Harish Kumar Kajla, Rajesh Kumar and Krishna Kumar Bohra, in the petition, said the question here is whether 80 per cent reservation for women in the Nursing Cadre of AIIMS is unconstitutional or otherwise illegal.

The impugned decision was made during a Meeting held on July 27, 2019 of the Central Executive Body of AIIMS. The

said decision has been implemented in the recruitment drive organized vide Advertisement Notice dated August 5, 2020 issued by AIIMS, for filling up 4,629 vacancies of Nursing Officer, Level 07, PB-2, Group B post, the plea said.

The results for the appointment of the nurses was announced on October 8, this year.

Advocate Santhosh Krishnan, appearing for the petitioners, said the recruitment drive pertains to vacancies in 12 AIIMS all over India and added that these male candidates, despite having such a high percentage were not getting

appointed due to this 80 per cent women reservation policy.

The petition contended that this reservation by AIIMS violates the 50 per cent overall ceiling contemplated for reservation in public employment and it cannot be exceeded.

In the present case, the purported object of reservation is patient comfort and care'. It is thus apparent that the object had nothing to do with bettering women by way of better employment opportunities. The reservation is apparently only for the purpose of patient's comfort. Hence, the reserva-

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

COURT NOTICE
(U/O 5 Rule 20 CPC)
IN THE COURT OF
MS. VANI GOPAL SHARMA
Principal District Judge
(Family Court),
Gurugram
Haina Sagar
Versus
Vashista Sagar
CIN No : HMA/1547/2019
CRN No : HRGR01-017875-
2019

Next Date: 15-02-2021
Petition No: I/J/S 13(1)(a) HMA,
Publication Issued to :
Vashista Sagar, s/o
Pamasamy, r/o Prestige Dulia,
18B, 18098, 8th Floor, Ayya-
pan Thangal, Chennai
Or
R/o N-47, O-17, K. R. Koilist,
W. Mambal, Chennai
Or
R/o N-47, DLF Phase-2,
Gurugram, Haryana.

In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s)

could not be served. It is

ordered that defendant(s)/

respondent(s) should appear

in person or through coun-

sel on 15-02-2021 at 10:00 a.m.

For details logon to

https://highcourtchd.gov.in/?

rs=district_notice&dis-

trict=gurugram.

Dated, this day of 01-12-

2020.

Principal District Judge

(Family Court),

Gurugram

Seal of the Court

NOTICE
DEBT'S RECOVERY
APPELLATE TRIBUNAL
Apartment No. 318, IIrd
Floor, Hotel Samrat, Kau-
tilya Marg, Chanakyapuri,
New Delhi-110021.
Misc. Application No.
489/2019 In Appeal No.
356/2019 In OA. 181/2008
DRT, III, Delhi
Rajni Sharma
— Appellant
Versus
Canara Bank & Ors.
— Respondent

1. Dalshan Adhesive

Through its Proprietor,

5521/74, Regarpura, Karol

Bagh, New Delhi-05

— Respondent 2.

2. Sri Rajiv Kumar RZ-B-36A,

Anup Nagar, Uttam Nagar,

New Delhi-59

— Respondent 3.

Sri Beg Ram RZ-B-36A,

Anup Nagar, Uttam Nagar,

New Delhi-59

— Respondent 4.

Whereas the notice that an

appeal from the order passed

by the Presiding Officer of

DRT in the above case has

been presented by the appellee

— Respondent 5.

Given under my hand and

the Seal of the Court on this

02-12-2020.

ASJC-Cum-JSCC-Cum-G,

Judge (Central)

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

Seal of the Court

— Petitioner

— Respondent

— Respondent 1.

— Respondent 2.

— Respondent 3.

— Respondent 4.

Whereas the notice that an

appeal from the order passed

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02-12-2020.

ASJC-Cum-JSCC-Cum-G,

Judge (Central)

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

Seal of the Court

— Petitioner

— Respondent

— Respondent 1.

— Respondent 2.



Today is Human Rights Day. Nowadays, there is a big trend to bulldoze democracy, crush fundamental rights, and muzzle the voice of the people. Our government is committed to upholding human rights

MAMATA BANERJEE

WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER 2020

03

Farmers' MSP demand has been met, claims Dushyant

Haryana deputy CM Dushyant Chautala backs BJP even as JJP has been drawing fire from within the party and outside for not quitting their alliance over farmers' protest against the Centre's farm laws

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, 10 DECEMBER

With questions being raised over the future of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s ruling alliance with the Janmabhumi Party (JJP) in Haryana after a section of the JJP legislators extended support to the farmers protesting against the BJP-led Centre's controversial new farm laws, JJP leader and Haryana deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala today sided with the BJP dispensation, saying that the Centre has accepted the farmers' demand for assuring minimum support price (MSP) of crops.

"The Centre has accepted the demand of the farmers by assuring the MSP in writing. It is now up to the farmers' unions to decide on it," he told reporters.

Dushyant said the demand of the farmers that the Union government must ensure MSP in writing has been fulfilled yesterday. "It is now up to the farmers' unions to decide the next course of action on the government proposal," he said.

On his party leaders lending support to the protesting farmers, he said: "I am saying that I am a farmer first.



When did I ever deny that? But it is our responsibility to ensure an adequate price for their crops."

Earlier, his younger brother Digvijay Chautala had said

Dushyant Chautala had been in constant talks with the central leadership over the protest by the farmers, saying "the party is of the farmers and for the farmers".

"Dushyant Chautala is constantly holding talks with the Union ministers and he is advocating the cause of the farmers so that they do not face problems," he had said.

HC seeks Centre reply on plea challenging constitutionality of CGST Act sections

PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

The Delhi High Court has sought the Centre and DGCI's reply on a plea challenging the constitutional validity of various provisions of the Central Goods and Service Tax (CGST) Act, relating to the power of arresting a person.

A bench of Justices Mammoohan and Sanjeev Narula issued notice to the central government and the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGCI) on the plea seeking to declare sections 69 and 132 of the CGST Act as unconstitutional, illegal, unenforceable and ultra vires to the Constitution.

goods and having allegedly committed offences under the CGST Act amounting to Rs 13 crore.

Gupta has sought direction to the authorities that no coercive action be taken against him in relation to the investigation pending against Transline Technologies.

During the hearing, advocate Vijay Aggarwal, representing Gupta, showed a video clip to the court claiming that the DGCI, New Delhi, officials were allegedly slapping and manhandling the employee of the petitioner and an audio clip of the call recording was also played.

The high court directed the authorities not to arrest Gupta till the next date of hearing, December 22 and to seal his house and godown.

It also directed the petitioner to appear before the Deputy Director, DGCI, on December 11 for recording of statements and that he shall continue to appear and cooperate in investi-

gation as and when directed by the officer.

Keeping in view the peculiar facts of this case, in particular the audio visual tapes placed on record as well as the no coercive steps' orders passed by the Apex Court in..., this court directs that till the next date of hearing the petitioner shall not be arrested, the high court said.

The petition, filed through advocates Yugant Sharma, Nagesh Behl and Deepanshu Chothani, challenged the investigation on the grounds that it was conducted by the GST officers in gross non-compliance of the procedure established by law as contemplated under the Code of Criminal Procedure, claiming it to be in violation of Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution.

"The vires of sections 69 and 132 of the CGST Act, 2017 were also challenged on the ground that an arrest cannot be made under the said Act, as there is no constitutionality abiding to the same, it said.

Jai Ram condemns attack on Nadda's convoy in WB

He said that 'people of Bengal would give befitting reply to the nefarious designs of TMC in the coming Vidhan Sabha elections'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 10 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur has condemned the alleged attack on the convoy of Bharatiya Janata President (BJP) president Jagat Prakash Nadda on his way to Diamond Harbour in West Bengal today to meet party workers for the 2021 Bengal assembly elections.

The chief minister said that this cowardly act has vindicated the fact that there was no law and order in Bengal and goons supported by ruling TMC were out to intimidate their political opponents.

Thakur said that it seemed that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has no faith in democratic norms and were resorting to unlawful tactics to remain in power.

He said that 'people of Bengal would give befitting reply to the nefarious designs of TMC in the coming Vidhan Sabha elections.'

For this, he also suggested the formation of a monitoring committee in the State Congress Committee for best coordination among the various units from booth to

Haryana police reunite 2 missing children with their families

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 10 DECEMBER

Haryana Police has reunited two missing minor children, who were traced in Mumbai, with their families.

Giving this information on Thursday, a Haryana Police spokesperson said the Anti Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) of Crime Branch traced these minors in Mumbai and handed them over to their parents. One was reported missing from Nizamuddin (Delhi) and another from Farakpur (Yamunanagar).

The JJP has been facing criticism within the party for not walking out of the alliance on the issue of the farmers' protest and "clinging to power".

In an alliance, the JJP had extended support to the BJP, which won 40 seats in the 2019 Haryana Assembly polls, which was six short of the simple majority mark.

The JJP has been facing the ire of the people on Twitter with thousands trolling Dushyant Chautala by using the hashtag "Dushyant_Kisan_Ya_Kursi" with more than two lakh tweets being issued till Thursday evening.

The JJP, a breakaway faction of the state's once prominent regional outfit Indian National Lok Dal, is primarily a rural Jat-centric party with the farmers being its core vote bank. The Jat, a dominant farming community, comprises 28 per cent of the state's population.

respectively.

Upon getting some clues, special efforts were made by the AHTU team for tracing and reuniting kids with their families. With the coordinated efforts of Haryana and Maharashtra Police, both kids were brought back and reunited with their parents. Both minors have been produced before the respective Child Welfare Committee before being reunited with their families.

Raju had gone missing for the last one and half year from Yamunanagar. He was living at David Sassoon Industrial School, Matunga, Mumbai, while Neelu was living at a shelter home in Dadar, Mumbai.

After the parents received information that their miss-

ing children were traced, they, without losing a moment, came to get the custody of the kids. The children recognised parents through video-calling and after adopting legal procedures, Raju was handed over to parents on 7 December, whereas Neelu was reunited with family on 8 December.

Meanwhile, the Director General of Police, Manoj Yadava appreciated the entire team of AHTU for their sheer dedication who are relentlessly working towards this noble cause. Both AHTU and our field units have been playing a significant role in tracing out missing children and reuniting them with their parents, he added.

HPNLU discusses rights of female prisoners

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 10 DECEMBER

The Himachal Pradesh National Law University, Shimla, in collaboration with the Institute of Correctional Administration, Chandigarh Dr Upneet Lalli introduced an online seminar on "Implementation of Bangkok Rules in Indian Prison System" to mark the International Human Rights Day today.

Vice-Chancellor, HPNLU, Shimla Professor Nishtha Jaswal delivered the inaugural address on "Constitutional Rights and Women in Custody" in which she very

impactfully focused on the constitutional provisions and Supreme Court judgments with regard to the rights of female prisoners. Deputy Director, Institute of Correctional Administration, Chandigarh Dr Upneet Lalli introduced the theme and elaborated upon the Bangkok Rules highlighting the social and psychological impacts of incarceration on females.

Prison officers from over ten states attended the event as a part of their training along with over 150 other participants. Members of NGOs such as India Vision Chaturvedi.

Foundation and Humanising Lives were also present. Ms Swati Sathe, DIG Prisons, Maharashtra and other female prison officers were the resource persons in the technical session.

Professor Pam Rajput shared her experience as the Chair of the High-Powered Committee of Government of India, on the status of women. There was a group discussion session in which participants openly expressed their views about human rights of prisoners. The seminar was coordinated by Dr Amit Chaturvedi.

Himachal Cong mulls monitoring bodies for better coordination

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 10 DECEMBER

Former Union minister and Congress in-charge for Himachal Pradesh Rajeev Shukla on Thursday said the state unit should formulate a monitoring committee for better coordination between booth, block, district and state level office bearers.

Addressing a webinar with Block Congress chiefs, Rajeev Shukla said all block units should work hard to strengthen the party in the state and besides, training programmes should be conducted at regular intervals at booth level party workers.

He gave directions for preparations for upcoming Panchayati Raj and Municipal bodies' elections in state and said Congress party will perform well in these elections only if the party works as a unitary force.

He further stated that the formation of all the blocks in the state had almost been completed and now, the emphasis should be laid on forming booth committees so that the party workers can create a better mutual coordination and work constructively.

For this, he also suggested the formation of a moni-

Rathore asks workers to follow party directions

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 10 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore said the party workers should follow directions of the party strictly. He directed the block unit chiefs to maintain close coordination with the district and state level office bearers.

Addressing a webinar with

ments more vigorously against the anti-people policies and wrong decisions of the Central as well as state government.

"HP Congress stood solidly with the people of the state in Covid crisis and the party has donated health equipment to three medical colleges of IGMC, Nercowk and Tanda.

In addition, the party suc-

cessfully organized rallies in all the parliamentary constituencies in support of the farmers in which the party got huge support from the people," he added.

He asked block unit chiefs to visit all their panchayats and select candidates associated with the party by mutual coordination and consensus so that the BJP can be defeated in upcoming elections.

gestions for better functioning of the party and share problems with party leadership as they were the backbone of the party.

Shukla appreciated State Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore and Leader of Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri for their work amid Covid pandemic and said the party was able to raise issues of public interest and failures of the state government effectively.

He also raised the issue of addition of fake voters in voter lists for Panchayati Raj Institutions elections and said the block unit chiefs should gather evidence on these irregularities so that the state government could be exposed on the issue.

Remote Uttarakhand village in spotlight months after archaeological finds

RAJU GUSAIN
DEHRADUN, 10 DECEMBER

A remote village in Uttarakhand is in the spotlight for its archaeological finds. Some stone pillars and statues had been unearthed in Ramnagar village near Barahmukh in Uttarkashi district earlier this year.

This had then failed to make any news as the villagers were busy managing the return of migrants back to their native places in the midst of the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

The unearthing of some ancient pillars and statues came to light recently when the villagers of Ramnagar and Panyasari launched an agitation for getting road connectivity to their villages. Some media persons reached Kali Mandir at Panyasari and found some artifacts inside the temple. When they asked some local people, they told media persons about three



instances of ancient idols having been found in neighboring Ramnagar village.

A Panyasari resident Tepan Singh Kumain said, "In June this year, some digging was done at a traditional water source (Naula) site; two statue and few carved pillars were recovered from Ramnagar. This is the third find in our area. Earlier in 1965-66, a farmer found some statues while working in his field. We have stored some

recovered idols at Kali Mandir and the latest idols recovered are kept at the water source site."

Few years ago, another find was registered at Ramnagar, while a local person was doing some construction work for cattle sheds. The recovered artifacts were part of a Shivling, but it has gone missing from the village. The latest find has surprised the villagers and they are asking the state govern-

Funds sanctioned for staff, web conference licence for district courts: AAP govt to HC

PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

The AAP government has informed the Delhi High Court that funds have been sanctioned for employing staff and purchase of 761 licenses from Cisco Webex to continue with virtual court hearings in the district courts of the national capital.

had received approval of the finance department and was being considered by the law minister when a letter was received from the District and Sessions Judge (HQ) asking for vehicles of a higher model. Sub-

sequently, the file was withdrawn for reconsideration, the report said.

The report was filed pursuant to the court's December direction to the Delhi government to grant administra-

tive approval and necessary sanctions for releasing Rs 1.44 crore to purchase 761 licences from Cisco Webex in order to

continue with virtual court hearings in the district courts in the national capital.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

SWEATSHIRT

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SALE

WINTER OFFER

ARROW raymond Colorplus LOUIS PHILIPPE PARK AVENUE

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

By Economy Sales: 9212758425



When people need three meals a day, there is no clarity on the vaccine, jobs are being lost and farmers are on the streets. Is this the priority at this time

CPI(M) GENERAL SECRETARY SITARAM YECHURY

DESCRIBING FOUNDATION LAYING FOR NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING 'AS COLOSSAL WASTE OF RESOURCES'

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ndia

THUMBNAILS



Irshad Ahmad Reshi, linked to terror outfit Jamaat, was arrested by Jammu and Kashmir police, in South Kashmir's Awantipora on Thursday. Incriminating materials have been recovered from him. ■ IANS

PPE kits for ASHA workers: Executive Director, MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child, New Delhi, Dr Sunil Mehra presented 350 PPE kits and 1,100 ASHA kits for ASHA workers of the state to Himachal Pradesh chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur in Shimla on Thursday. ■ SNS

Kerala gold smuggling case: Kerala Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan on Thursday said allegations of an unholy nexus with Swapna Suresh, prime accused in the gold smuggling case, were false and baseless. He conceded he failed in understanding the background of Suresh who, he insisted, was known to him only as an official of the UAE Consulate. The Speaker was contemplating legal action against BJP state president K Surendran for dragging his name into the case. ■ SNS

Multi-Modal Logistic parks to come up along Dedicated Freight Corridor

ABHIJEET ANAND
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

Multi-Modal Logistic parks are proposed to be built along with the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC). These logistic parks will be hubs for transport of cargo and container terminals, bulk cargo terminals and cold chains will be part of the logistic parks.

To be built at strategic locations along with the alignment of DFC, these logistic parks will increase the freight handling capacity of DFC.

"Multi-Modal Logistic parks are aimed at enhancing the presence and share of rail transport in the overall transport chain and attain increased rail freight volumes by offering integrated, efficient and cost effective logistics and warehousing options to users. It will also reduce the make cargo transportation cost effective," said managing director, DFCCIL, R N Singh.

The DFC is in an advance stage of construction. In the financial year 2020-2021, 40 per cent of the total DFC will be fully operationalised which will link the important ports of Kandla, Mundra and Pipavav with National Capital Region via Western DFC.

The complete Western Dedicated Freight Corridor and the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, excluding the Sonnagar-Dankuni stretch, is

Cong targets Centre over new Parliament building

Asks what would a building represent when it's built after trampling democracy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

The Congress on Thursday attacked the Centre over the new Parliament building, and asked what would a building represent when it is built after "trampling" democracy.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said history would record that when farmers were fighting for their rights by protesting on the streets, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was busy laying the foundation stone of the new Parliament building.

"Dear PM, Parliament is not mortar and stones. It envisions Democracy. It imbibes Constitution. It is Economic-Political-Social Equality. It is Compassion and Camaraderie. It is the aspirations of 130 crore Indians. What would a building built upon trampling of these values represent?" he said on Twitter.

Surjewala said in a democracy, power does not mean fulfilling one's whims and fancies, but serving people and public interest.

"Mr Modi, history will also record that when the 'Anna-datta' (food grower) was fighting for his rights for 16 days on the streets, you were building a palace for yourself in the name of Central Vista. In democracy, power is not a means to fulfil your whims, but is a medium for public service and public welfare," he said in another tweet in Hindi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday laid the foundation of the new Parliament building here at an



event attended by leaders from various political parties, Cabinet ministers and ambassadors of different countries.

The Congress, however, did not attend the event. The party has been accusing the Central government of trampling the rights of farmers who have been protesting against the new agri-market laws.

Another Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said the existing Parliament building built by the British bears a remarkable similarity to the Chausath Yogini Temple in Morena in Madhya Pradesh, while the new 'atmanirbhar' Parliament building bears an eerie likeness to the Pentagon in Washington DC.

He also shared pictures of the old and new Parliament buildings and that of the Pentagon and the Morena temple to draw a comparison.

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said: "The foundation for a new Parliament building was laid on the ruins of a liberal democracy." Congress spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill said the decision to build the new building was heartless, senseless and shameless. At a time when the nation is going through economic recession, the BJP instead of giving any concession is taking out an extravaganza procession, he said.

Meanwhile, Dalit leader Udit Raj organised a protest march near Parliament against laying the foundation stone of the new building. The demonstration took place when the PM was laying the foundation stone of the new Parliament building. "Our demand was to name the new building after BR Ambedkar. The heavy police presence did not allow the marchers to reach the Parliament, he said.

Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, deserves this honour. He is the voice of the voiceless people," the national chairman of the Confederation of SC/ST Organisations said in a statement.

Indian Parliament's new building will have a triangular shape to reflect the importance of triangles being a sacred geometry in various religions, while its interiors will have three national symbols

as their main themes - Lotus, Peacock and Banyan Tree.

The new building will be constructed close to the existing one under the Central Vista redevelopment project.

The Congress has been opposing the redevelopment project and the new Parliament building. It has maintained that the need of the hour is not to go ahead with the ambitious project, but to spend the resources in rebuilding India and giving a boost to the country's economy which has been hit by Covid-19 pandemic.

PM's speech diabolic doublespeak: CPI(M)

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Thursday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and accused him of diabolic doublespeak, while destroying democracy, hours after he laid the foundation stone for the new Parliament building.

Asserting that Indian democratic traditions predate the Magna Carta, a 13th century document many scholars consider as the framework for a modern republic, Modi said on Thursday that the day is not far when the world will term India as the "mother of democracy" if Indians extol the country's democratic history with confidence.

Attacking the PM, Yechury said in a tweet: Mr Modi is giving a moral lecture on the values' & culture' of democracy while in practice destroying democracy mercilessly, assaulting all dissent & preventing our youth from even choosing their life partners: diabolic doublespeak.

The government has been defending these laws, saying they will benefit farmers in the long run and raise their incomes.

Union minister Danve on Wednesday claimed that China and Pakistan were behind the ongoing protests by farmers. Talking to reporters here, Raut said: "The Shiv Sena takes this statement of the Union minister seriously... now, it is the responsibility of the Central government to teach the two neighbouring countries a lesson."

He said the Shiv Sena was "thankful" to Danve for highlighting an important issue.

"Lakhs of farmers are at the Singhu border, adamant on their demands. If the government wished early resolution of the standoff, it could have found a solution," Raut said.

The Rajya Sabha member further said problems faced by farmers in the entire country are similar. "If the BJP-led government at the Centre wants agriculture reforms, first implement them in states ruled by the party. If successful, rest of the country will follow," he said.

Some years ago, the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act was repealed in Bihar.

In reference to that, Raut said, "According to my information, the price of food grains is Rs 900 in Bihar and Rs 1,500 in Punjab."

"Should farmers from Bihar go to Punjab to sell their crop?" he asked.

Maharashtra minister and NCP's national spokesperson Nawab Malik in a video message hit out at the Union minister's remark and said:

"The government should clarify whether this is the government's position or that of



Karnataka farmers participate in a protest rally to press for the repeal of the new agricultural laws and against the Karnataka Legislative Council over the passing of Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill 2020, in Bengaluru on Thursday. ■ IANS

Farmers' stir: Raut takes dig at Danve, NCP seeks his ouster

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 10 DECEMBER

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Thursday took a dig at Union minister Raosaheb Danve over his "China and Pakistan behind farmers' protest" claim, saying if true, then the Centre should teach a lesson to the neighbouring countries.

The NCP also lashed out at Danve and said he should resign if his comment is not the Central government's position on the issue.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting at Delhi borders since 26 November, demanding a repeal of the new farm laws, which they say will lead to dismantling of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanism and mandis that ensure earning.

The government has been defending these laws, saying they will benefit farmers in the long run and raise their incomes.

Union minister Danve on Wednesday claimed that China and Pakistan were behind the ongoing protests by farmers. Talking to reporters here, Raut said: "The Shiv Sena takes this statement of the Union minister seriously... now, it is the responsibility of the Central government to teach the two neighbouring countries a lesson."

"The new agriculture laws brought by the Centre will exploit the farmers," the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister told reporters here on Wednesday night.

"The President gives suggestion to the Central gov-

Centre trying to ruin country: Kamal Nath on new farm laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
INDORE, 10 DECEMBER

ernment. Now, it is for the Central government to take a call. The government should try to understand the reality of the agriculture sector," Nath said in response to a query over Opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi and Sharad Pawar, meeting President Ram Nath Kovind seeking repeal of the farm laws.

"Our economy is agrarian and unless the farm sector grows strong financially, the economy will not improve," Nath added. "Our priority right now should be that farmers get justice and that they get fair prices for their produce," the former Union minister said.

Danve saheb."

"If it is the government's position why is then (Union agriculture minister) Narendra Singh Tomar ji holding meetings with farmers? Why did (Union home minister) Amit Shah ji meet them and is holding discussions?" he asked.

The NCP leader said Danve should immediately resign if what he said is not the government's position. "He should be sacked, if he is not resigning on his own. Danve has insulted farmers with his comments," he said.

NCP's chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase described Danves' comments as "absolutely shameful".

"The NCP demands that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should immediately sack Danve," he added.

Tapase said cultivators have sought inspiration for their protest against the "draconian and anti-farmer" agriculture laws from the civil dis-

obedience movement called by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930 to oppose Britishers.

He noted that despite several rounds of discussions between the Centre and farmers, no concrete decision has been taken yet.

"The government has shown its blatant indifference to the plight of farmers by categorically stating that there will be no rollback of the new farm laws," he said.

NCP spokesperson Clyde Crasto said the Union minister should be reprimanded for "rumour-mongering" if there is no truth in his claims.

"Our Defence Minister must take immediate cognizance of Raosaheb Danve's statement & ask him to help our country counter this threat from #China & #Pakistan by providing information known to him.

"But if there is no truth in his claims, he should be reprimanded for rumour mongering," Crasto tweeted.

BOVINE AID



Andhra Pradesh chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the launch of 'Jagananna Jeeva Kranti' scheme under which sheep and goat units will be distributed to women belonging to BC, SC, ST and minority communities through Rythu Bharosa Kendras with government financial assistance, in Amaravati on Thursday. ■ IANS

India, Australia partner on Covid-19 research

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

to protect farmers from disasters associated with climate change and demonstrate how food-drying technology using renewable energy can reduce pollution in the food-processing sector.

Australian minister for industry, science and technology Karen Andrews said she was pleased that work in these important areas would be able to continue after the pandemic had caused significant delays this year. "This latest funding will enable Australian and Indian researchers to contribute to the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including in crucial screening and diagnostic testing," Andrews said.

The Australian government remains committed to our strong, strategic relationship with India, which provides numerous economic benefits for both countries."

The Australian recipients are the University of South Australia, the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Technology Sydney, the Metro

North Hospital and Health Service in Brisbane, the University of Adelaide, and the University of Western Australia. In June 2020, the Australian government announced it would commit a further \$15-million to extend the AISRF for another four years to 2024, bringing Australia's total funding for AISRF grants to nearly \$100-million over 18 years. This funding will begin to roll out from the next grant round in 2021. The AISRF is Australia's largest fund dedicated to bilateral science collaboration. It helps build links between Australia and India's top universities, research institutions and the end users of scientific innovation.

Amid its ongoing border row with China, India today discussed steps to further strengthen defence cooperation with China, including joint exercises and training.

The two sides held wide-ranging discussions during the visit of Gen Izutsu Shunji, Chief of Staff, Japan Air Self Defense Force who arrived yesterday and met his Indian counterpart, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria.

The two Air chiefs recognised the progress made in defence ties between India and Japan and discussed avenues to further enhance cooperation and interoperability between the two Air Forces.

Avoid actions that may complicate situation: Rajnath Singh's veiled message to China

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

In a veiled reference to China's aggressive behaviour against its neighbours, defence minister Rajnath Singh today underlined the importance of mutual trust and confidence based on restraint in activities and actions that might further complicate the situation in the region. He also hit out at Pakistan for its continued support to terrorism.

He was addressing the 14th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting organised online by Vietnam. Apart from Singh and his Chinese counterpart, Wei Fenghe, the meeting was attended by the defence ministers of ASEAN member-countries, United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Singh emphasised India's call for an open and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific region based upon respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, peaceful resolutions of disputes through dialogue and adherence to international rules and laws.

He also reiterated India's support to freedom of navigation and overflight for all in international waters in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in the backdrop of China's continued attempts to browbeat its neighbours on maritime issues.

Singh pointed out that the Indo-Pacific region confronted numerous traditional and non-traditional security threats and recalled the launch of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at last year's East Asia Summit. The IPOI was an open global initiative which drew on existing regional cooperation architecture and mechanism. He noted the commonality between India's IPOI and ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific, both being opportunities for cooperation.

Terrorism, he said, remained a major scourge for the region and world. The structures that support and sustain terrorism continue to exist, including in India's neighbourhood, he said in a veiled reference to Pakistan. He called for stronger commitment and need to strengthen international mechanism to fight terrorism, jointly and vigorously.

Singh underlined the key role of ASEAN-centric forum in promoting dialogue and engagement towards a pluralistic, cooperative security order in Asia.

TENDER

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

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INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1. Strengthening of Infrastructure of existing school under RMSA of Govt. Sr. Sec. School at Sahi Tehsil Bhatiyat Distt. Chamba HP (SH- Construction of One No. Classroom, One No. Lab in Ground floor including staircase)

2. Restoration of Damage on Dalhousie Jandrihat Chamba via Kohlani road (SH- Providing and laying 30 mm thick Bituminous Concrete in Km. 2/0 to 3/0).

3. M/T on Chamba Chowari road Km. 2/0 to 5/0 (SH- Providing and Laying M/T , C/O 375871/-, 18.12.2020

4. AMP on Raipur to Dohi (Gugri to Jambal) road Km. 0/0 to 2/825 (SH- P/L Bituminous



The Congress, the National Conference and the PDP are befooling the innocent masses in the name of self-rule and autonomy.

'Former WB CM Buddhadeb's health improves but still critical'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 10 DECEMBER

The condition of the veteran CPI-M leader and former chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya remained critical today though he regained consciousness.

Bhattacharya was admitted to a private hospital on Alipore Road on Wednesday afternoon with respiratory trouble and low oxygen saturation level.

Hardly a year ago, he was taken to the same hospital with symptoms of pneumonia.

A medical bulletin released by the hospital authorities this evening said, "He is on sedation and ventilated. His oxygen saturation is 95 per cent."

His blood pressure and pulse rate are stable and urine output is satisfactory. He is on Ryles tube for feeding, according to the bulletin.

An 11-member medical board comprising Dr Kaushik Chakraborty and Dr Soutik Pant, two critical care experts of the hospital, Dr Saroj Mondal, professor in cardiology of SSKM Hospital, and other specialist physicians are monitoring his health condition round-the-clock.

"He has been administered antibiotics and steroids and other supportive medicines through intravenous procedure. We are trying to keep him out of the ventilator support as much as possible. He is responding to our treatment," a member of the medical board said. The 77-year-old is a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease patient.

His breathing distress was deteriorating since last week at home with the onset of winter. He fell unconscious at home on Wednesday.

Murthy in RMM upsets Rajini fans

Posters to bear only Rajinikanth till party announced formally

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 10 DECEMBER

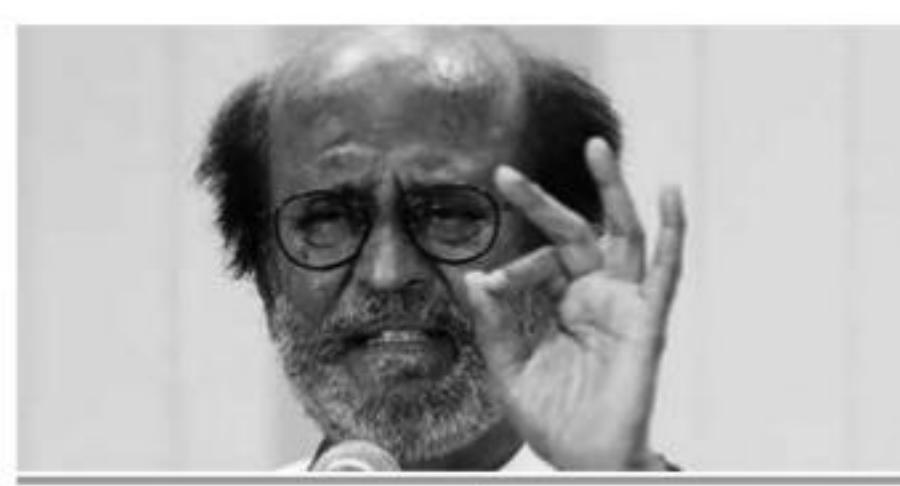
The disappointment of Rajini Makkal Mandram (RMM) cadres on the appointment of Arjuna Murthy, former intellectual head of the BJP as his party's chief coordinator, was reflected in the meeting Rajinikanth held on Wednesday with RMM functionaries when Rajini asked his fans not to show anyone except him on posters until the party is formally announced.

Rajinikanth on Wednesday convened a meeting with RMM functionaries, including Murthy and Tamilaruvu Manian to discuss the strategies for the upcoming state Assembly election.

The RMM was formed from the actor's fan club All India Rajini Rasigam Mandram after he announced his interest in electoral politics in 2017. Since most of the members of the fan clubs are from lower strata of the society, appointment of an upper caste BJP former intellectual cell chief and seems have disappointed fans base entirely.

RMM was overjoyed when an actor-turned-politician Rajinikanth or *Thalaivai*, as he is fondly called, finally announced his political debut, but a little bit disappointed now on these developments. Even though, they are ready to obey what their ultimate leader says and support his political ambitions, Rajini, as accused by opposition parties as a pawn of BJP in the state, now seems to be threading a cautious path.

Meanwhile, Rajinikanth seeking alliances ahead of



Rajinikanth on Wednesday convened a meeting with RMM functionaries, including Murthy and Tamilaruvu Manian to discuss the strategies for the upcoming state Assembly election

the TN Assembly elections, have been questioned by multiple Opposition parties regarding his political ideology and motive for entering the fray. While Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) chief Thol Thirumavalavan has alleged that Rajinikanth is merely another face of BJP, CPI-M's TN chief Balakrishnan stated that starting a political party unlike abruptly starting a private company.

These remarks come at a time when Rajinikanth is speculated to head a third Front in the state with smaller parties as allies.

He had confirmed the launch of his political party in January (most probably on Pongal which is on 14th), just months ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections. Following his announcement, both AIADMK and DMK leaders claimed that their vote share will not be affected by Rajinikanth's entry.

Modi to address int'l Bharati festival today

CHENNAI, 10 DECEMBER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the International Bharati Festival 2020 on Friday, organiser of the event, Vanavil Cultural Centre, said here.

The PM will address via video-conferencing and also present the Bharati award, K Ravi, founder of Vanavil Cultural Centre, told reporters here on Thursday. The event is being conducted as part of the 138th birth anniversary celebration of Tamil poet and writer Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati.

This year the festival is being organised in virtual mode due to the pandemic. Modi will address the festival at 4.30 PM on Friday, Ravi said.

TN Minister for Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture and Archaeology K Pandiarajan, would also address the festival, he added. The Bharathi Award, to be presented by Modi, was instituted in 1994 by Vanavil Cultural Centre. Every year it is being conferred on eminent persons who have done laudable service in any field of social relevance and thus worked towards the fulfilment of Bharathi's dreams.

He said about 4,000 party workers will cover 2,51 lakh km to reach out to 27,500 households. The constituencies will be covered by 950 teams of TMC workers even in those Assembly segments where Trinamul does not have its MLAs.

Chatterjee said the MLAs and team members will carry booklets and cards to the households and promulgate different development works and beneficial projects of the government.

He said since Mamata Banerjee came to power in 2011, the departmental budget for education has increased three fold. In 2010-11, the budgetary allocation was Rs 13,872 cr but in 2021, the allocation stands at Rs 37,059 cr.

Lauding the Kanyashree project which started in 2013 and has received the UNESCO prize, he said Rs 6,720 crore

were spent on 67.29 lakh beneficiaries so far.

In 2015, Miss Banerjee started the Sabuj Sathi scheme under which 84 lakh students were given cycles. This year, the scheme received UNESCO

prize before the Press and public

Chatterjee said the MLAs and team members will carry booklets and cards to the households and promulgate different development works and beneficial projects of the government.

He said 92 lakh students

received school uniforms and 113 lakh students are under mid-day meal scheme.

Infrastructure has also developed considerably with about 30 universities and 50 colleges, 73 ITI, 36 polytechnic institutes and 15,378 classrooms all of which manifested under the current regime.

He said his government had introduced online admission and online class teachings during Covid-19 pandemic.

Subrata Mukherjee, state panchayat and rural affairs minister said, "Since 1971, I've been

in the ministry of Congress government in West Bengal but never seen a chief minister placing his government's report card of development works and other beneficiary projects before the Press and public

before the poll."

"We will ask the people who will be given this booklet: go through it judge us and vote us. He said the greatest achievement of rural Bengal has been to end open defecation system under Nirmal Bangla Project and spent Rs 5,298 crore for that."

The last decade saw state GDP in West Bengal increase from Rs 4.51 lakh cr to 6.9 lakh cr with 30 per cent growth in agriculture and allied sectors; 60 per cent in industry and 62 per cent in service sectors.

Under the Bangla Awas Yojana, 33,87,000 houses were

built and Rs 39,993 cr spent.

Sudip Bandopadhyay, MP said, CM's 'Duare Sarkar' scheme is highly welcomed by the people of Bengal. "They are forming beelines in camps to get registered for various projects especially Swastha Sathi project." Unlike BJP-run states, Mamata Banerjee's government did tremendously for the development of SCs, STs and other Backward classes and minorities, Bandopadhyay said.

Chandrima Bhattacharya, minister of state for health, said that Mamata Banerjee is the only CM in India who not only declared free ration for people upto June 2021 but has also declared Swastha Sathi cards for 10 cr people and the state government will have to spend Rs 2,000 cr.

Firad Hakim spoke about Miss Banerjee's social security scheme, where 1.30 lakh people are covered. He also spoke about 'Sneher Parash' to migrant labourers and 17,80,000 people are receiving pension or widow pension.

Shovondeb Chattopadhyay, MIC power, said, "95.3 lakh new household electrified since 2011 and thus 100 per cent certification was done." He also said household consumption in 2010 was 550 let but in 2020 the household consumption increases to 703 let.

He said 1,18,128km rural roads were built in the last decades.

UNION MINISTER JITENDRA SINGH

DURING A PUBLIC RALLY IN SUPPORT OF BJP CANDIDATE ASIF CHOUDHARY

The Statesman

05

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER 2020

TMC releases report card on Mamata's 10-yr rule

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 10 DECEMBER



Mamata Banerjee during a protest against farm laws at Mayo road in Kolkata on Thursday. ■ BISWAJIT GHOSH

Senior state ministers and Trinamul Congress MPs today released report cards of development works and different projects of Mamata Banerjee's government in the last decade.

Trinamul Congress general secretary and state education minister Partha Chatterjee today declared that from tomorrow all the MLAs will visit 294 Assembly constituencies and commence *Banga Dhawni* outreach programme.

He said about 4,000 party workers will cover 2,51 lakh km to reach out to 27,500 households.

The constituencies will be covered by 950 teams of TMC workers even in those Assembly segments where Trinamul does not have its MLAs.

Chatterjee said the MLAs and team members will carry booklets and cards to the households and promulgate different development works and beneficial projects of the government.

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Vaccine concerns

The advisory issued by the United Kingdom after three persons administered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against coronavirus developed severe reactions encapsulates the concerns voiced by those who believed accelerated clinical trials of the sort the world has seen over the past few months were fraught with risk. UK officials have now advised people with a history of "significant allergies" not to take the vaccine after two reports of anaphylaxis and one of a possible severe reaction. Anaphylaxis is a condition that can cause the throat to swell, and lead to breathing difficulties and trouble in swallowing. While this is a general advisory, there is as yet no word on the precise allergies that could get triggered, which in effect would suggest this was not an aspect covered ~ or one that was ignored ~ by the clinical trials that preceded certification of the vaccine for use in the UK. Indeed, so fuzzy is the science on the subject that UK authorities were amending advisories on the fly as reports of severe reactions started to come in. First, health authorities advised those with a history of a "significant allergic reaction to a vaccine, medicine or food" not to take the shot and then amended the caution to exclude food allergies. At least one report suggests that Pfizer had excluded people with a history of significant adverse reactions to vaccines or to the ingredients of its product from late stage trials. If so, this would beg the question why Pfizer did not say so publicly before its vaccine was cleared for public use. These reports must alert American and Indian regulators, who are considering authorising emergency use of the vaccine, to ask probing questions of the manufacturer before saying yes.

Without in any way seeking to devalue the near superhuman efforts made by the scientific community around the world to develop vaccine candidates, the commercial and geopolitical aspects of vaccine development cannot be overlooked. Pfizer, BioNTech, AstraZeneca and the others involved in developing an antidote to the virus are at the end of the day commercial enterprises answerable to shareholders.

Successful development and certification by national health authorities will boost both profits and valuations. The race to develop a successful vaccine also has a geopolitical dimension; it was not so long ago that the Russian launch of its Sputnik-V vaccine was compared to its inaugural foray into space more than six decades ago. Scientists and epidemiologists have warned that these pressures could lead to corners being cut as manufacturers seek to achieve deadlines that many deem unrealistic given the history of past vaccine developments. More than anything else, concerns raised in the UK within days of public use being allowed will add to the ranks of those who are predisposed to be hesitant about using vaccines. The scientific community and vaccine manufacturers owe it to the world to cover all bases before launching a product. The cure must not prove worse than the disease.

Of nationalism

It's been a tough week for External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, which was capped on Wednesday by his candid if obvious acknowledgement of the fact that India was probably at the "most difficult phase of our relationship with China in the last 30-40 years or even more" in the wake of the military standoff between the two countries in eastern Ladakh. Speaking at a webinar hosted by an Australian think-tank, he went on to add that the Sino-Indian relationship had been "significantly damaged" this year. Also, this week, Mr Jaishankar was targeted in a media interview by a respected commentator on international affairs and former Indian Foreign Service colleague for his helming of Indian foreign policy which was characterised by the latter as being marked by "a lot of uncertainty... (and) no clear direction".

The retired diplomat was particularly harsh on Jaishankar's handling of China. Well, the man is entitled to his views, and there certainly is a problem with the New Delhi-Beijing equation, but the solution to it lies not in abandoning the path Jaishankar has set out but by treading on it more firmly. The Foreign Minister would also do well to ignore accusations from the usual suspects of his allegedly self-serving acquiescence with the "nationalistic" stance of the political establishment he represents.

On the contrary, a reiteration of his statement made soon after he was sworn-in as a surprise choice to head the ministry that, to paraphrase, 'nationalism can be a force for good in the world depending on the variety one is speaking of', would be apposite. For, Indic nationalism is not of the type that was practiced by European ethnic nation-states which led to the horrors of Nazism, fascism and expansionism. So, when Mr Jaishankar asserts that today's China is "much more nationalistic", he needs to underline that it is the Western model of nationalism ~ in this case inspired by a socialism of sorts with definitive Chinese characteristics ~ he is pointing to. Failing that, the same criticism can fairly be made of India too unless the non-expansionist nature of the emergent Indian nationalism is repeatedly underlined at all global fora.

It is not enough to just assert as Mr Jaishankar does: "You could argue that it is natural for a country that goes up the power hierarchy... that its behaviour and pattern would change. I reserve my comment on it. But there's clearly no question that you have a very much more nationalistic China and that is expressed down the line in a variety of ways and often in policies as well." Because then the riposte could certainly be ~ and the same to you! The danger, as always, is becoming what one opposes. India must guard against it.

Shepherd to Saint

Remarkably, although Latu was an outcaste, Sri Ramakrishna didn't care and made him his closest attendant and trained him intimately. Doing so, he broke the caste custom again as was his wont for the accomplishment of a higher socio-religious order



He was a Dalit. Born to shepherd parents, about whom he had no memory since they died when he was just an infant. He only knew that he hailed from a remote village of Chapra district in Bihar and his indigent issue-less uncle had adopted him as his child, who later brought him to Calcutta when he was in his teens. That's all he could tell regarding his life before joining the household of the household-devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, Ramchandra Datta as a boy servant. Neither did he know the name of his native village, nor had he heard his parents' names. All he knew was his own name, Rakhtu Ram, perhaps given by his uncle. He was, however, popularly known as Latu.

Latu was dear to Ramchandra Datta for his exceptional simplicity, honesty and obedience. When he first came to Dakshineswar with his master Ramchandra, he immediately fell in Sri Ramakrishna's notice conspicuously for his sterling qualities and unsullied nature which Sri Ramakrishna could measure in a trice by his *Divya Dristi* (spiritual perception). And that was indeed the real turning point of his life towards his future sainthood. Sri Ramakrishna requested Ramchandra to let Latu stay with him in the temple garden and that's how he shifted to Dakshineswar for good.

The fact that he wasn't touched by worldliness at all deeply impressed Sri Ramakrishna to choose him as his disciple. He was ignorant, unlettered, hapless but pure at heart which is the cardinal criterion for one to achieve the love of God. His crystal clear mind ~ because of the absence of greed, lust and ego ~ was ready for spiritual awakening by direct experience, waiting only for a God-realised Teacher like Sri Ramakrishna to guide. One of his brother disciples said: "Many of us had to go through the muddy waters of intellectual knowledge before we attained God, but Latu jumped over them like Hanuman." Through Latu, Sri Ramakrishna had demonstrated the fact to the modern world that intellectual exercises aren't compulsory for earning spiritual wisdom.

Remarkably, although Latu was an outcaste, Sri Ramakrishna told him cryptically: "Do you know what your Lord Rama is

closest attendant and trained him intimately. Doing so, he broke the caste custom again as was his wont for the accomplishment of a higher socio-religious order. Unforgettably, in a milieu of sticky caste affairs in Kamarupukur he wasn't reticent to accept the first alms from a sudra woman after his sacred thread ceremony as a boy though it was socially forbidden for a brahmin! Why, he was even at ease and respectful to the women of the red-light area as well as to the ladies of theatre world in the capital city of British India who were untouchable to the so-called enlightened in society. He revolutionized religion when it was misrepresented variously, by numerous similar examples all through his life and mission. In any case, Latu's metamorphosis into a spiritual giant under his tutelage, despite his birth in a socially unacceptable class, was the greatest among them. Sri Ramakrishna once told him in an ecstatic mood: "One day the gems of Vedas and Vedanta will pour from your mouth." Observing this actually happen, Swamiji described him as a "miracle" of Sri Ramakrishna.

Latu had also candidly confessed, saying: "I was an orphan. He (Sri Ramakrishna) flooded me with love and affection. If he had not accepted me, I would have been like an animal, spending all my days working like a slave."

Of his monastic disciples, Latu was the first to come to Sri Ramakrishna and serve him relentlessly till his end at Cossipore on 16 August 1886. He attended day in day out on Sri Ramakrishna reciprocating his love with an absolute devotion, reposing a firm faith in every word his Guru as well as his God uttered for him. Latu had in this way proved his worth to Sri Ramakrishna that he was a true Adhikari (competent) for spiritual knowledge and had, accordingly, won it from him without any hassle.

One day while he was massaging his legs, Sri Ramakrishna told him cryptically: "Do you know what your Lord Rama is

doing now? Your Lord Rama is now passing an elephant through the eye of a needle." He rightly understood that his Guru was then compassionately transmitting spirituality into him which he used to do in quirky manners with devotees whom he deemed suitable. By a touch, or a look, or a song, he would transport the mind of a genuine aspirant from the mundane to the sublime sphere of consummate spirituality. Another day, before dawn Sri Ramakrishna asked Latu and his other young disciples to meditate under his watch. When they all sat together, he told them, "Dive deep today ~ repeating the Lord's name with devotion." Then he began to sing, "Wake up, O Mother Kundalini, wake up (jago, ogo ma kundalini, jago)," and went round and round. Suddenly, "Latu uttered a cry", upon which Sri Ramakrishna pressed him down by the shoulders, saying: "Don't get up. Stay where you are." Latu lost his outer consciousness in a moment and remained still in ecstasy as long as Sri Ramakrishna sang, which he eventually continued for more than an hour.

As spiritual teacher, Sri Ramakrishna was a tough task master. He placed a ban on Latu's night sleep for rigorous spiritual practice. Latu struggled continuously for two years and had ultimately succeeded in controlling his sleep. He used to spend almost the entire night in prayer and meditation, as his Guru had instructed him that night-time wasn't for sleep but the best hour for calling on God, sleeping a while during the daytime. This made him a perfect adept in meditation.

Like ecstasy, by the grace of his Guru, he had many other kinds of spiritual experience. He attained the acme of Samadhi at Cossipore while Sri Ramakrishna was wrapping up his Divine Play as man. While rubbing oil on Sri Ramakrishna's head one day "his hand stopped, his body became motionless, and he was absorbed in deep meditation". He was not responding to any call. Sri Ramakrishna said: "Don't disturb him. Is his mind in this world?"

Latu Mahajal lived in Kashi for some years till his demise there in 1920. Sri Ramakrishna's proclamation about him came true. He then quietly shared his sagacious wisdom with others there, who sincerely craved it from him. He told them once:

Relating this experience later, Latu explained he lost his body consciousness then and became conscious of the transcendent Reality which he couldn't express in words.

Blessing of Sri Ramakrishna was his only refuge, by virtue of which he grew to be an exceptional mystic from an insignificant being. Girishchandra Ghosh once told somebody: "If you want to see a monk such as the Gita describes, go and see Latu. I see you have not read the second chapter of the Gita. The nature of a man of steady wisdom (*sthitaprajna*) is described there. You can see all those qualities exemplified in Latu's character."

Swamiji gave him sannyasa in 1887 naming him Swami Adbhutananda, meaning one who possesses the wonderful bliss of the Self-realization. Latu was a footloose type of monk who wouldn't bother about what he ate or where he stayed but remained always alert in the God-consciousness. Swamiji, therefore, with due love and respect, exempted him from all the binding rules he imposed on his monastic brothers as discipline when he established the Ramakrishna Mission.

Latu had an inestimable love for Swamiji. Swamiji's sudden death was unbearable to him. When Swamiji passed away on 4 July 1902 he didn't come to Belur Math. Giving vent to his painful feeling, he said afterward, in view of some critical remarks about him: "Let them talk. Will their talk heal my pain? They do not know how much my Brother Vivekananda loved me! I will miss his great love for me. His love for me was second only to the Master (Sri Ramakrishna)."

Latu Mahajal lived in Kashi for some years till his demise there in 1920. Sri Ramakrishna's proclamation about him came true. He then quietly shared his sagacious wisdom with others there, who sincerely craved it from him. He told them once:

"There are three possible relationships one can have with God: 'My God,' 'I am God,' and 'I am God's.' The last one is best, because it does not tempt pride."

Latu Mahajal's life story isn't an ordinary tale of providing food and shelter to one from the impoverished masses. It's indeed an incredible account of uplifting a downtrodden to the Highest Good in fact.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Recovery momentum

A resurgence in novel coronavirus cases is slowing down South Korea's economic recovery, though its manufacturing sector has been propped up by improving exports. Outbound shipments from Asia's fourth-largest economy grew 4 percent on-year in November, bouncing back from a 3.6 percent decrease in October.

The country's economy grew at a faster-than-expected pace of 2.1 percent in the July-September quarter from three months earlier, raising hopes that it was on a path to recovery. The figure marks the fastest expansion in 11 years and the first positive growth in three quarters.

But private consumption and facility investment recorded on-month declines again in October and industrial output stayed flat, showing that the recovery momentum remained weak amid the prolonged pandemic crisis.

A recent flare-up in COVID-19 infections, which has prompted the government to tighten its social distancing rules again, is expected to further dampen the fragile momentum.

The Korea Economic Research Institute, a private think tank, last week forecast that the country's gross domestic product would shrink 1.4 percent this year and increase 2.7 percent next year.

The figures were lower than the estimates made by the Bank of Korea in November. The central bank predicted the Korean economy would contract 1.1 percent and expand 3 percent in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

The Organization for Economic

The Korea Herald
Cooperation and Development last week forecast the Korean economy would retreat 1.1 percent this year before growing 2.8 percent next year, down from its September projections of a 1 percent contraction and 3.1 percent growth for the respective years.

Despite the downward revision, the OECD noted that Korea's economy was expected to record the smallest decline among its member states this year, citing the country's "effective measures to contain the spread of COVID-19."

President Moon Jae-in and his economic aides may feel buoyed by the Paris-based organization's prediction that Korea will fare better than other advanced economies in 2020 amid pandemic-caused difficulties.

But Korea's relatively good performance is attributable largely to two factors unrelated to robust economic fundamentals.

One is the lower prominence of the service sector in the economy and the other is a higher reliance on China for exports.

With service businesses hit hardest by the spread of COVID-19 around the world, Korea has managed to better contain the economic shock of the pandemic due to the service sector's reduced presence. From another viewpoint, however, this can be seen as evidence of a delay in restructuring its economy to forge new growth engines.

A bill aimed at promoting the development of the service industry has been shelved at the parliament for nearly a decade.

Korea has benefited considerably from a rapid upturn in China's economy since the second quarter as the country depends on China for a quarter of its outbound shipments. But an escalating confrontation between the US and China could heighten the risks of Korean exporters' excessive reliance on the Chinese market.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

India must up-spend on health

SIR, In an era dominated by information technology and the razzmatazz of a free-wheeling existence, the health sector was considered pretty much passé. Now we know better. With Covid-19 looming large over the country's hapless denizens, the wisdom of investing a mere 1.15 per cent of GDP in public health expenditure could come back to haunt the republic.

That India's healthcare system is appalling, despite

the undiluted commitment of its frontline and over-worked medical staff battling all odds, is hardly news. It is time to ramp up public health expenditure by doubling spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP. By global standards, it is still small, but it is at least a start. Comparisons are odious, but compare we must, especially in times of crisis. In 2017, the US spent 17 per cent of its GDP on health consumption, whereas

the undiluted commitment of its frontline and over-worked medical staff battling all odds, is hardly news. It is time to ramp up public health expenditure by doubling spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP. By global standards, it is still small, but it is at least a start. Comparisons are odious, but compare we must, especially in times of crisis. In 2017, the US spent 17 per cent of its GDP on health consumption, whereas

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averages 0.8 doctors for every 1,000 citizens; even Italy, which has been badly hit by the coronavirus outbreak, has five times as many doctors per capita.

A mere 44 per cent of the population has some form of health insurance. Hence the government's ambitious Ayushman Bharat programme, according to OECD figures. Even Nepal spends 6.29 per cent.

India rightly aspires to be a global power, but if those lofty standards are to be applied on the ground, she needs massive capacity building in the health sector. What is needed is more hospitals, doctors, primary healthcare, emergency facilities, diagnostic equipment, protective gear, and medical and nursing schools.

Other indicators, too, are far from heartening. India has just 0.5 hospital beds for every 1,000 people when the WHO recommends at least five. India

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KUDOS

SIR, Two sportswomen have been in the news. Manipuri footballer Ngangom Bala Devi became the first Indian woman to score in a top-tier professional league in Europe. The other is Olympian Anju Bobby George, who secured a historic bronze medal in the 2003 World Athletics Championship in Paris and who has now disclosed that she achieved her successes with a single kidney and many other limitations, including being allergic to even a painkiller.

AIFF's 2014 and 2015 Women's player of the year, footballer Bala Devi came off the bench in the 65th minute, and scored her side's last goal of the match in the 85th minute. The 30-year-old Bala had become the first Indian to sign a professional contract with a top-tier club in Europe in January. To mark her joy, shared by all Indians, she cooked Manipuri fish and rice and celebrated.

Yours, etc., Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee, Faridabad, 8 December.

Putting them into proper historical perspective. He has brought reality to the fore and enriched the knowledge of ordinary readers. One more myth about Gandhi is that he slept naked with young girls to practise celibacy. Is this correct? Could the learned writer throw some light on this aspect of the "Mahatma's" (Great Soul) life. Was he Mahatma or Papatma (Evil Soul)?

Yours, etc., Farooq Abdulgafar Bawani, Rajkot, 7 December.



RAJA MURTHY

Familiar street vendors and vada-pau sellers have returned to Churchgate since March, but this making news speaks of life turned upside down by the mysterious Covid-19 pandemic.

Sellers of pirated books and busy road traffic returned to the Kala Khoda area with its striking Gothic-architecture, and the ghosts of Englishmen and women who walked the same streets 100 years ago.

The sprawling coffee shop inside the 'Fab India' showroom in Kala Khoda had barely three customers; restaurants and small shops are closing, while online behemoths make billions offering devilishly tempting cheap Chinese goods - with Faustian discounts enabled by overseas hedge funds.

Retail businesses are open but near empty with public transport restrictions. What economic future have governments mapped? Extinction of small retail, the neighbourhood shop, and millions of jobs lost? A global economy controlled by six or seven mega billionaires who will rule the Earth?

Has doing business become criminally unfair? Do governments pay empty lip service only before an election to level the playing field?

It's a survival fight on the street. Aswad' restaurant proprietor Pappu Kesarwani near The Oberoi in Nariman Point resumed serving his popular Rs 90 thali after this summer of suffering. 'All is well, sir', he grinned with folded hands of thanksgiving, saying his staff are well too. How many like him will survive?

But even a devastating pandemic delivered disguised blessings in an optimist's half-full glass. Many discovered inner strength, ingenuity to overcome hurdles, experienced generosity of strangers the past 10 months.

14-year-old Subhan Shaik left school in November and became a tea seller in Mumbai's Bhendi Bazaar to support his mother and education of his two sisters. After local media reported his courage, Mumbaikars rushed to help. Smiling Subhan who wants to join the Indian Air Force has since returned to school.

But alongside courageous strug-

Finding strength within to battle mystery virus

gles, new startling questions about Covid-19 confuse a world losing patience - with no consensus among experts about the virus even after a year of torment.

A half-deserted Marine Drive in the evening light showed India's financial capital is not walking the path of European capitals such as Berlin and London, where thousands protest prolonged lockdown and pandemic restrictions.

On 26 November, 22 leading international scientists, doctors and medical researchers wrote a letter shaking the foundation of the global response to Covid-19.

Their letter to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in Solna, Sweden, (<https://coronadrostenreview.com/retraction-request-letter-to-eurosurveillance-editorial-board>) said the widely used RT-PCR test to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus had "10 major flaws at the molecular and methodological level".

They accused the original paper certifying the RT-PCR test 'Detection of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) by real-time RT-PCR' of being published in Eurosurveillance (23 January 2020) without sufficient peer review.

The 22 scientists claimed the certifying paper had instructions to test for the SARS-CoV-2 virus "without having virus material available," and instead relied on Chinese scientists' genetic sequence published on the Internet.

The 22 signatories included molecular genetics scientist Dr Pieter Borger, virology specialist Dr Ulrike Kämmerer from the University Hospital in Würzburg, Germany, Microbiology and Immunology Professor Makoto Ohashi from Japan's Tokushima University and former Pfizer Chief Scientist Dr Michael Yeadon.

These scientists declared the RT-



5-star chef Akshay Parkar sells biryani on the streets of Mumbai.

PCR test had no "scientific rationale" and "there was no viral isolate to validate what they were doing".

"There is nothing at the centre of it," a signatory Dr Kevin P. Corbett told award-winning Swedish journalist Celia Farber. "It's all about code, genetics, nothing to do with reality, or the actual person, the patient."

What is the hidden truth about Covid-19?

While experts contradict each other and governments enforce

extreme policies based on conflicting information, jobs continue being lost, schools closed and people suffer critical daily problems.

The Maharashtra government is indecisive about resuming the city's lifeline of commuter trains for all. Are lives being saved or lives being ruined? Surely there exists a safe way to both save lives and livelihoods.

While new pandemic questions deepen the mystery into sinister realm, job losses increase in Mumbai, the epicentre of India's finance,

media and advertising industry.

Many fight back adversity. A five-star hotel chef Akshay Parkar lost his job and he now makes and sells biryani in his new roadside stall in Dadar.

For those braving challenges amid a mystery pandemic, this is a season to strengthen oneself and serve others. Strength, like the truth, is within.

The writer is a senior, Mumbai-based journalist.

Long road back to normality

C K LAL

After a long hiatus, the Pashupatinath temple is all set to open its doors for devotees from 16 December 2020. One of the holiest shrines of South Asia and a much-frequented place of worship for Hindus from all over the world, the premier Shaivite temple had never remained closed for so long in its recorded history.

The onset of the Hindu nuptial season has revived the business of so-called party palaces that serve as convenient venues for wedding receptions. Attendants in face-shields serve drinks with gloved hands at large gatherings where it's almost impossible to maintain the required social distance of two metres between attendees. Guests pull their masks to the chin to eat and drink with friends, family and fresh acquaintances.

Except for gyms and movie theatres, most commercial enterprises are up and running. Industries were already in operation - once the initial confusion of the lockdown guidelines in March were cleared. Business may not be booming, but some spas and beauty parlours have also begun to welcome clients. The usual crowd of customers is still missing, but restaurants remain open till late in the evening.

Life seems to be coming back to normal in Kathmandu for those that don't have a Covid-19 victim in their immediate families. In private conversations, optimistic observers in South Asia have begun to expect what analysts call a 'V-shaped recovery' that sometimes occurs after a recession. Even though such a simplistic sanguinity is a reflection of wishful thinking rather than of realistic hopes, the process of revival in a relatively weak economy isn't impossible to kick-start.

In the initial phase of the pan-



demic, migrant workers had begun to trek back to their far-flung villages for safety. In a bid to escape rural poverty, workers have since started to come back to urban centres where service industries are humming once again. Public transport has resumed. Small eateries selling noodles and momos are back onto the streets with pots, pans and plastic plates.

Migrants are queuing up at Gadda Chauki near Mahendranagar or Jamunah in Nepalgunj to go back to their work-stations in India. Aircraft fly day and night from Tribhuvan International Airport to ferry unskilled workers to West Asia. The remittances that they send back home fuel consumption that then help raise revenue and fund government expenditure.

However, the 'V-shaped' recovery doesn't occur as easily as a ball

bouncing up from the ground. When calamities wreak havoc with economic activities, the fall is often sudden and steep. The ascent from the bottom of the pit requires concerted effort, takes longer, and looks more like a trudge than a lift-off.

The government's policies and priorities play an important role in bringing normalcy back to the political economy of the country. The central bank has to create confidence in lenders as well as borrowers with appropriate monetary strategies. The profit sector has to pull itself up and identify new opportunities of investment.

Most of all, leadership quality during and after a crisis makes all the difference. In the post-pandemic state of physical, mental and financial exhaustion, the world needs a team

of unifiers everywhere and in every sector. What it has instead are a bunch of dividers that draw their strength from rabid polarisation of politics and society.

A look at Supremo KP Oli's flippancy is enough to show the kind of leadership several countries of the world are saddled with during the worst pandemic to hit humanity in over a century.

Implications of pandemic fatigue upon physical and mental health, weakening compliance with social norms, and safety considerations are widely discussed and publicly disseminated. Somewhat less noticed is the propensity of clutching at straws to escape the state of misery. One such indication is the unnecessary exuberance over the victory of Joe Biden in the US presidential elections.

While freedom from Trumpism anywhere is indeed welcome, it will take a while for the new incumbent of the White House to reclaim the leadership of the free world. Meanwhile, right-wing populism is unlikely to abate anytime soon.

In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro is going from strength to strength: it's being said that as the Covid-19 death count rises, so does Bolsonaro's popularity. Even as the pandemic rages, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's approval rating has been creating new records. Then there are quintessential strongmen such as the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to say nothing of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, who consider themselves even more indispensable at a time like this.

President Trump is on his way out, but the force of Trumpism is so enduring that even President-elect Biden has been forced to declare an 'America-first' policy. The authoritarian wave is likely to outlast the pandemic for there is no antidote to right-wing proclivities. During times of crisis, people are looking for a self-assured saviour. Learned leaders are

full of self-doubts. Swashbuckling politicos can take the masses round and round in circles to retain their central position. Unfortunately, science has no vaccine for the widespread credulity of ethno-nationalists that lap up every lie of demagogues such as the Supremo of Nepal keeps spouting.

Just as political强men use a crisis to strengthen their internal legitimacy, diplomats of powerful countries devise stratagems to consolidate and enlarge their areas of influence. The Chinese claimed a lead in the race for the Covid-19 vaccine. The Russians were not far behind in displaying their virological prowess. The winner, however, seems to be the Americans; so far with at least two vaccines with considerable efficacy. Their long-term side-effects remain to be seen, but expectant countries are waiting for their share of the doses to check the pandemic.

It's an axiom of geopolitics that friendship between unequal countries is fine, but financial or physical assistance to the poorer partner isn't charity. The recipient has to respond in a manner that the donor expects. The Chinese are a great benefactor of Nepal, but the government in Kathmandu has to keep swearing by its 'One China' policy at frequent intervals to display its unwavering loyalty.

Once Beijing begins airlift millions of doses of Sinovac Biotech vaccines, the political leadership in Kathmandu will be morally bound to listen even more carefully to the constructive suggestions of overt and covert interlocutors from the northern neighbour. The Russians may come up with their own offers that Baluwatar may find impossible to refuse. Since there are no free lunches in international relations, the vaccine initiatives of powerful nations will pull Nepal in different directions. Such moves often strengthen the status quo, as few outside players are willing to bet on untested characters.

The Kathmandu Post/ANN

NO 28161

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Lord Inchcape's statement that at present the Peninsular and Oriental Company is carrying passengers at rates below cost will not greatly comfort those Home-going travellers who find the present high fares coming like the last straw on the camel's back, though it may add a halo of virtuous satisfaction to the handsome revenue which the Company has been earning. Passengers will be duly grateful for the concession made to them, which, after all, is no mere than might have been expected from a company having so long an association with the Indian passenger traffic. They will at the same time hope for a speedy fulfilment of Lord Inchcape's assurance that fares will be reduced to an economic level as soon as possible. Evidently Lord Inchcape anticipates a reduction of the Company's expenses; otherwise the "economic level," if passengers are carried at a loss would mean an increase in the fares and the passenger's case would be harder than ever. Even the high fares are a lesser grievance than the shortage of steamers. Two years have elapsed since the war, and the shipbuilding yards have been turning out new tonnage at high pressure - to say nothing about the former German liners - and yet the Indian passenger traffic is insufficiently supplied with steamer accommodation. The fact can be explained, but the explanations leave the waiting passenger still unsatisfied.

NEWS ITEMS

STRIKE TROUBLES IN MADRAS

Madras, Dec 10
The lockout at the Buckingham Mills, which has lasted more than a month, culminated yesterday in a serious disturbance, with the result that police, who were constantly stoned, had to open fire on the mob. It is stated that two or three parties of mill hands indulged in stone throwing while the temporary coolies were being taken back from the mills to the harbour in motor lorries, and several officers who escorted lorries together with some coolies sustained serious injuries. A police lorry coming out from the mills with Mr. C.B.N. Pelly, Dewan Bahadur Parankusam, and others, met with a volley of stones. Mr. Pelly, Commissioner of Police, ordered the escort to open fire. The injured were sent to hospital after the excitement had subsided.

INDIAN VAKILS

Allahabad, Dec 10
During his speech at a dinner given by the Vakils' Association in his honour the Hon. Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, Law Member elect, referring to the status of vakils in India, said: I do believe the time has come when the legal profession in India, I mean the Vakil profession, should demand nothing less than what has been done in the Colonies, viz, the creation of an Indian bar which will have the same privileges, which will exercise the same disciplinary powers over its own members, which will develop the same esprit de corps, and which will grow and foster the highest traditions and standard of conduct known to this profession in other parts of the world. I think when you demand the elevation of your status, you are demanding what is absolutely your due.

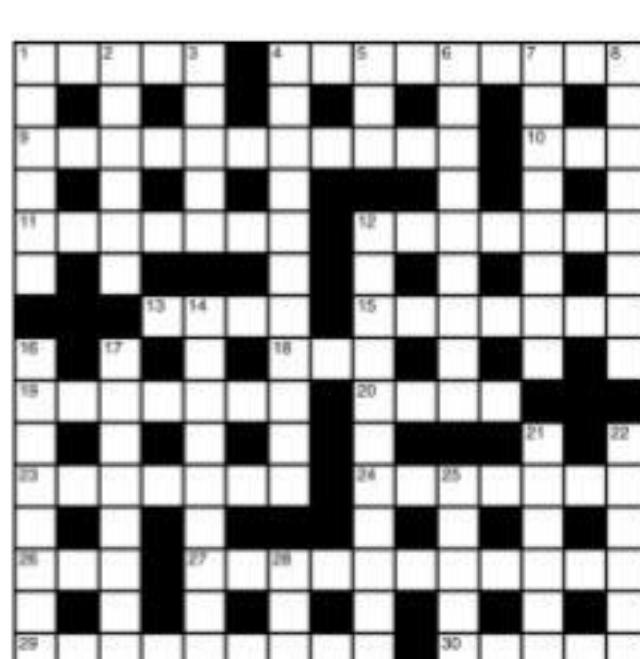
BRITISH MISSION TO KABUL

Delhi, Dec 10
As is known the recent conversations at Mussoorie were intended to clear the ground for final negotiations between the British and Afghan Governments for a permanent treaty of friendship. The Afghan delegates returned to Kabul to lay the results of these discussions before the Amir. Recently the Amir, after full consideration of the reports of his delegates, wrote to the Viceroy, in friendly terms, inviting a British Mission to Kabul for the conclusion of a treaty, and His Majesty's Government have now authorised the Government of India to accept this invitation. The mission will consist of Mr. Dobbs, Nawab Sir Sham Shah, Mr. Pears, Lieutenant-Colonel Muspratt, and Mr. Atherton. It is hoped that the mission will be able to cross the frontier in the last week in December.

DURWAN SHOT

The case in which Kiron Nisa charged Darbi Bibi and another person with kidnapping her infant son, assumed serious developments on Thursday night, when a durwan employed by another woman was shot when trying to prevent some Indians from entering his mistress's house. The story goes to show that a witness for the accused woman who refused to depose on her behalf and took shelter with another woman residing in Corporation Street, also was a friend of the complainant. Half a dozen men went to the house and demanded to see the witness in question, and, on her durwan barring their way, one of the gang shot him. The durwan has been removed to the Campbell Hospital. The Taltolla police have so far made no arrest.

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

HIDEOUS RUGGED
EUR T A R R
ASCERTAIN AURIC
D H I L S V A O
ORALS WOODENTOP
V M A M Y I P
EXPOSURE GAUCHE
R H T C R R
HANDEL HANDYMAN
EAR P T A I
EDINBURGH BIGOT
L V O I E E R
SHEAR CATATONIA
T N E E T T
HERESY RELEASE

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

ACROSS

- 1 Bit of clipper sailor's occupying? (5)
- 4 American to stop daughter securing flat in US city (9)
- 9 Hostile sumo wrestling in Scottish port (11)
- 10 Vehicle almost failing to operate (3)
- 11 Novelist concealing disgusted expression in polite greeting to woman (7)
- 12 Unidentified person, rather overlooking rule, embracing the writer (7)
- 13 Pain has one going round hospital (4)
- 15 Pig-like monster goring tree (7)
- 18 Very old when set beside
- 19 Help and aid distributed for London theatre (7)
- 20 Not initially full, not initially empty (4)
- 23 Gutted the insect's weapon, dealing with bugs? (7)
- 24 Film director not too keen about very quiet acting (7)
- 26 Man needing time to leave prison (3)
- 27 Epicure curses onion in the soup (11)
- 29 Hero of Shaw play with parts including leader of Christians (9)
- 30 Article subsequently cut to form additional item (5)
- DOWN
- 1 Explorer abandoning vehicle
- 2 ahead of new group of fighters (6)
- 3 Book is rather lacking that certain something - that's a handicap (6)
- 4 Number - number reduced by 20% - gets comment on Farm (5)
- 5 I'll be taking no flights? Rising anger after heading out (3)
- 6 Recording number of years controlling border line - it's not at all long (9)
- 7 Tasteful stuff from married relatives in excellent area (8)
- 8 Get untidy to confound and upset most of distinguished party (8)
- 12 A sauce spoon needs treatment - such as washing-up liquid? (11)
- 14 Italian holiday island company adopting Channel Islands? It's light-hearted stuff (9)
- 16 I will avoid obscure part of the world for Disney film (8)
- 17 Certain to tuck into alcohol in a responsible manner? (8)
- 21 Solemn over adolescent getting hooch (6)
- 22 Mathematical item: arts graduate gets confused on the radio (6)
- 25 Food that may be listed anywhere except the start of the dictionary? (5)
- 28 Love letter, unfinished, turning up (3)





Oyo has already invested around euro 350 to 400 million in Europe and will be making further investments there

RITESH AGARWAL
FOUNDER AND GROUP CEO, OYO

THUMBNAILS

Ford price hike: Ford India on Thursday said it will increase prices of its vehicles across models by up to 3 per cent from 1 January to offset the rising input costs. The price hike will range from 1-3 per cent, translating into an increase of around Rs 5,000 to Rs 35,000 depending on the model, Ford India executive director marketing, sales and service Vinay Raina said. He said the decision has been necessitated due to the rising input costs. PTI

Amazon-CII pact: E-commerce major Amazon and industry body CII have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to bring the benefits of ecommerce to micro small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in 10 states across India. Amazon and CII will work closely with the ministry of MSME to enable lakhs of MSMEs across these states to leverage technology to reach customers in India and globally, according to a Press release. SNS

Scheme to support infra: The Finance ministry has notified the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme under which infrastructure projects would be selected for financial support to give a push to the sector. As per the scheme notified by the ministry, funding up to Rs 200 crore will be sanctioned by the empowered committee (EC) headed by the economic affairs secretary, while projects needing over Rs 200 crore would be approved by the EC with the approval of the finance minister. PTI

HCL Tech hiring: IT services major HCL Technologies on Thursday said it has set up its first delivery centre in Vietnam at Hanoi, and plans to hire more than 3,000 people over the next three years. HCL's local entity "HCL Vietnam Company Ltd" aims to foster growth and train the nation's talent pool in collaboration with local ICT and engineering institutions, a statement from the company said. PTI

UTI Mutual Fund: UTI Mutual Fund has launched an open-ended equity scheme ~ UTI Small Cap Fund ~ which will predominantly invest in small-cap stocks. The new fund offer has opened on 2 December 2020 and will close on 16 December 2020. The scheme will re-open for subscription and redemption for an ongoing basis from 23 December 2020, the company said in a Press statement issued on Thursday. SNS

IRCTC divestment: The offer-for-sale for the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corp (IRCTC) got a good response from non-retail investors as the issue was subscribed nearly two times on day one. The government is planning to sell up to 20 per cent stake in IRCTC through OFS which opened for subscription on Thursday. PTI

ADB revises growth forecast for FY21

It sees 8% GDP contraction in fiscal 2020-21 compared to 9% estimated earlier

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) today upgraded its forecast for the Indian economy, projecting 8 per cent contraction in financial year 2020-21 as compared to 9 per cent growth estimated earlier, on the back of faster than expected recovery.

Observing that the economy has begun to normalise, the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) Supplement said the second quarter contraction at 7.5 per cent was better than expected.

The economy contracted by 23.9 per cent in April-June quarter of the current financial year on account of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The GDP forecast for FY2020 is upgraded from 9.0 per cent contraction to 8.0 per cent, with GDP in H2 probably restored to its size a year earlier. The growth projection for FY2021 is kept at 8.0 per cent," the Asian Development Outlook (ADO)

Supplement said.

► Highlighting that India is recovering more rapidly than expected, the report said the earlier South Asia forecast of 6.8 per cent contraction is upgraded to (-) 6.1 per cent in line with an improved projection for India.

► With regard to inflation, ADO said, it is expected to ease in the coming months, and the 4 per cent update projection for 2021-22 is maintained.

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Growth will return in 2021-22, at 7.2 per cent in South Asia

and 8 per cent in India, it added.

Earlier this month, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das had said the economy is recuperating faster than anticipated and growth rate is likely to turn positive in the second half of the current

financial year.

In the year as whole, the economy is likely to contract by 7.5 per cent, which is an improvement over Reserve Bank's previous projection of 9.5 per cent contraction, Das had said while unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy review.

Observing that the prospects of growth have brightened with the progress on the vaccine front, Das said, the economy was likely to record a growth of 0.1 per cent in Q3 and 0.7 per cent in Q4.

With regard to inflation, ADO said, it is expected to ease in the coming months, and the 4 per cent update projection for 2021-22 is maintained.

In India, supply chain disruption brought food inflation to an average of 9.1 per cent in the first seven months of fiscal 2020-21, pushing headline inflation to 6.9 per cent in the same period, it said.

As a result, ADO revised India's inflation from 4.5 per cent to 5.8 per cent for the current

year.

Highlighting that India is

Walmart plans to up exports from India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

grammes.

Announcing the commitment, Walmart Inc president and CEO Doug McMillon said as an international retailer that brings value to customers and communities worldwide, Walmart understands that local entrepreneurs and manufacturers are vital to the success of the global retail sector.

"And we see huge potential for Indian suppliers to grow their businesses by leveraging the unique scale and global distribution opportunity Walmart provides," he added. McMillon further said: "By significantly accelerating our annual India exports in the coming years, we are supporting the "Make in India" initiative and helping more local businesses reach international customers while creating jobs and prosperity at home in India."

The Bentonville-based firm said its new commitment to export "\$10 billion of India-made goods each year by 2027" is expected to provide a significant boost to MSMEs in India, alongside ongoing efforts such as the Flipkart Samarth and Walmart Vridhni supplier development pro-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

Fair trade regulator the Competition Commission of India (CCI) today conducted raids at the offices of some cement companies, including LafargeHolcim.

LafargeHolcim, which is the parent firm of two leading cement manufacturers ACC and Ambuja Cements, has confirmed the development.

"LafargeHolcim confirms that ACC's and Ambuja Cement's offices in Mumbai were visited by the officials from the Indian Competition Authority yesterday i.e. 9th December," said a LafargeHolcim spokesperson.

"LafargeHolcim/ACC and Ambuja Cement are fully cooperating with the authorities, but cannot comment further as the matter is ongoing," he added.

According to the media

SHARES PLUNGE

► Shares of cement companies on Thursday declined after the CCI conducted raids at the offices of some cement companies.

► The stock of Ambuja Cements closed at Rs 248.35, down 1.80 per cent.

► ACC dipped 1.46 per cent to close at Rs 1,631.95.

reports, the fair trade regulator has also searched the offices of other leading cement makers such as Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement and Shree Cement.

Comments from the Aditya Birla group and Shree Cement could not be ascertained by the time of filing story as the email send remained unanswered.

Earlier in the day, ACC and Ambuja Cements in a reg-

TCS expands operations in Texas

NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) today said it plans to invest more than \$100 million in Austin and hire 1,000 new employees across Texas.

TCS has expanded its business operations in Austin, Texas with the construction of a new facility, doubling its presence to more than 400 professionals in the city and adding to its over 5,500 employees across the state, TCS said in a statement.

The new Austin office adds to existing offices in Dallas, Houston, and Plano and more than 30 TCS locations around the US. "By 2022, TCS will hire an additional 130 new employees in Austin, adding to the plans to hire 1,000 new employees across Texas. Over the next seven years, TCS will invest more than \$100 million in Austin," TCS said.

The Mumbai-based company said it expects to hire an additional 10,000 local employees in the US by 2022, utilising its Secure Borderless Workspaces framework. PTI

Hina Nagarajan appointed CEO of United Spirits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

Benckiser). She has over 30 years of experience and held several senior marketing and general management positions in Nestle India and Mary Kay India.

Kripal, who joined United Spirits nearly eight years ago and was the managing director and CEO for seven years, will step down on 30 June 2021, to pursue the next phase of his career, it said.

He had led full integration of USL after its acquisition by Diageo and played a key role in making considerable improvement in operating performance, margin growth, working capital and cash generation of USL, it said. One of his key contributions was induction of the USL executive team with 40 per cent female staff.

USL manufactures, sells and distributes an outstanding portfolio of premium brands such as Johnnie Walker, Black Dog, Black & White, VAT 69, Antiquity, Signature, Royal Challenge, McDowell's No.1, Smirnoff and Captain Morgan.

Headquartered in Bengaluru, USL runs 49 manufacturing facilities in India. Before joining Diageo, she was MD China & SVP North Asia with RB (Reckitt Benckiser).

with CMA.

This was upheld by the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal, which is an appellate authority over the CCI. However, the Supreme Court had stayed it.

Shares of cement companies, including Ambuja Cements and ACC, today declined after the Competition Commission of India (CMA) said it is of the firm view that it has acted and continues to act in compliance with competition laws and we are fully cooperating with the investigation and providing all necessary information to the authorities.

According to the Cement Manufacturers Association (CMA), India is the second largest cement producing country after China with an installed capacity of 545 million tons. CMA is the apex body of large cement manufacturers in India.

The Indian cement industry, which accounts for eight percent of the global cement installed capacity, is often mired by the controversy regarding the unfair trade practices and price fixation.

Earlier on 31 August 2016, the CCI had imposed a penalty of more than Rs 6,300 crore on 10 cement companies for cartelisation, along

with CMA.

This was upheld by the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal, which is an appellate authority over the CCI. However, the Supreme Court had stayed it.

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with CMA.

FM takes stock of MSME dues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

₹21,000 CR PAID IN 7 MTHS

► Since the month of May 2020, regular follow-up and concerted efforts have been made by Government of India, particularly by the MSME ministry, for payment of these dues. Particular focus was placed on CPSEs and Central government agencies for payment of dues to MSMEs, an official statement said.

► As a result, over Rs

21,000 crore of MSME dues have been paid in past seven months by Central government agencies and CPSEs, it added.

ministry, for payment of these dues. Particular focus was placed on CPSEs and Central government agencies for payment of dues to MSMEs," an official statement said.

As a result, over Rs 21,000 crore of MSME dues have been paid in past seven months by Central government agencies and CPSEs, it added.

The statement by the MSME ministry said the high-

level of procurement was achieved in October of over Rs 5,100 crore and payment of over Rs 4,100 crore.

It further said going by the reports received in first 10 days for November, this level of performance is expected to be surpassed as procurement of about Rs 4,700 crore and payment of about Rs 4,000 crore have already been reported.

"Efforts made in respect of

clearing MSME dues include several rounds of letters written to the GoI ministries and CPSEs by the secretary, MSME, followed by personal talks and persuasions," the statement said.

The efforts found strong support from PMO and Cabinet secretary, who wrote letters to CPSEs and government agencies.

An online reporting system was developed by the MSME ministry for CPSEs and Central government ministries to report details of total transactions, total payment as well as pending dues at the end of every month.

The report of seven months (May-November) indicates that procurement by Central government agencies and CPSEs from MSMEs is on the rise and has in fact, gone up by almost 2.5 times since May 2020. The payments to MSMEs have also gone up proportionately.



Xi Jinping has made clear his intentions... he wants total control at home, and to make China the number one power abroad

US SECRETARY OF STATE MIKE POMPEO

DURING A VIRTUAL ADDRESS TO THE GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER 2020

09

US bombers fly to W Asia to deter Iran

The flight of the two massive bombers was designed to underscore America's continuing commitment to West Asia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 10 DECEMBER

In a new show of military might, two American bomber aircraft took off from the United States and flew over a swath of the Middle East on Thursday, sending what US officials said was a direct message of deterrence to Iran.

The flight of the two massive B-52H Stratofortress bombers over the region, the second such mission in less than a month, was designed to underscore America's continuing commitment to the Middle East even as President Donald Trump's administration withdraws thousands of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.



The long-range heavy bombers, which are capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear weapons, are a formidable sight and are flown less frequently in the Middle East than smaller combat aircraft, such as American fighter jets. Adversaries often complain about bomber flights in their region, deeming them a provocative show of force. "The ability to fly strategic bombers halfway across the world in a non-stop mission and to rapidly integrate them

with multiple regional partners demonstrates our close working relationships and our shared commitment to regional security and stability," Gen. Frank McKenzie, the top US commander for the Middle East, said.

The troop cuts coupled with the impending departure of the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier strike group in the Gulf have fuelled allies' concerns that the US is abandoning the region. Those worries are compounded by fears

that Iran may strike out at the US or allies in retaliation for the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

Iran has blamed the death on Israel, which has been seen in previous killings of Iranian nuclear scientists. US officials are also worried about a possible Iranian retaliatory strike on the first anniversary of the US airstrike that killed Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, and senior Iraqi militia leaders near Baghdad's airport in early January.

Iranian-backed militias routinely launch rockets near installations in Iraq where US and Iraqi troops are based, and officials worry about a larger, more deadly assault.

"We do not seek conflict,"

McKenzie said, "but we must remain postured and committed to respond to any contingency or in opposition to any aggression."

A senior military official, who spoke to a small group of reporters on the condition of anonymity to provide details of the mission, said the administration believes that the risk of an Iranian attack on US or allied interests in the region is a bit higher than normal now, and the Pentagon wants to ensure that Tehran thinks twice before doing anything.

Adding to the concerns is the presidential transition in the US following Joe Biden's November victory over Trump. The official said Iran or other adversaries often believe the US may be weaker or slower

to respond during a political transition, which American officials flatly deny.

According to officials, the bombers flew out of Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana on Wednesday and conducted the flight into Thursday. Officially nicknamed the Stratofortress and informally known as the Big Ugly Fat Fellow, the B-52 gained lasting fame in Vietnam as an aerial terror.

The two bombers were expected to fly a roughly 36-hour mission, across the Atlantic Ocean and Europe, then cross the Arabian Peninsula and fly down the Persian Gulf, making a wide loop near Qatar and staying a safe distance from Iran's coastline before returning home, said the military official.

Imran Khan dares Opp to table no-confidence motion to oust him

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, 10 DECEMBER

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has dared the Opposition alliance to table a no-confidence motion in Parliament to oust him, as he criticised its call to lawmakers for mass resignations to force him to call snap polls.

Khan said he did not backtrack from holding a national dialogue to steer the country out of multiple crises.

An 11-party Opposition alliance announced on Tuesday that their lawmakers will resign en masse by the end of this month from Parliament to paralyse the government and force Prime Minister Khan to call snap polls.



An 11-party Opposition alliance announced on Tuesday that their lawmakers will resign en masse by the end of this month from Parliament to paralyse the government and force PM Khan to call snap polls

The decision was taken after the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an alliance of 11 Opposition parties formed in September this year to overthrow Prime Minister Khan's government, held a marathon meeting in Islamabad.

Khan said the Constitutional way to send a government packing is to table a no-confidence motion in Parliament. He also criticised the PDM's call for en masse resignations.

Parliament is the best place for political dialogues and I'm ready to respond to all questions [in Parliament]. Democracy will only work when there is a debate, he said while talking to the media on Wednesday in Sialkot city in Punjab province.

Khan said the Opposition wanted quashing of corruption cases.

We have no problem and

World Bank approves \$300 mn loan for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, 10 DECEMBER

The World Bank has approved a \$300 million loan to help the cash-strapped Pakistan address issues of climate change, health emergency and manage solid waste to reduce flooding chances in the country's financial capital Karachi, a media report said on Thursday.

These investments will bolster Pakistan's efforts to build resilience to natural hazards such as floods and droughts in the Sindh province and will strengthen solid waste management in Karachi to tackle recurrent urban flooding and public health emergencies in the city, an official statement issued by the bank's local office said. PTI

the government is ready to hold talks on any issue but the NRO (National Reconciliation Ordinance) like concession will not be discussed, he said, adding that the graft cases would not be closed.

Addressing a ceremony after inaugurating a private airline company, Khan slammed the Opposition parties, saying those who had criticised the government for not imposing a complete lockdown, were now holding public gatherings.

The Opposition alliance has alleged that Khan was supported in the 2018 elections by the establishment and also failed to run the country and address chronic issues.

PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif has directly named Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and ISI head Lt Gen Faiz Hameed for meddling in political affairs. Khan and the Army have rejected these allegations.

The bipartisan coalition led

EU leaders weigh sanctions over Turkey's Mediterranean drilling work

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, 10 DECEMBER

Concerned that their credibility is at stake, European Union leaders are set Thursday to give the green light to the expansion of sanctions against Turkey over its exploration of gas reserves in Mediterranean waters claimed by EU members Greece and Cyprus.

At their last summit in October, the leaders offered a positive political EU-Turkey agenda to Ankara, including trade and customs benefits and the prospect of more funds to help Turkey manage Syrian refugees on its territory if it halts its illegal activities in the eastern Mediterranean.

But EU foreign ministers agreed this week that Turkey's behavior has not improved,

and Thursday's summit is shaping up as a crucial meeting for EU-Turkey relations.

All of them considered that we have not seen a fundamental change of direction, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters after chairing a videoconference between the ministers on Monday. In several aspects the situation has worsened. The 27 EU countries are split over how best to handle Turkey.

France and Cyprus have pushed for tougher measures like economic sanctions, but other countries are concerned about further undermining

the country's already ravaged economy and destabilizing the region.

Still, EU diplomats fear the bloc's credibility, values and interests are on the line. We can't say there's a problem in October and do nothing in December when things have got worse, one said ahead of the summit. He was not permitted to speak on the record as the deliberations were continuing.

On Wednesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan brushed off the threat of sanctions and accused the EU, which Turkey is a candidate to join, although its membership talks are blocked, of acting dishonestly and failing to keep its promises.

Any decision to impose sanctions against Turkey won't be of great concern to Turkey, Erdogan told reporters.

US sues Facebook over its WhatsApp, Instagram acquisition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 DECEMBER

The US government and 48 states have filed parallel antitrust lawsuits against Facebook, accusing the social media giant of anti-competitive conduct by abusing its market power to create a monopoly and crushing smaller competitors, a move which may force it to sell WhatsApp and Instagram.

Soon after the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and 48 state attorney generals on Wednesday sued the California-headquartered company, Facebook's shares dropped significantly.

The bipartisan coalition led

by New York attorney general Letitia James alleged that Facebook has engaged in a systematic strategy to eliminate threats to its monopoly. This includes its 2012 acquisition of up-and-coming rival Instagram, its 2014 acquisition of the mobile messaging app

According to the federal complaint, this course of conduct by Facebook harms competition, leaves consumers with few choices for personal social networking and deprives advertisers of the benefits of competition.

WhatsApp imposed the imposition of anti-competitive conditions on software developers.

According to the federal complaint, this course of conduct by Facebook harms competition, leaves consumers with few choices for personal social networking and deprives advertisers of the benefits of competition.

It would also punish companies for protecting their investment and technology from free-riding by those who did not pay for the innovation, and deny consumers the benefits of competition. Our aim is to roll back Facebook's anti-competitive conduct and restore competition so that innovation and free competition can thrive, said Ian Conner, Director of the FTC's Bureau of Competition.

The lawsuit is seeking a permanent injunction in federal court that could, among other things: require divestitures of assets, including Instagram and WhatsApp; prohibit Facebook from imposing anti-competitive conditions on software developers; and require the social media behemoth to seek prior notice and approval for future mergers and acquisitions.

Personal social networking is central to the lives of millions of Americans. Facebook's actions to entrench and maintain its monopoly deny consumers the benefits of competition. Our aim is to roll back Facebook's anti-competitive conduct and restore competition so that innovation and free competition can thrive, said Ian Conner, Director of the FTC's Bureau of Competition.

The FTC complaint alleged that Facebook undertook a years-long effort to maintain its monopoly through anti-competitive acquisitions and actions that target potential and nascent rivals.

Lebanese judge charges caretaker PM in blast

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, 10 DECEMBER



Diab received the backing of the Hezbollah group and its allies after Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned in the wake of mass antigovernment protests last year. Diab himself resigned a few days after the blast, which leveled the country's main port and destroyed large parts of the city.

The four are the most senior individuals to be indicted so far in the investigation, which is being conducted in secrecy.

Judge Fadi Sawwan filed the charges against Hassan Diab and former Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil, as well as Ghazi Zeiter and Youssef Fenianos, both former ministers of public works. All four were charged with carelessness and negligence leading to death over the Aug. 4 explosion at Beirut's port, which killed more than 200 people and injured thousands.

A statement issued by his office accused Judge Sawwan of violating the constitution and bypassing parliament, adding that Diab has already provided all the information he had to Sawwan.

This surprising targeting goes beyond the person to the position per se, and Hassan Diab will not allow the premiership to be targeted by any party, a statement issued by his office said.

It was not clear whether his comments meant he would not accept to be interrogated again. Judge Sawwan said he would interrogate Diab and the three ministers as defendants next week.

Youssef Lahoud, legal representative to 1,500 families affected by the blast, described Sawwan's move as "essential step toward revealing the complete truth."

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Flat-bottomed boat (4)
4 Twist forcibly (5)
8 Mexican snack (4)
9 Deception (8)
10 Single (10)
13 Form of verse (6)
14 Be quiet! (4,2)
15 Gainsay (10)
18 Throat (8)
20 Way out (4)
21 Culinary herb (5)
22 Dance movement (4)

DOWN
2 Whreelie (4)
3 Murder mystery (Informational) (9)
4 Card game (5)
5 Sort (3)
6 Beautiful (8)
7 Channel (6)
11 Myriad (9)
12 Driver (8)
14 Turn on a pivot (6)
16 Tolerate (5)
17 Lively dance style (4)
19 Arid (3)

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidysagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800125151
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001301407
- INDIGO AIRLINES 23861262, City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383383, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 23354373

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

PAR SCORE 45-55

by JUDD

SCRABBLE[®] BRAND

G R A M S I

T C V

D M L E Y L

O N S A I O C

T I A S D L M

Triple Word Score

RACK 1

RACK 2

RACK 3

RACK 4

4th Letter Triple

PAR SCORE 45-55

by JUDD

SCRABBLE[®] BRAND

W I L L I N G

F R O T H S

D R A W L S

S T A Y I N G

PAR SCORE 1



Vaccine nationalism is moving at full speed, leaving poor people... wondering if and when they will be vaccinated

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES

REITERATING HIS CALL FOR VACCINES TO BE TREATED AS A GLOBAL PUBLIC GOOD

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	25 H
HONG KONG	24	19 H
TOKYO	14	6 H
LONDON	8	5 H
DUBAI	25	19 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	14	9 H
NEW YORK	10	1 CL
MOSCOW	-6	-11 CL

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

THUMBNAILS



An employee disinfects handles as a precaution against the coronavirus on a subway train in S Korea on Thursday. ■ AGENCIES

Hunter Biden facing federal probe: US President-elect Joe Biden's son Hunter has said that he is facing a federal investigation into his taxes, putting a renewed spotlight on the questions about his financial dealings that dogged his father's campaign. ■ AGENCIES

EU inches toward landmark budget: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Thursday that the European Union is on the brink of sealing an agreement on a massive budget and a coronavirus recovery package, signaling that it has almost overcome objections from his country and Poland about tying EU funds to upholding the rule of law. ■ AP

Iran, Afghanistan open first rail link: The leaders of Iran and Afghanistan on Thursday inaugurated the first railway link between the two countries, expressing hope it would enhance trade links across the region. The \$75 million project began in 2007. ■ AP

EU trade talks face moment of finality on weekend: UK

LONDON, 10 DECEMBER

Britain's foreign minister said Thursday that negotiations on a trade deal with the European Union will reach a moment of finality this weekend, with both sides assessing chances of an agreement as slim.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the Sunday deadline set by Britain and the EU for a decision was final, though he added you can never say never entirely. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson held a three-hour dinner meeting Wednesday in hope of unblocking stalled talks, but came away saying the gaps between them were large.

We understand each other's positions. They remain far apart, von der Leyen said. They told their negotiators to keep talking, but set Sunday as decision day.

Without a deal, the bloc and Britain face a tumultuous no-deal split at the end of the month, threatening hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions in losses.

Britain left the EU on Jan. 31 but remains in its economic structures until the end of the year. That means a serious economic rupture on Jan. 1 that could be chaotic if there is no trade agreement. A no-deal split would bring tariffs and other barriers that would hurt both sides, although most economists think the British economy would take a greater hit.

Months of trade talks have failed to bridge the gaps on three issues — fishing rights, fair-competition rules and the governance of future disputes. ■ AP

Pfizer shot faces last hurdle before US nod

The FDA's decision is awaited as the coronavirus continues surging across much of the world, claiming more than 1.5 million lives

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 10 DECEMBER



Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine faces one final hurdle as it races to become the first shot green-lighted in the US: a panel of experts who will scrutinise the company's data for any red flags.

Thursday's meeting of the Food and Drug Administration's vaccine advisory panel is likely the last step before a US decision to begin shipping millions of doses of the shot, which has shown strong protection against the coronavirus.

The FDA panel functions like a science court that will pick apart the data and debate in public and live-streamed whether the shot is safe and effective enough to be cleared

for emergency use. The non-government experts specialize in vaccine development, infectious diseases and medical statistics. The FDA is expected to follow the committee's advice, although it is not required to do so.

The FDA's decision comes as the coronavirus continues surging across much of the world, claiming more than

1.5 million lives, including more than 289,000 in the US.

Hanging over the meeting is a warning from UK officials that people with a history of serious allergic reactions shouldn't get the vaccine. Government officials there are investigating two reports of reactions that occurred when the country began mass vaccinations.

Still, a positive recommendation and speedy US approval seem nearly certain after FDA scientists issued an overwhelmingly positive initial review of the vaccine earlier this week.

FDA said results from Pfizer's large, ongoing study showed the shot, which was co-developed with Germany's BioNTech, was more than 90% effective across people of different ages, races and under-

lying health conditions, including diabetes and obesity. No major safety issues were uncovered and common vaccine-related side effects like fever, fatigue and injection site pain were tolerable.

The data presented in the briefing report were consistent with what we heard before and are really exciting, said Dr. William Moss, head of Johns Hopkins University's International Vaccine Access Center. Nothing that I see would delay an emergency use authorization. The meeting also gives regulators an opportunity to try to boost public confidence in the breakthrough development process that has produced the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and a string of other upcoming shots in less than a year. The FDA has also faced weeks of verbal abuse

from President Donald Trump for not rushing out a vaccine before Election Day.

There have been a lot of questions about why it takes us so long or are we being rigorous enough? said FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn in an interview. I'm hoping that people will see with our transparency that we have taken a very rigorous stance on this. Hahn said the agency has already teed up the process to authorize the vaccine by filling out all the legal paperwork in advance, regardless of the ultimate decision. On Thursday's agenda:

The FDA uncovered no major safety issues in its review of Pfizer's 44,000-person study, including no allergic reactions of the type reported in the U.K. But such studies can't detect rare problems

that might only affect a tiny slice of the general population.

FDA reviewers noted four cases of Bell's palsy that all occurred among people getting the vaccine. They concluded the cases were likely unrelated to the vaccine because they occurred at rates that would be expected without any medical intervention. But the agency did say cases of the nerve disorder should be tracked, given that other vaccines can cause the problem.

I think we have to be upfront, without scaring people, that we don't know yet about any potential, rare, long-term adverse events, Moss said.

The FDA found the vaccine highly effective across various demographic groups. But it's unclear how well the vaccine

works in people with HIV and other immune-system disorders.

The study excluded pregnant women, but experts will tease apart the data for any hints in case women get vaccinated before realizing they're pregnant. A study of children as young as 12 is underway.

Answering some of these questions will require keeping Pfizer's study going for many more months.

When the FDA panel met in October, experts warned against allowing trial participants who received placebos to switch and get the real vaccine immediately after it receives the FDA's emergency OK. Doing that could make it impossible to get answers to long-term questions, including how long the protection lasts.

Tensions rise over masks as virus grips smaller US cities

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MISSION, 10 DECEMBER



Arguments over mask requirements and other restrictions have turned ugly in recent days as the deadly coronavirus surge across the US engulfs small and medium-size cities that once seemed safely removed from the outbreak.

In Boise, Idaho, public health officials about to vote on a four-county mask mandate abruptly ended a meeting Tuesday evening because of fears for their safety amid anti-mask protests outside the building and at some of their homes.

One health board member tearfully announced she had to rush home to be with her child because of the protesters, who were seen on video banging on buckets, blaring air horns and sirens, and blasting a sound clip of gunfire from the violence-drenched movie "Scarface" outside her front door.

"I am sad, I am tired. I fear that, in my choosing to hold public office, my family has too often paid the price," said the board member, Ada County Commissioner Diana Lachiondo. "I increasingly don't recognize this place. There is an ugliness and cruelty in our national rhetoric that is reaching a fevered pitch here at home, and that should worry us all."

Boise police said three arrest warrants were issued in connection with the demonstrations at board members' homes.

In South Dakota, the mayor of Rapid City said City Council members were harassed and threatened over a proposed citywide mask mandate that failed this week even as intensive care units across the state filled with Covid-19 patients.

The tensions are flaring

amid an epic surge in US deaths, hospitalizations and infections over the past several weeks.

The US topped 3,000 deaths Wednesday in what is a single-day record, according to the Covid Tracking Project. That's surpassed the level seen during last spring's peak in and around New York City.

New cases per day have rocketed to more than 200,000 on average, and the number of patients in the hospital with Covid-19 stood at almost 105,000 on Tuesday, another 105,000 on Tuesday, another all-time high.

The grim figures led the usually stoic health director of the nation's most populated county to become emotional. Barbara Ferrer described a "devastating increase in deaths" in Los Angeles County, with the total hitting 8,075 on Wednesday.

Over 8,000 people who were beloved members of their families are not coming back, Ferrer said, fighting back tears.

Meanwhile, protesters in Montana's Gallatin County have gathered for two consecutive weeks outside the Bozeman home of county health officer Matt Kelley to decry regulations, including a statewide mask mandate. They have carried signs reading, "We refuse to be your experiment" and "Oxygen is essential."

Last week, around 80 people lined Bozeman's Main Street to support Kelley and other health officials.

SHORT TAKES



► **UN chief to take Covid-19 vaccine publicly:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said that he intends to take the Covid-19 vaccine when it becomes available and he will do so publicly, asserting that vaccination for him is a moral obligation towards the whole community. Of course, I intend to receive the vaccine when it becomes available for me in whatever the situation that will be justified for that. And, obviously, I will have no doubt in doing it publicly, Guterres said on Wednesday. His remarks came during the hybrid press conference with Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat following the Fourth UN-AU Annual Conference.

► **S Africa declares second wave of coronavirus:** South Africa has declared a second wave of coronavirus as the number of cases surged with the per day infections exceeding 6,000. The deadly virus has so far infected 828,598 people and claimed 22,574 lives in South Africa. A total of 6,709 new cases were reported overnight. The virus also claimed 135 lives in the last 24 hours. The second wave is being driven by Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces.

► **Tokyo's daily infections top 600 for first time:** The number of new coronavirus infections in Japan's capital have topped 600 in a day for the first time. Experts on Tokyo's virus task force say the surge in infections has placed an added burden on hospitals, making it difficult for many of them to carry out treatment for ordinary patients. Tokyo reported 602 new cases Thursday, while the daily tally for the entire nation was 2,810. Japan has reported 168,573 infections since the pandemic began, with 2,465 deaths.

► **Novel antibody test gives results in 20 minutes:** Scientists have developed a new accurate and reliable test to detect antibodies for SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes Covid-19, which gives results in less than 20 minutes. The serological assay, described in the journal Scientific Reports, is as accurate as the most reliable antibody tests currently available, but is less complex and can be performed much faster. The new method, called biolayer interferometry immunosorbent assay (BLI-ISA), provides complete quantitative results in less than 20 minutes. Serological testing is important for understanding the spread of the coronavirus by determining how many people in a population have been infected.

► **UN food agency to receive Nobel prize in online event:** The World Food Programme will receive its Nobel Peace Prize Thursday, in an event very different from the traditional pomp-filled celebration in the Norwegian capital because of the coronavirus outbreak. In Oslo, the head of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen, will give a webcast statement, after which David Beasley, the UN agency boss, will give an acceptance speech from Rome, where it is based. The body was given the prestigious award for efforts to combat hunger.

Over 80 mn people forcibly displaced; Covid worsens crisis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
UNITED NATIONS, 10 DECEMBER

on top of the global public health emergency.

The virus has disrupted every aspect of human life and severely worsened existing challenges for the forcibly displaced and stateless, UNHCR said, adding that some of the measures to curb the spread of Covid-19 made it harder for refugees to reach safety. At the peak of the first wave of the pandemic in April, 168 countries fully or partially closed their borders, with 90 countries making no exception for people seeking asylum. Since then, and with UNHCR's support, 111 countries have found solutions to ensure their asylum system is fully or partially operational while ensuring necessary measures are taken to curb the spread of the virus.

At the beginning of this year it said that about 79.5 million people had been forced from their homes due to persecution, conflict, and human rights violations. This total included 45.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 29.6 million refugees and others forcibly displaced outside their country, and 4.2 million asylum seekers. Existing and new conflicts and the novel coronavirus have dramatically affected their lives in 2020, the UN agency said.

An estimated 3034 million (38-43 percent) of the 79.5 million forcibly displaced persons are children below 18 years of age (end-2019).

More than two thirds of all refugees under UNHCR's mandate and Venezuelans displaced abroad came from just five countries - as of mid-2020- Syria (6.6 million), Venezuela (3.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.3 million) and Myanmar (1 million). Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees, with 3.6 million people. Colombia is second with 1.8 million, including Venezuelans displaced abroad.

Although the actual number of stateless people remains unknown, 79 countries in the world have reported 4.2 million stateless people on their territory, UNHCR said.

With forced displacement doubling in the last decade, the international community is failing to safeguard peace, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said. We are now surpassing another bleak milestone that will continue to grow unless world leaders stop wars, Grandi said.

The agency noted that for people forced to flee, COVID-19 became an additional protection and livelihoods crisis

Trump knocks on US top court's door against election results

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 DECEMBER



laws during the 2020 election.

Meanwhile, with West Virginia certifying its presidential election results, all 50 US states and the District of Columbia have now certified the outcome of the November 3 presidential polls, according to a media report on Thursday.

US to execute inmates before Biden inauguration

The Trump administration is planning an unprecedented five more federal executions before President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, starting with a Texas street-gang member set to be put to death Thursday for his role in the 1999 slayings of an Iowa religious couple whose bodies he burned in the trunk of their car.

Brandon Bernard was 18 when he and four other teenagers abducted and robbed Todd and Stacie Bagley on their way from a Sunday service in Killeen, Texas. He would be the ninth federal inmate put to death since July, when President Donald Trump ended a 17-year hiatus in federal executions.

Indian-American elected as chair of powerful CPC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 DECEMBER



eight Deputy Whips.

The CPC Executive Board is representative of the diversity within the caucus more than half of Executive Board members are people of colour and more than half are women.

As a lifelong organiser, I am honoured that my colleagues have elected me to lead the Congressional Progressive Caucus at this pivotal moment, Jayapal said soon after her election to this most powerful Congressional Caucus, which is slated to play an influential role during the next Biden Administration.

Joe Biden, 78, is due to take over as the 46th president of the US on January 20.

The incoming Executive Board of CPC is made up of 26 members: Chair, one Deputy Chair, one Whip, two Chair Emeriti, two Special Order Hour Conveners, ten Vice Chairs, one Executive Board Member At-Large and

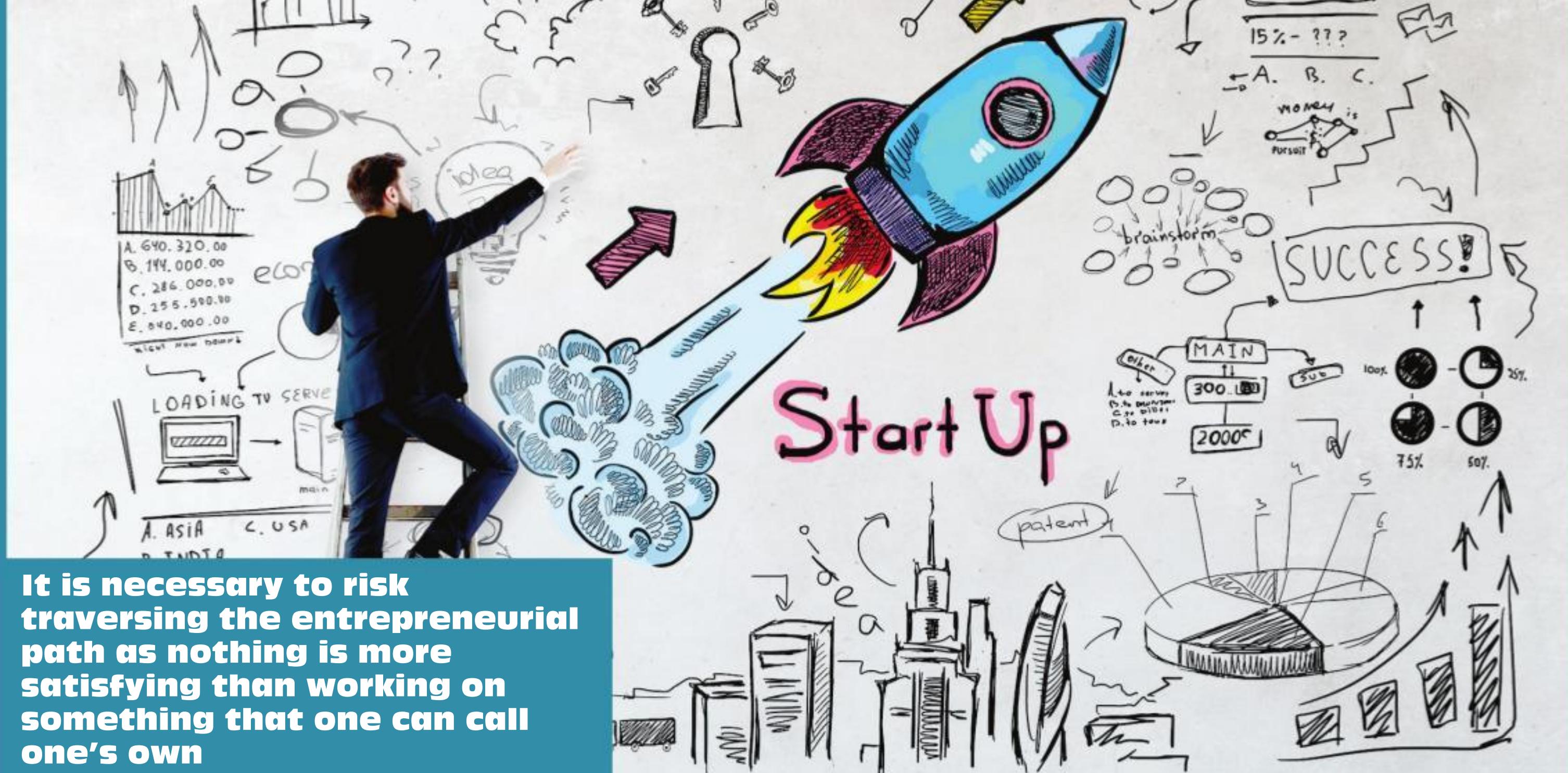
Biden seeks waiver for his defence chief nominee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 DECEMBER

would be the first African-American to lead the Department of Defence.

"The law states that an officer must have left the service seven years before becoming Secretary of Defence. There are good reasons for this law that I fully understand and respect, and I would not be

Stepping out of comfort zone



It is necessary to risk traversing the entrepreneurial path as nothing is more satisfying than working on something that one can call one's own

LAKSH BUCHA

Entrepreneurial dreams come with their share of hindrances. One of the most unlikely impediments is education. Education, as it is imparted in our country today, is far from sufficient; it fails to nurture risk tolerance which forms the core of any entrepreneurial attempt. Business administration courses claim that they can instil entrepreneurial skills in the students, but the reality is far from it. The fact that less than 20 per cent of the business administration graduates actually start their endeavour testifies this.

Successful entrepreneurs across the globe consider the learning from their apprenticeship or executive days as the foundation of their empire. There are limited course structures wherein apprenticeship is essential; hence most of the fresh graduates don't have any practical experience of their domain. Their theoretical knowledge is of little help in case they wish to start on their own and hence, on

the job training becomes significant.

Entrepreneurship is the journey towards self-realisation. People tend to make mistakes in their first few attempts, and those with a firm resolve learn from them to triumph. There are some touchstones of success, which must be complied if one wishes to succeed. It is pertinent to research about one's prospective competitors; assess the legal aspects of the segment; gauge personal and business finance along with a realistic assessment of the risk involved. The mightiest of the swordsmen didn't forge their swords, and hence, one must also be open to hiring help whenever required. Further, timing is another relevant factor.

Every founder must consider the below mentioned six steps to achieve ever-increasing growth acceleration:

Nature of business

We have all heard the famous proverb 'jack of all trades, master of none'. A businessman who tries to provide multiple services will fail as

clients always repose trust with experts. Other than that the law of the land also requires one to state the nature of business.

The clarity in concept

The recipe of success is simplicity. One must not over-complicate the concept because it would become difficult to implement a complex idea. Finding investments for simple concepts is easy in comparison to complex concepts as their marketability is higher.

Focus on the market

One may have a brilliant product idea, but it is pertinent to focus on the market trend. Ignoring the demands of the market can lead to huge disappointments; the product must be tailor-made to suit the requirements of the buyers.

Experimentation and improvements

Product/service launch is of great significance, and one must not

leave any stone unturned to ensure their success. It has been an industry practice to launch alpha and beta prototypes before the actual launch. Organisations do this to seek feedback from the end-users and modify their offerings accordingly.

Government compliance

Many start-ups have been caught in the net of legal violations for their ignorance of government compliance. It is necessary to fulfil all the government compliance requirements to march on the road to success. Many a time, the compliance requirements help start-ups in fine-tuning their services and products.

Don't hire friends

One should always avoid hiring friends and relatives due to the various complexities that may occur with the intertwining of relations. The friend may take undue advantage of the trust reposed in them or the owner may have higher expectations from the friend/relative. In any such

case, it is the business that suffers. Hiring professionals is the key to success. Productivity would increase if the employer-employee relationship is intact.

The term "business" is often read as "busy-ness". Everyone who wishes to become an entrepreneur must be willing to step out of their comfort zone. Those attracted towards entrepreneurship due to the perks attached must remember that there are no free lunches in the world. An entrepreneur has to work with extreme caution to become successful because unlike an employee, they bear the losses themselves. Having said that entrepreneurship is a rewarding process not only for those involved in it but also for the society at large. It creates employment and strengthens the economy through revenue generation. One must strive to traverse the entrepreneurial path for nothing is more satisfying than working on something you can call your own.

The writer is CEO and founder, Growthxo

STANDING FIRM DURING CRISIS



Women entrepreneurs are aggressively responding to market dynamics to protect their businesses from the exacerbating effect of Covid-19

PRIYANKA MADNANI

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has presented the Indian start-up ecosystem with gruelling challenges. Bringing everything nearly to a grinding halt, almost every start-up entrepreneur has faced multiple barriers and hurdles including lack of financial aid. However, for women that's just one of the obstacles in their entrepreneurial journey, considering the household disruptions interrupting the work from home models. Additionally, facing socio-cultural barriers to limited access in investment

opportunities, the ongoing pandemic has impacted most of the women entrepreneurs disproportionately.

According to industry estimates, there is an average drop of 73 per cent in business revenues, and some of the entrepreneurs even took business loans during the lockdown, while others exhausted personal savings or cash reserves for business survival. This has led to enterprises facing temporary or even permanent shutdown. Furthermore, the estimates also state that one in three women-led enterprises have had to go through such grim situation during

the lockdown period.

On the contrary, the ongoing pandemic has also served as a catalyst for change in Indian women entrepreneurs. The virus has made businesses realise the success of remote working models, and the accelerated use of virtual infrastructure and digital channels that enabled women entrepreneurs to be at the forefront of entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystem.

Rise in women entrepreneurship

There is no denying that the Covid-19 era has made women face

extreme challenges, ranging from increased unemployment and at-home responsibilities. Having said that, many women have come forward to turn the Covid-19 crisis into entrepreneurial opportunities from the comfort of their home. Usually, women are burdened with social responsibilities and have to juggle between work and family life. Those who dropped the idea of starting something of their own or pursue the dreams of becoming an entrepreneur or self-employed have utilised the pandemic era as a period to build. The radical shift from physical

meetings to digital interactions has helped women in levelling up the game of entrepreneurship. The transformative changes adopted by the business and start-up ecosystem have uncovered the potential of women who desired to be a part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. For instance, many women have taken complete advantage of this era by recording their own videos, becoming social media influencers, lifestyle or business coach, or even starting an e-commerce store of the products they are passionate about.

Restructuring the existing business model

The impact of the ongoing pandemic on start-ups and enterprises has been extreme. Since it has been disproportionate for females than male entrepreneurs, women are seeking to restructure their business model for survival as well as sustainability. As per the industry facts, around 54 per cent of the women have changed their business model in response to the crisis, and an additional 24 per cent plan to make a change. The dynamic market trends, new work models, adoption of new technologies, transformative customer behaviour, etc. have led the women to make a quick shift in their business models to maintain relevance and consistency.

For instance, many women entrepreneurs even considered the crisis as an opportunity to take a break from work and revive their skills to bounce back in the industry. Witnessing the widespread adoption of digital technologies, they learnt the ways of social media and used it as a tool to re-establish, increase their outreach, and retain the existing customer base. Furthermore, entrepreneurs have been resilient in these tough times. Learning from the crisis to adapting to uncertainty has become a new normal for many women. Thus, this has enabled the women entrepreneurs to aggressively respond to the market dynamics to protect their business from the exacerbating effect of Covid-19.

The writer is co-founder, Easy to pitch

PLUS POINTS

Learn to live



Poornam—an annual event organised by Unmish—a learning centre for differently-abled children and adults took place recently. The event was online with entries by special children for various competitions which spanned over two days.

It witnessed love and support from across the globe; London, Bangkok and Dubai. All the events had dignitaries from various field to judge these phenomenal entries. Stalwarts like Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Abir Chatterjee, Tanmoy Bose came forward and interacted with the children and rendered priceless support and motivation.

The first day's competition consisted of "Dhwani", a vocal and musical category which enabled children to get a multisensory experience while developing their sensation, perception, and cognitive abilities. The second event was "Compose".

Luminous celebration



Mother Nature and the new normal was the theme of inter-school fest organised by the Nature Club and Interact Club of South Point High School, called Udaan-Vrikshya 2020.

M Kohli, director, South Point School, formally inaugurated the fest, by digitally addressing the participants. The ceremony began with an invocation followed by the school song. Eminent Kathak exponent, Malabika Mitra, an MBBS doctor, was the chief guest. Actor Riddhi Sen was the special guest. All the participants participated enthusiastically and performed brilliantly, keeping in mind the Covid guidelines. All the events were later compiled and put up on South Point's Facebook page.

Annual conference



Samarthya—a student body at XLRI to help school students realise their full potential by focusing on social and emotional learning—conducted Reflections 2020, its annual conference in online mode recently. The event focused on "Mental Health and the Pandemic: Its implications and how to cope".

The conference emphasised the importance of mental health, especially during this challenging time, and initiated discussions amongst students, teachers, and parents on various issues that affect school children. It saw the participation of over 150 students from schools like Dayanand Public School, DAV Public School, and Tarapore School in Jamshedpur. Students engaged in various fun-filled interactive activities to better understand emotions and cultivate good mental health practices. Teachers and parents got valuable insights on identifying difficult emotions and their impact on the kids.

Virtual debate

Held virtually, the seventh edition of ISBF Model United Nations (MUN) Conference was heavily dominated by debates and deliberations on post-Covid-19 economic revival. The two-day conference was attended by over 100 student delegates, representing eight premier higher educational institutions from across the country including ISBF, the host institution for the event and an affiliate teaching centre of the University of London.

This year, a total of six committees representing various UN agencies like the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Security Council (UNSC), Economic Commission on the Asia Pacific (UNESCAP) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) were formed by the Executive Board of the ISBF MUN 2020 that saw students mock-represent more than 15 countries. All participants received certificates, while four received Best Delegate Awards and three won high commendations, along with attractive cash prizes.

**MULTI-ROLE MAN**

Australia's Steve Smith has said though Virat Kohli (photo, left) missing the last three Tests of the forthcoming four-match series will be a big loss for India, fans and stakeholders will have to understand that the Indian skipper is a human being and has a life outside cricket.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Second Test: A total of 30,000 spectators will be allowed each day from 26 December to 30 December at the Melbourne Cricket Ground for the second Test of the four-match series between Australia and India. Cricket Australia is "excited" to be able to welcome fans.

Harvey's plea: Neil Harvey, who made his Test debut aged 19 in Don Bradman's 1948 side, has urged selectors to consider young talents Will Pucovski and Cameron Green for the Test series against India. Both may be held back from the first Test next week.

Tour plan: England will play two Test matches behind closed doors in Sri Lanka next month at the Galle International Cricket Stadium. The England and Wales Cricket Board and Sri Lanka Cricket have agreed on biosecurity measures with plans for the rearranged tour.

Proteas' programme: South Africa will tour Pakistan next month for the first time in 13 years to play two Tests and three Twenty20 Internationals. The five-day matches are in the World Test Championship and will be staged in Karachi (Jan. 26-30) and Rawalpindi (Feb. 4-8).

2022 Cup: Qatar will be involved in Uefa's qualifying for the 2022 World Cup the country is hosting, and its team are set to be placed in one of the five-team groups. The idea will be to balance out the groups and also give the hosts essential preparation games.

Solskjaer's reply: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer told Mino Raiola to realise that football is a "team sport" after the super-agent revealed that Paul Pogba wishes to leave Manchester United. United were knocked out of the Champions League by RB Leipzig on Tuesday night.

Race row: The fourth official in the racism controversy in Tuesday's aborted Champions League clash between Paris-Saint-Germain and Istanbul Basaksehir will struggle to work again if the allegations against him are upheld, according to Kick It Out's Sanjay Bhandari.

Action urged: Kylian Mbappe urged action against racism when his Paris St Germain team followed Istanbul Basaksehir out of the pitch after the Turkish club had accused a match official of racism on Tuesday. The Champions League group game was suspended.

Pally terms: Cristiano Ronaldo says he has always got on well with Lionel Messi and never saw him as a rival after scoring twice in Juventus' 3-0 win over Barcelona in the Champions League on Tuesday. The Italians ended Barca's 38-game unbeaten continental run.

China Open: Zhang Jialin will make history this week when she becomes the first female golfer to compete in the 26-year history of the China Open. The tournament usually has European Tour status and is for men only but the coronavirus sees it tweaked this year.

Hamilton back: Lewis Hamilton is back in training and set to return for Mercedes at this weekend's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, but only if he is passed fit and returns negative tests for Covid-19. The seven-time world champion was absent from last week's action-filled Sakhir Grand Prix in Bahrain.

Rossi dead: Paolo Rossi the hero of Italy's 1982 World Cup-winning campaign, has died at the age of 64. The news was announced today by Italian television network RAI Sport, for whom Rossi had been working as a pundit.

MULTI-ROLE MAN

Australia's Steve Smith has said though Virat Kohli (photo, left) missing the last three Tests of the forthcoming four-match series will be a big loss for India, fans and stakeholders will have to understand that the Indian skipper is a human being and has a life outside cricket.

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

Mass lockdowns and *The Queen's Gambit* have brought unexpected gains for chess during the coronavirus. Indian grandmaster Vishwanathan Anand (in photo) says, praising the hit TV show's "accurate portrayal" of the game.

Anand, who spent three months stranded in Germany waiting for a flight back to India, said chess has enjoyed a surprise boom during the pandemic, with millions more people playing and following games online.

It has been helped by the runaway success of *The Queen's Gambit*, which follows the rise of a troubled chess genius - based on America's Bobby

Fischer - and has set new viewing records for Netflix.

"People sitting at home seem to have discovered the game of chess," Anand, a five-time world champion, said in a phone interview from his home in Chennai.

"There are now 13 million people playing online. And then during the pandemic there was also a Netflix show about chess, *The Queen's Gambit* and that is also a bit spectacular."

While many sports have suffered during the pandemic, chess has thrived. Online platform *Chess.com* last month said it had added 2.5 million new members since the release of *The Queen's Gambit*.

"Just like other sports have TV audiences, our audiences

are principally online. So all that happened was that the chess players moved online to join the spectators," said Anand, 50.

"That's not to say there were no adjustments to be made. It was quite complicated and there was a learning curve, but yes chess has done very well."

Anand, acclaimed as the greatest player India has produced, said technology had brought about deep changes for chess, with the Internet now providing the platform to take it to a mass audience.

"Almost anyone, even someone who doesn't know the rules of chess can follow online," said Anand. "A spectator-friendly experience is being created."

Anand won his first world



title aged 30 in 2000, three years after super-computer Deep Blue's epochal defeat of Russian world champion Garry Kasparov.

"I was the crossover generation. I was 17 when the first chess database came along. I have pretty much worked with computers from that time onwards till today,"

said Anand.

"I think computers have changed the way you study the game. Every person no matter how weak, how isolated, has the world's strongest chess player sitting in the room with them always willing to answer any question."

"Think of it, you have a Roger Federer and Diego Maradona in your room and saying, 'Ask and I will give you any answer.' That's been the impact of chess computers."

Anand enjoyed great rivalries with the likes of Kasparov, Russian grandmaster Vladimir Kramnik and Soviet-born Israeli Boris Gelfand.

He said there were still muscular showdowns such as Magnus Carlsen against Fabiano Caruana - the current

leading players - and tipped teenage sensation Alireza Firouzja, who was born in Iran but plays for France, for future stardom. He said Russian domination was increasingly being challenged, with Ding Liren and Wang Hao leading a wave of Chinese players and Caruana

in the world top 20, was playing in a chess league in Germany where most international travel came to a halt in February.

He kept himself busy following his favourite football team Real Madrid, doing commentaries and leading India in the Online Nations Cup before finally returning home in May.

But despite the advances in technology, he said it was impossible to replicate the tension and atmosphere of a live game.

"If you want to play, you need that sense of being sitting there in the hall feeling that tension," he said. "All those things, I think I need to remember again. It has been a very, very long break. We never had the world grind to a halt like this."

Lockdown, Queen's Gambit spectacular for chess, says Anand

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 10 DECEMBER

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Anand won his first world

Neymar strikes thrice as PSG win

THE INDEPENDENT & AGENCIES

PARIS/MADRID/HERNING (DENMARK), 10 DECEMBER

Neymar scored a stunner of a goal as Paris Saint-Germain romped to a 5-1 win over Istanbul Basaksehir on Wednesday (Dec 9) when their Champions League match restarted a day after being suspended in an unprecedented walkout over a racism row.

Both sets of players and the match officials took a knee on the pitch before resuming the match which had been halted in the 14th minute on Tuesday amid accusations the Romanian fourth official had used a racist term to describe Basaksehir's Cameroonian assistant coach, Pierre Webo.

Neymar, who took to Instagram in the wake of the incidents to post the message "BLACKLIVESMATTER," joined other players in sporting a T-shirt with the slogan "No To Racism" during the warm-up at the Parc des Princes.

When the game got going again, the world's most expensive player was clearly in the mood and he put PSG in front within seven minutes of the restart with a stunning turn and nutmeg followed by a curling strike into the top corner.

The French club had already been guaranteed qualification for the last 16 after Manchester United's 3-2 defeat by RB Leipzig in Germany, but they still needed to win this game to finish on top of Champions League Group H.

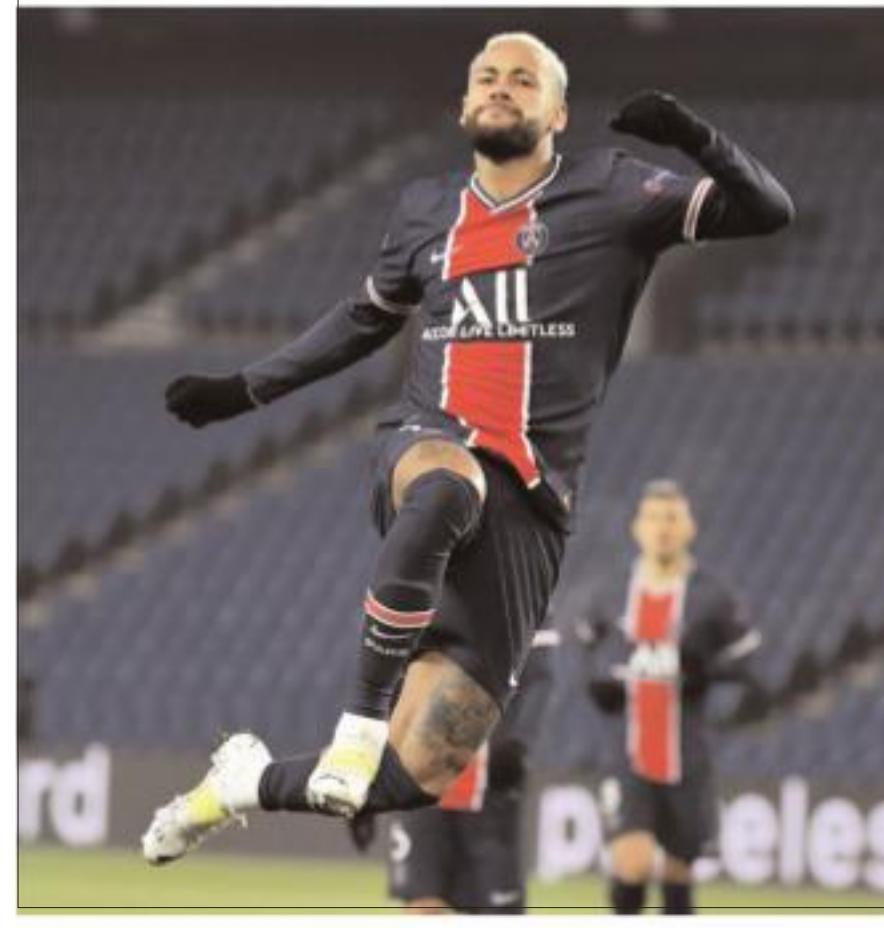
It was Mbappe's 20th Champions League goal, but his first in 10 matches in the competition since December last year.

Neymar completed his hat-trick with another tremendous hit after a one-two with Angel di Maria at the start of the second half, and Mbappe got PSG's fifth into an open goal after Mehmet Topal had scored for Basaksehir.

The Turkish side finished bottom of the group.

Two headed goals from Karim Benzema helped Real Madrid reach the knock-out stages with a convincing 2-0 home win in Madrid last night over Borussia Moenchengladbach, who also progressed to the last 16.

Benzema ghosted into the area unmarked to head home a floated cross from Lucas Vazquez in the ninth minute and



rose again to score in the 32nd, this time powering a cross from Rodrygo through the hands of Swiss keeper Yann Sommer.

The German side were out-classed by the Spaniards but sneaked through from the group as Inter Milan drew 0-0 at home to Shakhtar Donetsk in the other game in Group B.

Zinedine Zidane's side finished top with 10 points while Gladbach came second with eight, pipping third-placed Shakhtar due to their better head-to-head record, while Inter came fourth with six.

Real's shock defeat to Shakhtar last week threatened their record of qualifying from their group for the last 23 years and piled renewed pressure on Zidane, who has won the trophy three times as coach but has had a difficult season in La Liga and in Europe.

But as often in the competition that forms such a large

part of their identity, Madrid stood tall when it mattered most.

The visitors wasted a glorious chance to cancel out Benzema's opener when French winger Alassane Plea raced clear towards goal but bungled his attempted dink over Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, sending the ball wide.

Gladbach had scored 16 goals in their previous five matches but were mostly blunt in attack and barely troubled Courtois, with Plea also missing the target in the second half.

Madrid, meanwhile, were hungry for more goals and should have stretched their lead.

Luka Modric had a strike ruled out for offside late in the first half while Benzema saw a third header saved by Sommer and then smashed a shot off the underside of the bar while Vazquez later struck the post.

Once the final whistle went, Gladbach's players huddled around a smartphone to watch the final minutes of Inter's game against Shakhtar, erupting with joy when that match also finished to send them through by the skin of their teeth.

"We're over the moon. These are incredible emotions that can't be described," said Gladbach midfielder Christoph Kramer.

In Herning, Denmark, A much-changed Liverpool were left hanging on to deny Midtjylland a first ever Champions League group stage win as the Reds escaped with a 1-1 draw in Denmark.

Mohamed Salah opened the scoring inside the first minute to become Liverpool's all-time top scorer in the Champions League.

Alexander Scholz's penalty

nationals series does not worry him. He says his grip is in the right place.

"Sometimes in white-ball cricket I like to open my grip up just slightly to allow me to slice the ball and particularly when I play the bigger shots... whereas in red-ball cricket, I can play with a lot more closed grip because you are not playing that many big shots. I think it helps me play the ball later and under my eyes a lot more... the grip's feeling good at the moment... it is in a good place," said Smith.

Like Pucovski, the 31-year-old also survived a concussion scare last year when he was hit on the head by Jofra Archer during the Ashes Test series. However, he recovered well from there, coming back to play some important innings.

Smith says it is the hangover effect of a hit that the players need to overcome and worry about.

"Every concussion is different, everybody is different. Will's had a few in the past so he has experienced just about getting over that hangover effect, the protocols, getting yourself into a position to go into the nets and face some light stuff and then some bowlers and then get yourself right to play your self out in the middle. I am sure he is working with the doctors there and doing everything he can to get himself right to play.

"That's what I am doing. I am resting and recovering and getting over that," Smith said.



much. I bat a fair bit at number three. Three or four... anywhere out there I am fine. You know when you bat at three, you are sometimes in at first ball of the game, first over of the game, that is the sort of reality of batting there, someone at three could go at the top," Smith said.

"I wouldn't put more pressure on myself. I will go out there and do my job and that is to try and score as many runs as possible as I can, no matter who is playing and what the circumstances are. I guess we will wait and see what happens with the next game and what the selectors want to do. We have still got a week before the start of the first Test. They have got a game to play against India A up there. We'll wait and see where it all ends," he added.

The right-handed batsman says he has got back his rhythm with the bat and his inconsistent run in the Twenty20 Interna-

tional series does not worry him. He says his grip is in the right place.

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For Australia, new sensation Cameron Green will get

another chance to impress skipper Tim Paine and coach Justin Langer while Mitchell Swepson would hope that when the third Test is played at the SCG in the New Year, he is in consideration.

Save Ajinkya Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujara in the first essay and Wriddhiman Saha's dour fifty in the second innings, there wasn't much to write home about for India in the opening first-class encounter.

So, this will be the visitors' chance to sort out the combinations, including a decision on whether the 36-Test experience of KL Rahul will gain precedence while opening with Mayank Agarwal, who is a certainty.

Considering Prithvi Shaw's loose technique against quality seam and swing bowlers and Shubman Gill still trying to find his feet at the top level, Kohli and head coach Ravi Shastri, at least in the first Test, would like to bank on experience.

Similarly, the other question would be whether India can afford to go into the Test carrying five specialist bowlers with perhaps an extra spinner in Kuldeep Yadav.

Kuldeep, among all the players in this team, has more experience of playing with pink ball and the kind of revolution he produces, he could make it difficult for batsmen

SC East Bengal settle for a draw against Jamshedpur

AGENCIES
GOA, 10 DECEMBER

SC East Bengal earned their first point of the Hero Indian Super League Season 7 as they held Jamshedpur FC to a goalless draw at the Tilak Maidan stadium, here on Thursday.

The result meant Robbie Fowler's side continued to be top of the Hero ISL table after four games.

Jamshedpur were superior and dominated possession