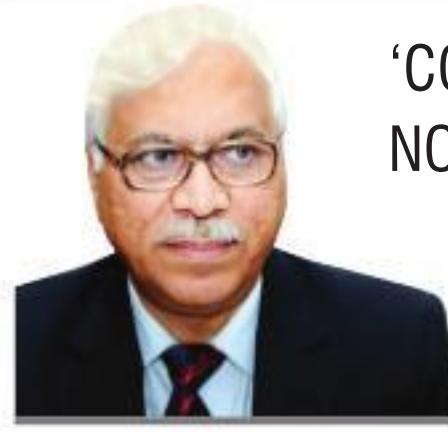




PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



'COUNT VVPAT SLIPS,  
NOT EVM TALLIES'

P7



NO-DEAL BREXIT  
VERY LIKELY,  
WARN BORIS

P10



'TOUGH CAATSA LAW  
NOT DESIGNED TO  
TARGET ALLIES'

P11



LEWANDOWSKI  
OUTSHINES  
THE BIG DUO

P12

## WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Cold wave conditions at a few places. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 21 and 04 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 98% Min: 38%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 19.8°C (-3) Min: 4.4°C (-3)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

07:09 hrs 17:28 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

11:45 hrs 22:15 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



Performance by Tri-Service band to mark the Golden Jubilee of Indo-Pak War of 1971. At India Gate in the Capital on Friday. SNS

**Pak accuses India of targeting UN vehicle:** The Pakistan Army on Friday accused the Indian Army of "deliberately" targeting a United Nations Military Observers (UNMO) vehicle in the Chirkot Sector along the Line of Control, an allegation dismissed by India as untrue. The Indian Army resorted to provoke fire the Chirkot Sector of the Line of Control. While the vehicle was damaged, the two UNMOs luckily remained unharmed, the Pak Army said. Military sources in New Delhi rejected the allegation by the Pakistan Army. Reports of targeting the UN vehicle are not true, they said.

**SC issues show-cause notices to Kamra, Taneja:** The Supreme Court issued show-cause notices to comedian Kunal Kamra and comic artist Rachita Taneja on Friday for their alleged scandalous tweets against the apex court. A three-judge bench sought response from the two in six weeks. It, however, exempted them from personal appearances in the cases. Attorney General K K Venugopal had granted consent for criminal contempt proceedings against Kamra, saying the tweets were in "bad taste". P4

## India's Covid caseload about to cross one crore

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

Covid-19 caseload rose to 99.79 lakh with 22,890 new infections being reported in a day, while total recoveries crossed the 95 lakh-mark, according to the Union Health Ministry's data updated on Friday. With 338 more fatalities, the death toll reached 1,44,789, while the total Covid-19 cases mounted to 99,79,447, the data updated at 8 am showed.

**Delhi adds 1,418 cases, 37 deaths:** Delhi today recorded 1,418 fresh coronavirus infections (Covid-19), which took its Covid caseload to 6,14,775, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. It recorded 37 fresh coronavirus fatalities, which pushed its Covid toll to 10,219 so far, the bulletin said. (SEE P2)



## Covid-19 vaccination will be voluntary: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

Getting vaccinated for Covid-19 will be voluntary, the Union Health Ministry has said while underlining that the vaccine introduced in India will be as effective as any vaccine developed by other countries.

The Ministry further stated that it was advisable to receive a complete schedule of the anti-coronavirus vaccine irrespective of past history of infection with Covid-19 as this will help in developing a strong immune response against the disease.

It also said that protective level of antibodies generally develop two weeks after receiving the second dose.

The Ministry listed a series of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on Covid-19 vaccine on Thursday night and responded to questions like

### INOCULATION ADVISORY

► The Health Ministry stated it was advisable to receive a complete schedule of the anti-coronavirus vaccine irrespective of past history of infection with Covid-19 as this will help in developing a strong immune response against the disease

► Six vaccines - Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR, Zydus Cadila, Gennova, Oxford vaccine trial for which is conducted by SII, Sputnik V and a sixth one manufactured by Biological E Ltd, Hyderabad are undergoing clinical trials in India.

if taking a vaccine was mandatory, how long does it take for the antibodies to develop and if it was necessary for a Covid recovered person to take the vaccine.

"Vaccination for Covid-19 is voluntary. However, it is advisable to receive the complete schedule of the vaccine for protecting one-self against this disease and also



Gennova, Oxford vaccine trial for which is conducted by SII, Sputnik V and a sixth one manufactured by Biological E Ltd, Hyderabad are undergoing clinical trials in India.

to limit the spread of this disease to the close contacts including family members, friends, relatives and co-workers," the Ministry said in response to a question on if it is mandatory to take the shot.

The Ministry said that vaccine trials are under different stages of finalisation. The government is geared to launch a vaccine for Covid-

19 soon, it said. Six vaccines-one developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR, second one developed by Zydus Cadila, third one by Gennova, Oxford vaccine, trial of which is conducted by Serum Institute of India, Sputnik V vaccine which is being manufactured by Dr Reddy's Lab, Hyderabad, in collaboration with Russia's Gamaleya National Centre and the sixth one manufactured by Biological E Ltd, Hyderabad, in collaboration with MIT, USA are undergoing clinical trials in India.

On whether a vaccine will be safe as it is being tested and introduced in a short span of time, the ministry said, "Covid-19 vaccine will be introduced only when the safety is proven. As is true for other vaccines, the common side effects in some could be mild fever, pain, etc. at the site of injection."

## Covid-19 is world war, has spread like wild fire: Top court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

It is a world war against Covid-19 and the unprecedented pandemic has spread like a wild fire due to lack of implementation of guidelines and standard operating procedure (SoPs) issued by authorities to contain it, the Supreme Court said on Friday while expressing concern that the treatment for coronavirus was not affordable to the common people.

The apex court, which suggested either more provisions are to be made by the state governments and the local administrations or there shall be cap on the fees charged by the private hospitals, observed that states must act vigilant

ly and work harmoniously with the Centre as safety and health of citizens must be the first priority rather than any other considerations.

It said strict and stern action should be taken against those who are violating guidelines and SoPs as they cannot be permitted to play with the lives of others.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan while noting that right to health is a fundamental right and it includes affordable treatment, said treatment has become costlier and is not affordable to common people at all.

Even if one survives from Covid-19, many times financially and economically he is finished. Therefore, either more and more provisions

are to be made by the state government and the local administration or there shall be cap on the fees charged by the private hospitals, which can be in exercise of the powers under

the Disaster Management Act, said the bench, also comprising Justices RS Reddy and MR Shah, which was dealing the matter suo motu. Due to unprecedented pan-

demic, everybody in the world is suffering, one way or the other. It is a world war against Covid-19. Therefore, there shall be government-public partnership to avoid world

war against Covid-19, it said. The bench said fatigue of frontline health care workers, including doctors and nurses, is also an issue as they are already exhausted physically and mentally due to tireless work for eight months and some mechanism may be required to give them intermittent rest.

It also said that any decision to impose curfew or lockdown must be announced long in advance so that people may know and make provisions for their livelihood.

Observing that people should understand their duty and follow rules, it said despite huge fine being recovered, Rs 80-90 crores in Gujarat alone, people are not following guidelines.

## SC interim cover to 5 Bengal BJP leaders facing criminal cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

The Supreme Court on Friday granted interim protection to five BJP leaders, including Mukul Roy and MPs Kailash Vijayvargiya and Arjun Singh, in criminal cases lodged against them in West Bengal and directed the state police not to take any coercive action.

A bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul sought response from the West Bengal government on five separate pleas filed by BJP leaders alleging foisting of criminal cases to deter them from political activities and said interim protection from coercive action will continue till the next date of hearing.

The bench also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Hrishikesh Roy posted the batch of pleas for further hearing in the second week of January.

Beside Mukul Roy (top), Kailash Vijayvargiya (middle), and Arjun Singh (bottom), two other BJP leaders, Sourav Singh and Pawan Kumar Singh, had also moved the apex court for protection in cases lodged against them in the state.

leader in 2019 after he had joined BJP leaving TMC.

I am MP and these cases have been filed after I left TMC, Rohatgi said, adding, The first case against Arjun Singh was registered on 24 March, 2019 after he left the TMC.

Vijayvargiya's counsel told the bench that the BJP leader is an MP from Madhya Pradesh and false cases have been lodged against him in West Bengal.

I am an MP from Madhya Pradesh and just because I am going to West Bengal due to some party works, false cases have been filed against me, Vijayvargiya's counsel said.

### Conduct fire safety audit of Covid hospitals: SC to states

NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

The Supreme Court on Friday directed all states to carry out fire safety audits of dedicated Covid-19 hospitals to prevent fire incidents in medical institutions.

The apex court had earlier taken cognisance of a fire incident in a designated Covid-19 hospital in Gujarat's Rajkot in which several patients had died.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said hospitals whose fire NOC has expired will have to get it renewed within four weeks.

The apex court had earlier taken cognisance of a fire incident in a designated Covid-19 hospital in Gujarat's Rajkot in which several patients had died.

The court said every state is obliged to appoint nodal officer to ensure that there is no repeat of fire incidents in hospitals similar to Rajkot and Ahmedabad.

The issue of Rajkot fire incident had cropped up in the top court while hearing a suo motu case on proper treatment of Covid-19 patients and dignified handling of bodies in hospitals. PTI

democracy, everybody in the world is suffering, one way or the other. It is a world war against Covid-19. Therefore, there shall be government-public partnership to avoid world

war against Covid-19, it said. The bench said fatigue of frontline health care workers, including doctors and nurses, is also an issue as they are already exhausted physically and mentally due to tireless work for eight months and some mechanism may be required to give them intermittent rest.

It also said that any decision to impose curfew or lockdown must be announced long in advance so that people may know and make provisions for their livelihood.

Observing that people should understand their duty and follow rules, it said despite huge fine being recovered, Rs 80-90 crores in Gujarat alone, people are not following guidelines.

During the hearing, advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for petitioner Arjun Singh said that 64 criminal cases have been filed against the BJP

party in 2019 after he had joined BJP leaving TMC.

I am MP and these cases have been filed after I left TMC, Rohatgi said, adding, The first case against Arjun Singh was registered on 24 March, 2019 after he left the TMC.

Vijayvargiya's counsel told the bench that the BJP leader is an MP from Madhya Pradesh and false cases have been lodged against him in West Bengal.

I am an MP from Madhya Pradesh and just because I am going to West Bengal due to some party works, false cases have been filed against me, Vijayvargiya's counsel said.



*This is a huge loss; I have informed the CM about it and she is doing the needful to help them*

GAUTAM DEB, TOURISM MINISTER, WEST BENGAL

## Delhi logs 1,418 fresh Covid cases; positivity rate 1.6 pc

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

Delhi today recorded 1,418 fresh coronavirus infections (Covid-19), which took its Covid caseload to 16,14,775, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

These fresh Covid cases were detected out of 88,400 tests conducted the previous day, including 48,180 RT-PCR tests and 40,220 rapid antigen tests, the health bulletin stated.

The national capital's Covid positivity rate stood at 1.6 per cent. It recorded 37 fresh coronavirus fatalities, which pushed its Covid toll to 10,219 so far, the bulletin said.

This was the fourth consecutive day when Delhi's Covid positivity rate has remained



below 2 per cent. It was 1.51 per cent yesterday, 1.96 per cent on 16 December and 1.9 per cent on 15 December.

The national capital had yesterday recorded 1,363 new coronavirus infections—lowest since 31 August—and 35 Covid-linked deaths. These

infections were detected out of 90,354 tests—the highest in the city till date—even as the positivity rate plunged to 1.51 per cent, lowest in months.

On 31 August, the city had recorded 1,358 cases.

Delhi's Covid positivity rate from December 3 to Decem-

ber 7 had successively dipped to 4.96 per cent, 4.78 per cent, 4.2 per cent, 3.68 per cent and 3.15 per cent respectively.

However, on December 8 it had risen again to 4.23 per cent, but dropped to 3.42 per cent on December 9 and 2.46 per cent on December 10.

It had risen to 3.33 per cent again on December 11 and fell again to 2.64 per cent on December 12, and rose marginally again to 2.74 on December 13 but came down to 2.15 per cent on December 14.

On December 15 and 16, the positivity rates were 1.9 per cent and 1.96 per cent respectively. Today, Delhi's active Covid cases tally dipped to 11,419 from yesterday's 12,198. The city's coronavirus recovery rate rose to 96.48 per cent.

## Classified

### LEGAL NOTICES

P.L.A. No. 177 of 2019  
IN THE HIGH COURT  
AT CALCUTTA  
Testamentary and Intestate  
Jurisdiction  
President of the Union of  
India Petitioner for Probate  
In the goods of :  
Radha Devi Poddar, wife of Late Budhmal Poddar Lately residing at No. 18, Armenian Street, Kolkata-700 001, P.S.- Burabazar, a Hindu inhabitant deceased. All persons claiming to have any interest in the estate of the abovenamed deceased are hereby cited to come within 4 (Four) weeks from the date of the publication and affixation of the citation and see the proceedings, if they think fit, before the grant of Probate in the above goods. You are hereby informed that free legal services from the High Court Legal Services Committee are available to you and in case you are eligible and desire to avail of the free legal services, you may contact the above Legal Services Committee. Witness Mr. Thottathil B. Radhakrishnan, Chief Justice at Calcutta aforesaid, the 14th day of October in the year Two Thousand and Twenty.

For Sd/- Registrar  
15.12.2020

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENTION OF DEFENDANT

(Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)

In the Court of Sh. Sanjiv Jain  
District Judge (Commercial Court)-03

Room No. 24  
Patiala House Courts,  
New Delhi

Case No. CS (Comm):

917/2018

Punjab National Bank  
Versus

Satvir Singh & Ors.

To,

Sh. Mohit Goswami, s/o Sh.

Raja Ram Sharma, r/o 1576,  
Top Floor, Gali No. 19, Rajgarh Colony, Delhi-110031.

Whereas the abovenamed Plaintiff has instituted a suit against you. You are hereby summoned to appear before this court in person or by pleader on 12-01-2021 at 10.00 a.m. to answer the same.

Take notice that, in default of your appearance on that day before mentioned, the suit will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court, this

19-10-2020.

Senior Civil Judge-cum-

RC, West,  
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi  
Seal of the Court

COURT NOTICE  
(U/O Rule 20 CPC)

IN THE COURT OF  
MS. SUSHMA-I

Civil Judge  
(Junior Division),

Gurugram

Manish Vij

Versus

General Public,  
CNR No. HRGRO2-002534-2020

Next Date: 20-01-2021

Publication Issued to:

General Public, Gurugram.

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 counsel on 20-01-2021 at 10.00 a.m.

For details logon to  
[https://highcourtchd.gov.in/](http://highcourtchd.gov.in/)?r=district\_notice&dis-

PLaintiff has been served by Smt. Surinder Kaur, w/o Late Sh. Rajinder Singh. Through her attorney (her son) namely Sh. Harjeet Singh, r/o WZ-2A/3, Krishan Park, Gali No. 4, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-110018 died on 13th July, 2018 and his body has been buried by Smt. Surinder Kaur, w/o Late Sh. Rajinder Singh.

Whereas the abovenamed Plaintiff has instituted a suit against you. You are hereby summoned to appear before this court in person or by pleader on 12-01-2021 at 10.00 a.m. to answer the same.

Take notice that, in default of your appearance on that day before mentioned, the suit will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this

15th day of December, 2020.

District Judge (Commercial Court)-03

Patiala House Court,  
New Delhi

Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. UMED SINGH GREWAL

Addl. District Judge-(West)

Room No. 127, 1st Floor  
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

PC No. 43/2019

Surinder Kaur  
Versus

State  
CITATION UNDER SECTION  
283(2) OF SUCCESSION  
ACT,1925

Whereas an application under the Indian Succession Act, 1925, for grant of Probate of the Will or for Letters of Administration to the estate of Late Smt. Manjeet Kaur, w/o Late Sh. Gurdeep Singh, r/o WZ-2A/3, Krishan Park, Gali No. 4, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-110018 died on 13th July, 2018 and his body has been buried by Smt. Surinder Kaur, w/o Late Sh. Rajinder Singh. Through her attorney (her son) namely Sh. Harjeet Singh, r/o WZ-2A/3, Krishan Park, Gali No. 4, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-110018.

Whereas the 08th day of February, 2021 has been fixed for hearing of the case. Notice is hereby given that any person having any interest in the Administration of the Estate of the said deceased if he/she desires to appear in this court on the above said date and see the proceedings of the Grant of Probate (or for Letters of Administration).

Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court on this

17th day of November, 2020.

Addl. District Judge-(West)

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. NITISH KUMAR SHARMA

Senior Civil Judge-cum-RC,  
West,

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

CS SC/1941/2019

Next Date: 18-01-2021  
(O. R. 1, 5)

SUMMON FOR SETTLEMENT  
OF ISSUES

Shyam Indus Power Solution

ON THE MASSIVE FIRE THAT BROKE OUT IN DHUPGURI IN JALPAIGURI THAT DESTROYED AROUND 120 SHOPS

GAUTAM DEB, TOURISM MINISTER, WEST BENGAL

Capital

## Kejri: ₹ 2,500 cr MCDs scam bigger than CWG scandal

During its special session, Delhi Assembly passes a resolution calling for a CBI probe into alleged ₹ 2,500 crore scam in the BJP-ruled MCDs; LOP rejects charge as 'baseless'

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

Making a startling allegation, Delhi chief minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal today said that the alleged scam of Rs 2,500 crore in the BJP-ruled Municipal Corporations of Delhi (MCDs) was bigger than the 2010 Commonwealth Games (CWG) scam.

Addressing a special session of the Delhi Assembly, Kejriwal said that scams of Rs 5,000-Rs 10,000 crore erupt every year in the MCDs while giving required permissions for construction of buildings.

"This is a very painful event because we have gathered here today to discuss the biggest scam in the history of Delhi. The Rs 2,500 crore scam of the BJP is even bigger than the Commonwealth Games scam of the Congress," Kejriwal told the Delhi Assembly.

The Assembly passed with voice vote a resolution calling for a CBI probe into financial mismanagement and alleged Rs 2,500 crore scam in the BJP-ruled municipal corporations of Delhi.

"The amount of Rs 2,500 crore could have been used to pay salaries of sanitation workers, doctors and other employees of the corporations. It could have been used to ready 12,500 mohalla clinics or 7,500-bed hospitals," Kejriwal said.

"When Raghav Chadha said he would meet Amit Shah, the police arrested him. The police have never done this with rapists. Can't the elected representatives meet Amit Shah? Amit Shah should have allowed Raghav to have a cup of tea with him. What harm could have Raghav done to him?" Kejriwal asked.

The CM asked the Leader of Opposition (LOP) to push for a CBI probe into the alleged scam. Rejecting these charges, Bidhuri said the allegations of scam against the MCDs were "baseless". He offered to resign if the allegations were found to be true by any independent probe agency.

Hitting back, Kejriwal said, "You have claimed that you would resign if the scam proves to be true, then why don't you let the CBI probe it?"

Citing the BJP's demand of payment of Rs 13,000 crore due to the MCDs by the Delhi government, the CM said courts have also said that all dues have been paid.

"The court has said that the Delhi government has paid its dues in full to the MCD, yet the BJP is seeking Rs 13,000 crore from the dispensation to again loot the money and do corruption," he said.

Kejriwal said there were two models in Delhi—one of the BJP in the MCDs and the other of the AAP in the Delhi government.

Participating in the debate, urban development minister Satyendar Jain charged that the MCD was synonymous with corruption. "It is one of the most corrupt organisations in the world. Graft ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 5 crore is prevalent in giving building permissions," he alleged.

The Opposition BJP's MLA Vijender Gupta said the MCDs' funds were slashed by the AAP government. He also claimed "irregularities" of Rs 1,000 crore for last two years in the Mukhya Mantri Sadak Yojna.

BJP MP OP Sharma staged a walkout when he was not allowed to speak during the session. The Speaker denied him permission, saying he had already dropped eight ruling party MLAs due to lack of time.

The House was adjourned by the Speaker following passage of the resolution.



Hon'ble Chief Minis

When we demanded CBI

investigation into the matter, they arrested those who

demanded the investigation rather than those who committed the theft."

He said when AAP leaders,

Raghav Chadha and Atishi,

tried to meet Union home minister Amit Shah and Lt Governor Anil Baijal with the demand of CBI probe into this

scam, they were blocked by the police.

"When Raghav Chadha said he would meet Amit Shah, the police arrested him. The police have never done this with rapists. Can't the elected representatives meet Amit Shah? Amit Shah should have allowed Raghav to have a cup of tea with him. What harm could have Raghav done to him?" Kejriwal asked.

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# Convene winter session of Parl: SAD to President

Rejecting Modi govt's 'excuse' to cancel Parliament's winter session, SAD chief Sukhbir Badal urges President Ram Nath Kovind to urgently convene it to discuss protesting farmers' raging concerns

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 18 DECEMBER

**T**he Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)'s president and Member of Parliament, Sukbir Singh Badal, on Friday sought the President of India's intervention for convening the winter session of Parliament immediately.

The Narendra Modi-led BJP government recently declared that the winter session of Parliament will not be held this year due to the Covid pandemic — a move slammed by the principal Opposition Congress as "decimation of parliamentary democracy".

The SAD chief today wrote to President Ram Nath Kovind, saying that "the excuse of the Covid-19 argument to justify the cancellation of the Parliament's winter session simply does not wash".

"How do you convince the people that the Parliament could meet to pass the three controversial (farm) Bills at a time when the pandemic



was at its peak which required the Prime Minister to start the nation's fight against it with a long, countrywide lockdown," Sukhbir stated.

"Now, by the government's own admission, the intensity of the pandemic no longer requires a lockdown. Then, how does one justify the cancellation of the Winter Session? What was right then can-

not be wrong now," the SAD president said.

In his letter to the President, the Sukhbir also said that it was "absurd and ironical" that the ruling party saw "no danger to public health" during gatherings of thousands of people in its election rallies in Bihar and now in West Bengal but "wants the countrymen to believe that even

a limited meeting of MPs would result in a pandemic flare-up".

"There is no lockdown on BJP rallies but there is a lockdown on Parliament comprising just a few hundred members, and that too under controlled circumstances. The Covid excuse is patently fake and even ridiculous," Sukhbir stated.

Describing the central government's attitude as a case of "historic blunder," the Akali leader said, "The ruling party's stubbornness to listen to the country's 'annadata' and to let them die within a few hundred yards of the Parliament would be remembered in history as a case of a heartless and conscienceless government at war with its own people."

Sukhbir made it clear that Parliament must meet immediately as a "national priority" to discuss the concerns of farmers protesting against the Centre's agri laws for weeks.

He asserted that the ongoing farmers' movement affects nearly 100 crore of our people directly and the rest indirectly going by the percentage of the country's population dependent on agriculture.

The BJP's former ally, SAD had quit the Modi government and subsequently the BJP-led NDA a few months ago in protest against its "anti-farmers" agriculture laws.

## Both AAP & SAD have double standards on farm laws: Capt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 18 DECEMBER



"This shows Kejriwal and AAP have a different face for the people, with totally contrarian intentions hidden inside," said the CM, slamming the party over its anti-farmer double-faced actions.

Meanwhile, to facilitate e-learning in government schools amid Covid-19 pandemic, Punjab CM on Friday virtually launched the second phase of the 'Punjab Smart Connect Scheme', marked by distribution of smart phones to another 80,000 class 12 students of government schools. The event witnessed simultaneous distribution of phones at 845 schools today by various Ministers, MLAs and other dignitaries across the state.

Kick-starting the second phase at a government senior secondary school in Mohali, the CM announced that the remaining 45,443 smart phones of the targeted 1,75,443 would be provided to students by the end of this month, to fulfill his government's commitment to further strengthen digital infrastructure in schools.

In the 1st phase, 50,000 students had received smart phones. Under the scheme, the state government is spending Rs 87.84 Crore for the digital empowerment of 88,059 boys and 87,284 girls.

## BJP gearing up for coming Panchayat, Assembly elections in HP: Khanna

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 18 DECEMBER

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in-charge for Himachal Pradesh, Avinash Rai Khanna on Friday said that the party was focusing on the "mission repeat" in the 2022 state Assembly elections by galvanising party workers and was working on a similar roadmap for the forthcoming Panchayat polls in the state.

He said all the party MPs and MLAs will designate one day in a week to give exclusive time to the workers.

Khanna said the BJP is a cadre based party and if the cadre is happy the party is happy too.

He said the party will go for in-depth analysis of past polls in all the 68 constituencies in the state for better performance next time.

He said the BJP is the largest political party in the world.

State BJP president Suresh Kashyap said that the way in charge and co-incharge are working in this state on constituency level is a boost to the workers.

He said the BJP is all geared up for the upcoming Panchayat elections and will perform well in all the elections.

"We will also win the maximum number of Chairman and Vice Chairmen in the upcoming elections," he said.

He said the birthday of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vaj-

payee will be celebrated on 25 December as good governance day and this function will be held at the booth level.

Kashyap said the BJP will perform a mask/sanitizer distribution drive, blood donation camp and will distribute fruits to mark this occasion.

He said the state government is completing three years on 27 December. The party will organise a state level function in Shimla and further 68 mandals will be putting two LED screens each where this program will be witnessed by 6800 people across the state. The central leadership will also join this function virtually.

## HP CM urges Centre to expedite radar survey of greenfield airport

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 18 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Friday called on Union Minister for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri at New Delhi and urged him to expedite the radar survey of a greenfield airport at Nagchala in Mandi district.

He said that the proposed airport would go a long way in promoting high end tourism in the state besides serving as a base for the Air Force in case of requirement.

He also requested to complete all survey formalities at the earliest besides providing financial assistance to the state government for

**'The proposed airport would go a long way in promoting high end tourism in the state besides serving as a base for the Air Force in case of requirement'**

moving ahead.

The chief minister requested for expansion of the runways of Shimla and Gaggal airports besides resuming air services at Shimla airport.

The Union Minister directed the officers of the Airports Authority of India to expedite the process.

## Jai Ram meets PM to invite him for HP's golden jubilee event

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 18 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Friday called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi and invited him to join the golden jubilee function of Himachal Pradesh's statehood through virtual mode.

He said that the state would celebrate 50 years of its statehood on 25 January 2021. He requested to bless the people of the state on the occasion.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur for successful completion of three years of the present state government in office besides Golden Jubilee celebration of Statehood on 25 January 2021.

He assured of joining one of these functions through virtual mode besides all possible assistance and support to the state in future.

The chief minister thanked the Prime Minister for his support to the state government during the last three years especially successful implementation of ambitious projects like Atal Tunnel etc.

Thakur also thanked the Prime Minister for the continuous support of the Cen-



trial government due to which the state was witnessing rapid pace of progress in all spheres. He said that the state and its people were indebted to the Prime Minister for his special love and affection.

The chief minister also invited the Prime Minister for inaugurating the 111 MW Sawra Kuddu Hydro Power Project in Shimla district as it has been completed at a cost of Rs 1796 crores. He further said that due to policy support extended by the Centre, 210 MW Luhri Stage-I Project and 66 MW Dhaulasidh Project with a combined investment of Rs. 2497 crore were ready for foundation stone laying. He requested the Prime Minister to perform the foundation stone laying ceremony.

The chief minister also apprised the Prime Minister about the progress of the state during the last three years and updated the status of various ongoing development projects as the State Government was completing three years in office on 27 December, 2020.

## Women are valuable human resource, there should be zero tolerance towards gender insensitivity: HC

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

The Delhi High Court on Thursday said that every institution and organisation must declare zero tolerance for gender insensitivity and the law on sexual harassment at workplace must be complied with in letter and spirit as women are a valuable human resource and they are entitled to a congenial and dignified environment to attain their potential.

"Every institution and organization must declare zero tolerance for Gender insensitivity. Now that there is a statute to protect women from sexual harassment at work place the law must be complied in letter and spirit.

"Sexual harassment is a serious issue that needs to be addressed at all work places urgently and sensitively. Women are valuable human resource. Their contribution in all spheres of life can never be belittled, whether at the home and hearth or away from it, in more impersonal offices spaces. In either sphere, they are entitled to a congenial and dignified environment to live their life fully and attain their full potential," a bench of Justices Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Asha Menon observed.

The bench further observed that gender conditioning where a man develops a superiority complex, while the woman doubts her own capacity, starts very early in life.

"It need not be in the form of a tutorial, but certainly as subtle data to the minds of young children, about their privileges or lack of it. The privileges also come in the opportunities to develop personal, confidence, intelligence

and skills. It is impossible not to notice all around us, how easily the 'common woman' is put down by the 'common man'. Less said the better of what happens to the Third Generation," it said.

The court further said that this gender conditioning leads men to abuse, ill-treat or become violent towards women and third genders or treat them disparagingly and with condescension.

The observations came while allowing the appeal of a woman against a single judge order imposing Rs 50,000 cost on her and directing initiation of appropriate action against her for filing a false sexual harassment complaint against a senior colleague.

The single judge said that the complaint was false as she was unable to produce any witness in support of her complaint and did not even disclose to the International Complaints Committee (ICC) the inappropriate comments made by the alleged harasser.

While setting aside the single judge's order, the bench said the statements made before the complaints committee and placed on the electronic file "clearly establish that the respondent (man) had been misbehaving with the appellant (complainant) by making statements with sexual overtones".

The bench also laid down some guidelines to be followed by an ICC at the time of dealing with sexual harassment complaints, saying there appeared to be complete lack of information with women about the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

### DAILY REGIMENT



Morning walkers at Japanese Park in Chandigarh on Thursday.

PARDEEP SAINI

## One airport could have been designated in north India for import of flowers: HC

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

The Delhi High Court on Friday said the Centre ought to have earmarked one airport in north India for import of fresh flowers instead of designating only the Chennai airport for importing flowers for the entire country.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan said it was only "a question of accommodation" and the government ought to keep in mind that businesses should not be hampered in the prevailing pandemic situation.

"Where there is a will, there is a way. Tell your officials that," the bench said to the counsel representing the government before approaching the court, but no decision was

taken. The bench directed the Centre to decide the representations moved by the association within 8 weeks of receiving the order copy from the court and disposed of the plea. The court said the government will keep in mind the plight of the association members and that there should be a rationale basis for issuing such a notification, when it is taking a decision on the representation.

"In the prevalent situation, ensure that no one's business is hampered," the bench said to the government.

Earlier there were no such restrictions on import of flowers which include roses, carnations, orchids, chrysanthemums and lilies.

during hearing of a plea moved by an association representing traders of fresh fruits, flowers and vegetables challenging a July 9 notification issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) permitting import of flowers from the Chennai airport only.

They said they had made representations to the government before approaching the court, but no decision was

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

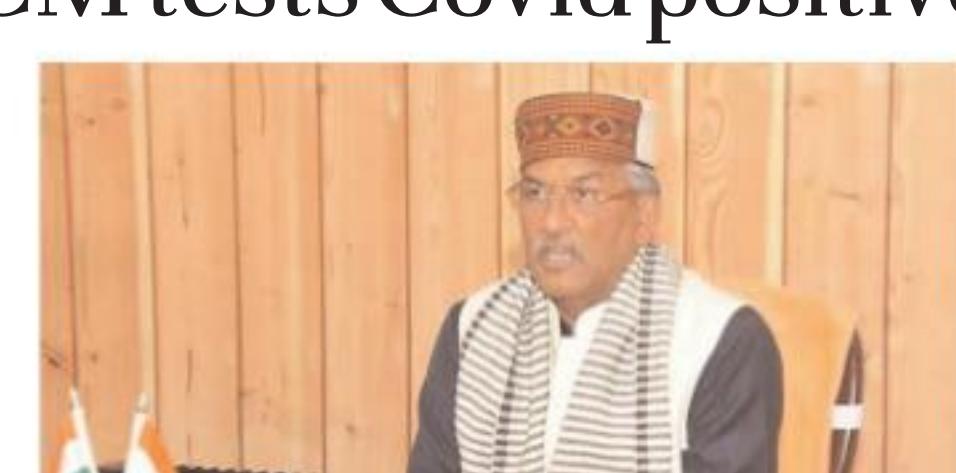
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ARROW raymond Colorplus LOUIS PHILIPPE PARK AVENUE

- 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

is fine and he is asymptomatic.

Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat



Informing on social media, Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat says, "I got a corona test done today which has been reported positive. On the advice of doctors, I have isolated myself and would request all who have come in contact with me recently,

to isolate them and conduct their test." The health of Uttarakhand Chief Minister

is fine and he is asymptomatic.

Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat



**Four killed after car hits motorcycle:** Four people were killed when a speeding car hit two motorcycles and fell into a ditch here, police said on Friday. The accident took place near Farida Parvin village in Gursara area here on Thursday evening, Circle Officer Manoj Sonkar said. Four people were killed and one person was injured. Deceased persons were identified as Omprakash (50), Nathu (55) and Sukhpal (30) and car driver Adarsh (25). PTI

# SC serves notice to Kunal Kamra, Rachita Taneja in contempt cases

SC bench sought response from both in six weeks on the notices issued in two separate cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER



**T**he Supreme Court issued show-cause notices to stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra and cartoonist Rachita Taneja on Friday for their alleged scandalous tweets against the apex court.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R S Reddy and M R Shah sought response from both in six weeks on the notices issued in two separate cases. It, however, exempted them from personal appearances in the cases.

Attorney General KVenu-gopal had granted consent for initiation of criminal contempt proceedings against Kamra, saying the comedian's tweets were in "bad taste" and it was time that people understand that attacking the apex court brazenly would attract punishment.

The attorney general had also given consent to initiate criminal contempt proceedings against Taneja, stating that the caricatures posted by her on social media were intended to denigrate the Supreme Court and lower its authority in the eyes of the public.

The consent of either the attorney general or the solicitor general is necessary under Section 15 of the Contempt of Courts Act for initiating contempt proceedings against a person.

Criminal contempt of the Supreme Court is punishable with a fine of up to Rs 2,000 and imprisonment of up to six

months.

The top court had reserved its order on Thursday on a batch of pleas seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against Kamra and Taneja.

During the hearing on Thursday, advocate Nishant R. Katneshwarkar, who appeared for one of the petitioners, claimed that Kamra had posted several tweets scandalous to the judiciary.

In the plea against Taneja, senior advocate P S

Narasimha and advocate Namit Saxena appeared for law student Aditya Kashyap seeking contempt action against the cartoonist.

Kashyap had said the petition highlighted three particularly outrageous and contemptuous posts that were crafted, posted and shared by Taneja through her social media handles (@sanitary-panel) on various platforms with the malicious intent of scandalising and lowering the authority of the apex court

and to prejudice and interfere with the due course of judicial proceedings.

The plea has sought direction that Taneja be restrained from publishing contemporaneous posts on social media that scandalise and undermine the authority of the top court.

One of petitions in the Kamra case has been filed by law student Shrirang Katneshwarkar and others.

They have claimed that the stand-up comedian had started publishing tweets on 11 November when the top court was hearing the appeal of Arnala Goswami against the Bombay High Court's order rejecting the journalist's plea seeking interim bail in a 2018 abetment-to-suicide case.

The plea has alleged that after the top court granted interim bail to Goswami on 11 November, Kamra "again published various tweets and thereby scandalized" the apex court and "further lowered" its authority.

## Anti-conversion law: HC seeks UP govt's reply

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ALLAHABAD, 18 DECEMBER

The Allahabad High Court asked the Uttar Pradesh government on Friday to respond to a petition challenging its recent ordinance on religious conversions.

The bench, comprising Chief Justice Govind Mathur and Justice Piyush Agrawal, passed the order while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by advocate Saurabh Kumar, who challenged the constitutional validity of the ordinance against "forcible" and "fraudulent" religious conversions, including for the sake of marriage.

According to the petition, CM Yogi Adityanath had announced on 31 October that his dispensation would bring a law against "love jihad". The state government on 24 November had approved the draft ordinance, which provided for a jail term of up to 10 years for violators.

"Love jihad" is a term used by right-wing activists to discredit interfaith marriages by describing it as part of an alleged conspiracy by Muslim men to convert Hindu women in the guise of love.

The primary contention raised in the PIL was that the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance impinges upon the fundamental right to choice and the right to change of faith.

During the hearing, the high court refused to grant any interim relief and directed the state government to file a counter affidavit by 4 January.

The petitioner said the ordinance was morally and constitutionally invalid. He requested the court to declare it as *ultra vires* of the Constitution and direct the authorities not to take any action under the law during pendency of the petition.

The PIL contended that the provisions of the ordinance gave policing powers over a citizen's choice of life partner or religion and, therefore, militate against the fundamental rights to individual autonomy, privacy, human dignity and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty) of the Constitution.

The plea also took exception to the requirement of every religious conversion to be scrutinised and certified by the state.

## Rival factions target K Surendran for BJP's spoils Kerala show

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 18 DECEMBER

Though compared to the 2015 local body polls, the BJP improved its tally and added more seats to its tally, it could not make the kind of impact it was hoping to make.

In the 2015 local body polls, BJP secured 1,400 seats in panchayats, municipalities and corporations and won power in 18 panchayats and one municipality; in this year's polls, the party increased its tally to 1,600 seats, 24 panchayats and two municipalities. The party succeeded in making its presence felt in all six corporations in the state.

The party went to the polls without convening the core committee and preparing the election manifesto. The party failed to run an effective campaign highlighting the development schemes of the Central government which could have been easily converted into votes, they reportedly wrote. They also demanded that Surendran should step down taking moral responsibility for the poor showing of the party in the polls.

After the results, the factions led by Sobha Surendran and PK Krishnadas have reportedly written to the party's central leadership alleging that the party failed to make use of the favourable situation in the state. It was K Surendran's

chayats, 24 municipalities and Thrissur and Thiruvananthapuram corporations. However, the BJP's hopes of wresting power in Thiruvananthapuram corporation came a cropper with LDF winning an absolute majority while in Trissur corporation, the party could win only six seats.

It has been reported that many BJP cadres believe that Sobha Surendran's absence in the election campaign adversely affected the party's performance. They said that state leaders engaged in group politics ignored her completely and did nothing to resolve the issues raised by her and her group. The state leadership did nothing to fight the polls unitedly, forgetting group rivalry at least at poll time, it has been alleged.

Maha CM asks MMRDA to explore other sites for metro car shed

MUMBAI, 18 DECEMBER

Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray has directed the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) to explore alternative sites for Metro 3 carshed, an official said on Friday.

The direction comes in the wake of the Bombay High Court on Wednesday staying the order passed by the Mumbai suburban district collector allotting 102 acres of salt pan land in suburban Kanjur Marg for the construction of an integrated metro carshed.

"The CM has asked the MMRDA to explore other sites for the metro car shed," the official from the state Urban Development Department said.

## GHMC's iPhone purchase plan dropped after social media stink

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, 18 DECEMBER

his private secretary and additional private secretary. The mayor, deputy mayor and all the 15 members of the standing committee from TRS and AIMIM will be demitting office on 10 February. Some of them, like the mayor, did not contest this time and will not be back in office. The standing committee is the highest decision making body of the civic body. Each of the iPhones will cost about Rs 1.6 lakh and the standing committee approved a budget of around Rs 30 lakh for the Information Technology wing to procure the expensive phones. However, outrage poured out on social media over the wasteful expenditure with taxpayers' money as revenue has dipped during the pandemic as the civic body

was reeling under fund constraints. BJP spokesperson K Krishna Saagar Rao termed the move as "atrocious, irresponsible and brazen abuse of power by the GHMC mayor and deputy mayor." He asked: "What are you celebrating? Are you celebrating the loss?" taking a dig at TRS which slipped from 100 seats to a mere 56 in the election held on 1 December. The TRS government then quietly stepped in and cancelled the procurement order.

Meanwhile, the BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar, local MLA Raja Singh and 48 newly elected corporators visited the Bhagalakshmi temple where they took oath

to the people and not indulge in irregular activities.

The standing committee of the GHMC decided to buy the costly iPhone 12 Pro Max for the mayor Bonthu Rammooh, deputy mayor Baba Fasihuddin and 15 members of the committee along with three of the mayor's staff including

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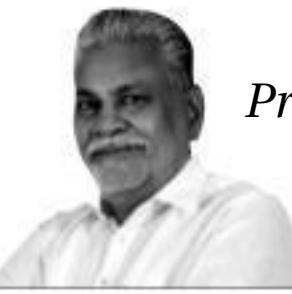
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Protest is not for farmers, it's meant to oppose Centre

URGING THE FARMERS TO LET THE AGRICULTURE LAWS BE IMPLEMENTED AND THEN APPROACH GOVT FOR MODIFICATIONS

UNION MINISTER PARSHOTTAM RUPALA

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 19 DECEMBER 2020

05

## THUMBNAILS



People wrapped up in woollens amidst the biting cold in the Capital on Friday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

**Injured militant dies at hosp:** A militant, who was arrested by security forces during a shootout in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir, succumbed to injuries at a hospital here on Friday, police said.

Zaheer Abbas Lone had sustained bullet injuries in abdomen, a police said. PTI

**Akya Esthetics partners Alma Medical:** Akya Aesthetics partnered with Alma Medical to provide all skin-related problems for the people of Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. SNS

**₹1.10 crore gold missing from Customs custody:** Gold worth Rs 1.10 crore has gone missing from the custody of the Customs department's office here in Gujarat, police said on Friday. The Jamnagar police have lodged an FIR against unidentified staffers of the Customs department after an internal probe. The FIR was lodged under the IPC section 309. PTI

**No drug consumed at party: Johar**

MUMBAI, 18 DECEMBER

Bollywood filmmaker Karan Johar, in his response to the notice issued by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), has claimed that no drug was consumed during a party at his house last year; an official said on Friday.

The anti-drugs agency had issued the notice to Johar over a viral video allegedly showing drugs being consumed at a party hosted at his residence, the official said. "Johar was asked to give details of the party. Accordingly, the NCB on Friday received a reply from him to the notice," he said. PTI

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

In continuation to the Public Notice published in various newspapers on 15.12.2020 regarding Cancellation/Partial Cancellation and Reduction in Frequency due to fog in 2020-21, the following amendments have been made in the traffic handling plan:-

1. In addition to already announced cancellations, following trains will also remain fully cancelled as under:-

## CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

Train No.	Train Name	Frequency/ Day	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
02171	Lokmanya Tilak (T) - Haridwar Jn. Superfast Express Special	Mon, Thu	21.12.2020 to 28.01.2021
02172	Haridwar Jn. - Lokmanya Tilak (T) Superfast Express Special	Thu, Fri	22.12.2020 to 29.01.2021

2. Train no. 02549/02550 Kamakhya-Anand Vihar (T)-Kamakhya (Frequency-Daily) was fully cancelled on daily basis. Now the Railways have decided to cancel this train for 04 days in a week instead of 07 days, as under:-

## CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

Train No.	Train Name	Frequency/ Day	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
02549	Kamakhya - Anand Vihar (T) Express Special	Mon,Tue,Thu,Sat	21.12.2020 to 30.01.2021
02550	Anand Vihar (T) - Kamakhya Express Special	Wed,Thu,Sat,Mon	23.12.2020 to 01.01.2021

3. The train no. 05004/05003 Gorakhpur - Kanpur Anwarganj Special (Frequency-Daily) was partially cancelled between Kanpur Anwarganj- Prayagraj Rambagh on daily basis. Now the Railways have decided to partially cancel this train for 02 days in a week instead of Daily, as under:-

## PARTIAL CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

Train No. & Train Name	Train Cancelled Between Stations	Date from Originating Station
05004 Gorakhpur - Kanpur Anwarganj Chauricha Express Special	Kanpur Anwarganj-Prayagraj Rambagh	18.12.2020 to 30.01.2021
05003 Kanpur Anwarganj - Gorakhpur Chauricha Express Special	Prayagraj Rambagh - Kanpur Anwarganj	19.12.2020 to 31.01.2021

**Note:** For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railway's website: [www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in](http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in)

Security Helpdesk No. 182  
Integrated Helpdesk No. 139

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Please join us on

Protest is not for farmers, it's meant to oppose Centre

# Talks on, hopeful to reach solution before year ends, says Tomar on farm protests

Tomar blames Opp for misleading farmers, accuse them of changing their stance on the reform process and politicising the issue

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

**T**he government is hopeful of resolving farmers' agitation against three new farm laws before the new year and is continuing its informal dialogue with various groups to defuse the crisis, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar has said amid formal talks remaining deadlocked with protesting unions refusing to accept anything less than the repeal of the Acts.

The minister said that the Modi government is committed to addressing all genuine concerns of the farming community and it is willing to resume formal talks anytime, but asserted that there was no point talking to those "shouting from peasants' shoulders".

He put the blame on Opposition parties for misleading the farmers and accused them of changing their stance on the



reform process and politicising the issue.

In an interview, Tomar who is leading the negotiation with about 40 farmer unions along with food minister Piyush Goyal and minister of state for commerce Som Parkash asserted that the three new farm laws are beneficial for farmers and the government is ready to give a written assurance that the

minimum support price (MSP) and mandi system will continue. At least five rounds of formal talks have been held between the three Union ministers and 40 farmer unions to break the deadlock, but the unions are demanding complete rollback of the Central laws.

"We have constantly been holding discussions with farmers' unions... Overall, our effort

is to reach a solution through dialogue with them. We are still open for talks. I hope through dialogue we can move towards reaching a solution," Tomar said. "Informal talks are going on. I am hopeful of some way out," he added.

Whether the Supreme Court constituted committee will take over talks and find a solution or the government will continue its efforts, Tomar

said the government has kept its door open for negotiations with farm leaders and would wait for the Supreme Court's order.

On farmers' unions asking the government not to hold "parallel talks" with other groups and "malign" the protesting farmers, he said, "Farm leaders, who are concerned about the welfare of farmers, should discuss peasants' problems. Why should it matter if the acts are repealed or not?" The government can consider changes to the laws if they convince successfully the clause by clause objections, he said.

On Akali Dal's charge that was real "Tukde-Tukde gang" and wanted to divide Hindu-Muslim and now Hindu-Sikh, he said: "The political parties should not do politics in the name of farmers. These are actually so beneficial for farmers that they would soon buy four wheelers to go to their farms."

## support of farm laws

Even as several farmers' leaders have dodged the police to proceed to Delhi to join the agitation against the three farm laws, the Gujarat BJP has launched a high-pitched campaign in support of the contentious legislations.

Amidst Section 144 promulgated to prevent farmers from gathering and protesting, the Gujarat BJP on Thursday held as many as four farmers' gatherings in different parts of the state to spit venom against the agitating farmers.

Gujarat BJP vice president Gordhan Zadaphia accused the former NDA ally Shiromani Akali Dal leaders Badals of being 'commission agents' in the agriculture trade. He said that the agriculture laws are actually so beneficial for farmers that they would soon buy four wheelers to go to their farms.

Order for submission of per-

## sonal bond withdrawn

The district administration in Sambhal has finally withdrawn the notices given to farmers to submit personal bonds of Rs 50 lakh for provoking farmers against the farm Bills. SDM Sambhal Deependra Yadav said that initially they had decided to reduce the amount of personal bond to Rs 50,000 but now it has been decided to withdraw the notices on the written assurance of peaceful protest by the farmers.

Earlier SDM Sambhal had issued the notices of Rs 50 lakh each to Harpal Singh (president BKU (Asli), Risabh Choudhary (state incharge of youth wing), Sanjeev Gandhi (Divisional General secretary), Rajpal Singh Yadav (District president of Sambhal) and two others for inciting farmers to participate in the agitation against farm bills. Notices were also issued to more than 12 farmers on personal bond of Rs 50 lakh in this regard.

## Sikh preacher who died by suicide near Singhu border cremated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KARNAL (HARYANA),  
18 DECEMBER



The mortal remains of Sikh preacher Sant Ram Singh, who was supporting the protest against the farm laws and allegedly committed suicide near the Singhu border unable to bear the "pain of farmers", were consigned to flames here on Friday.

A large number of his followers from various walks of life, including politicians, religious gurus and farmer leaders, reached Singhu village here to attend the last rites.

Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, his son and Congress MP Deepender Singh Hooda, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee president Bibi Jagir Kaur and Bhartaiya Kisan Union Haryana chief Gurjarn Singh were among them. On Thursday, Akali leaders and a large number of followers of the Sikh preacher paid their last respects to him at his gurdwara in Karnal.

Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar termed the 65-year-old preacher's death "an irrepara-

bble loss". Khattar's Punjab counterpart Amarinder Singh also expressed grief over his demise.

Sant Ram Singh's body was on Wednesday night taken to the Nanaksar Gurdwara in Singhu village, where a large number of his followers had gathered.

Many recalled that Sant Ram Singh dedicated his life to serving humanity and used to organise "satsangs (prayer meetings)" and "langars (community kitchen)" for thousands of people.

The Haryana BKU chief said Sant Ram Singh was deeply hurt to see the pain and sufferings of thousands of farmers, who are braving the cold on the roads for the past several days to demand the withdrawal of the "anti-farmer laws".

Talking to reporters after

attending the preacher's cremation, Hooda reiterated that the Centre should immediately accept the demands of the farmers.

Earlier, Congress leader Selja alleged the Centre is

"insensitive" towards the plight of the farmers.

"The government should accept the demands of the farmers, who have been sitting on roads for several days," she said.

## APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male **Named:** Vinod S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, **Age:** around 40 years, **Height:** around 5' 8", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Bearded:** Black and Greyish, who was found at Building of Double Storey Market, Near Dhobi Ghat, Lodhi Colony, Delhi. In this regard a case DD No. 18A Dated : 23.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Lodhi Colony, Delhi.



Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

Sd/- SHO  
P.S. Lodhi Colony, Delhi  
DP/357/SD/2020 Tel.: 011-24620283, 24611753

## BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI

4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001  
O.A. No. 952/19  
BANK OF BARODA  
SUDHIR SEETHI & ORS.  
VERSUS  
To,  
DEFENDANT

1. Mr. Sudhir Sethi Sh/o Sh. Surjit Singh Sethi  
R/o 139, SPS Ashok Vihar, Phase-4, New Delhi  
2. AVJ Developers India Pvt. Ltd.  
84, Patparganj Industrial Area, New Delhi - 92  
Also at: Plot No. GH-12/2 ZETA 1, Greater Noida, UP

Whereas the above named applicant (s) have instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 30,81,337/- (Rupees Thirty Lakh Eighty One Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty Seven Only) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 19.03.2021 at 10.30 A.M.

Please note that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

By Order of the Tribunal  
For Registrar, DRT-II, Delhi

## RUNNING OF NG EXPRESS SPECIAL TRAIN BETWEEN KALKA &amp; SHIMLA

It is notified for the information of all concerned that Northern Railway has been running the following special train as per details given below:-

04517/04518 Kalka - Shimla - Kalka Express Special Train (Daily)	
Train No. 04517	STATIONS
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
-- 07:00	Kalka
09:00 09:10	Barog
	19:02 19:08
12:55 --	Shimla
	-- 15:50

Days of Run: 04517 Ex. Kalka with immediate effect till further advice and 04518 Ex. Shimla with immediate effect till further advice

Accommodation: AC Chair Car

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

Note : For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website [www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in](http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in)

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## Love Thy Neighbour

Quite the most striking feature of the grandstanding on the 50th anniversary of India's war with Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh was Thursday's virtual summit between the two Prime Ministers ~ Narendra Modi and Begum Hasina. India has reaffirmed what it calls the "neighbourhood first" policy, which could play a pivotal role in area studies, and most particularly within South Asia. "India is our true friend," declared Hasina and Mr Modi has reciprocated the bonhomie by offering to Bangladesh the Covid vaccine when it is manufactured in India. Of a piece with this renewal of cordiality, that dates back to 1971, is Mr Modi's "sincere commitment" to complete the interim water-sharing arrangement for the Teesta river. The Prime Minister's signal of intent comes nearly a decade after the Bengal chief minister, Mamata Banerjee, decided to be a no-show at the airport's check-in-counter for the flight to Dhaka. Small wonder that then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh drew a blank in the face of Miss Banerjee's stout objection. Since 2011, she has been consistently against sharing of the waters of Teesta primarily because it would hit agriculture in North Bengal, where the Trinamul Congress has been trying to sustain its base. Very pertinently has Mr Modi dwelt on the land boundary issue while referring to what he called the "significant pillar" of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy. Also to be strengthened are connectivity, trade, cultural cooperation and border management. Both countries are acutely aware that the last has been a particularly thorny issue since 1979 when the "quiet influx", as this newspaper had then described it, had set in from the eastern flank. And it persists to this day with militants crossing over from Bangladesh to India... as often as not for safe passage to Kashmir. For all that, a paradigm shift in foreign policy cannot arguably be expected quite yet. It will not be easy to take Miss Banerjee on board ahead of the state Assembly election; for one thing, it can only exacerbate the increasingly bitter infighting within her party. Significant nonetheless is the impetus to connectivity, most particularly the inauguration of the Chilahati (Bangladesh) to Haldibari (India) rail link. It is fervently to be hoped that five of the six pre-1965 rail links will become operational. Fifty years after the creation of Bangladesh, the bilateral bonhomie is suitably critical not the least because Pakistan is attempting to improve ties with Bangladesh. Furthermore, China has been trying to rope in Dhaka to its strategic planning. The geostrategic overtures have clearly not deterred the Hasina government from concluding as many as seven agreements with India on a single day. The bonhomie is reinforced with the joint decision to celebrate 50 years of friendship. Towards that end, Mr Modi will visit Bangladesh next March to join the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the neighbour's independence and 50 years of bilateral diplomacy. Both countries are riveted to brasstacks, and not peripheral issues like hilsa diplomacy.

## Really unreal

The build-up to the first Test in Australia this time around risked sowing gratuitous confusion, amid the Wriddhiman Saha-or-Rissabh Pant clash of cerebral swords, when it came to be said, by way of celebrity speak, that you needed your best wicketkeeper for home matches on tricky tracks with spinners around but the better batsman among for overseas ones, when standing back would do. Not that regional reactions either way can be a criterion in decision-making but the right reason for a selection had better be spelt unambiguously out when a first-choice XI, on tour or not, is required to be fielded in the national interest. The case for Pant was argued ~ and that was quite all right ~ on the foundation of his century in one of the tour matches, buttressing his standing as a wicketkeeper who could be eminently useful with the bat, as he had been when India won their first Test series Down Under two years ago. Whether he is from Delhi or Deoghar is of no consequence. Saha's wicketkeeping credentials are deemed stronger ~ coach Ravi Shastri customarily describes him as "the world's best" ~ and it was when he, injured, was obliged to stay out of the previous series that Pant made the most of the opportunity to compel popular attention as someone who could be relied upon to fit nicely in even when the demands on an incumbent's skill set were sky-high. Equally truly, wicketkeepers have in the contemporary game come frequently to be picked for their batting utility, an area where Saha has perhaps been assessed as one less urgently to be gone to in the time of an emergency. Whether he can dominate the bowling on Australian wickets would have been another aspect of uncertainty.

Classical thinking would surely have prioritised a wicketkeeper's acumen behind the stumps - and India seem to have done so, going by their choice of personnel for Adelaide ~ way above his punitive powers with the bat but captains and managers today the world over might not be inclined to cast off the man with the stronger bat rightaway. And, as celebrities acknowledged, Pant was thought of as a bulwark against Australian pace aggression given India's top-order batting uncertainties and infirmities. But the top ones get in because they belong there and to bung someone else in anticipation of their failure might not really be what the doctor would recommend. And if circumstances dictate the inclusion of someone for a specific skill, he will have to be considered the best in the lot for the moment. But when calibrated evaluations of competing cricketers' attributes lead up to a conclusion where narrowly defined niches are pointed at for players good enough to be in the national mix, you are apt to be left wondering if the batsmen as well as the wicketkeepers are not befuddled. Hardly a good gameplan, that.

# Defence procurement

The initiative taken by the Ministry of Defence on procurement seems sound but India will take another two to three years to become self-reliant, for which constant efforts are required and the dependence on the bureaucracy must be reduced



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh released the draft Defence Procurement Procedure Policy 2020 in New Delhi on 20 March. This policy aims to make India a major global centre of defence manufacturing by involving the private sector in manufacturing activities under the 'Make in India' initiative. The government has also introduced the provision of purchase of defence equipment in various categories at affordable rates under the lease process.

The minister had said that under the new policy increasing the participation of Indian industries in defence production would expand this sector. As per reports, arrangements have been made to provide domestic manufacturers raw materials, special types of minerals and software at affordable rates.

It is a national policy to purchase defence equipment. Under the Defense Procurement Policy (DPP), submarines can be launched through Project Strategic Partnership. At the same time, arms will start under the project strategic partnership of the factory. With the introduction of the new government policy, the process of buying sensitive weapons or machines will be speeded up and the purchase of necessary weapons or machines will be expedited.

Under the DPP, indigenously designed, developed and manufactured (IDDM) equipment will be given first priority in the procurement of defence sector. Also, the manual associated with the defence procurement process will be updated every two months.

This committee was formed in August 2019. On that occasion, Mr. Rajnath Singh had said that the intention was to make India self-reliant in the matter of de-

fence equipment. He said that we want to make India a stronghold of production of defence equipment. With the experience gained by the Indian defence industry and the Ministry of Defence working together; the time has come for us to strengthen the Make in India initiative, he said. The draft of defence procurement process should have a greater indigenous share in the weapons acquired by the Indian Army.

The government of India recently introduced a new draft policy that sets a \$25 billion defence production target, including making \$5 billion from exports, by 2025.

The Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020 is meant to bolster local production of weapons and platforms by developing a dynamic, robust and competitive defence industry.

The draft policy also said the Ministry of Defence will set up a technology assessment cell to assess industry's ability to design, develop, produce and re-engineer assembly lines to manufacture major systems such as armoured vehicles, submarines, fighter aircrafts, helicopters and radars.

"The DPEPP 2020 is envisaged as overarching guiding to provide a focused, structured and significant thrust to defense production capabilities of the country for self-reliance and exports," the MoD said.

However, some defence experts and analysts are unimpressed with the draft policy. Amit Cowshish, a former financial adviser for acquisition with

the Defence ministry, said the DPEPP is high on rhetoric but low on specifics.

India's current defence production turnover is about \$11.42 billion. Of this, \$9 billion comes from state-owned enterprises and ordnance factories, while the private sector accounts for \$2.42 billion. From the total amount, \$1.53 billion comes from export business.

"It disregards financial reality, which is grimmer now due to the rampant pandemic than was the case in the past," Cowshish said, referring to the spread of the coronavirus that has hit economies worldwide.

A more productive defence industry in India will depend on how much money the government can spare for local procurement as well as the availability of material in the domestic market ~ two factors that should be a matter of concern, particularly with export targets, according to Cowshish.

Currently, India spends about \$18.52 billion annually on weapons and platform purchases, out of which 60 per cent is sourced from domestic companies, with remaining supplies coming from foreign vendors.

About \$11 billion of those appropriated funds go toward India's 50 state-owned laboratories focused on defence research and development, nine state-owned companies, and 41 ordnance factories. Conversely, private defence companies, including 3,500 micro and small enterprises, get a little over \$2 billion from this.

A CEO of a private defence

company in India, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the DPEPP fails to provide "a clear road map and direction for streamlining defence procurement and production." He argued that defence production would only improve if there were mutual trust, handholding, active participation and patience in the development process between the private and public sector.

Senior executives at the state-owned enterprises Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) would not comment on the draft policy, saying they are not authorised by the government to comment on MoD policy issues being a public sector unit.

However, Venkatesh Damal Kannan, a former research and development director with Hindustan Aeronautics, said achieving the \$25 billion target would be possible if the current capital allocation of \$18.52 billion for purchasing weapons and platforms is doubled.

There should also be a willingness from the Indian military to field a larger number of indigenous products, Kannan added, and improved bureaucratic processes in the MoD. However,

Cowshish said the military's arms requirements should not be held hostage by efforts for indigenisation. "In the meantime, especially in situations like the one we are faced with vis-à-vis China, there is no alternative to buying equipment, platforms, ammunition from abroad if what is needed is not available in India," he said. The initiative taken by the Ministry of Defence on procurement seems sound but India will take another two to three years to become self-reliant for which constant efforts are required and the dependence on the bureaucracy must be reduced.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**  
ASIAN NEWS NETWORK

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**Prioritize the poor**

One tragic consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the poor and those barely above the poverty line are and will be most affected.

The World Bank has estimated that the health crisis will make 2.7 million more Filipinos poor this year as a result of a record decline in the Philippines' economic output as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP). The multilateral agency expects Philippine GDP to shrink by 8.1 percent in 2020, worse than the existing Philippine record of a 7-percent contraction in 1984 when the Marcos dictatorship was wracked by a debt crisis in the wake of the Ninoy Aquino assassination. In the nine months to September this year, GDP had declined by 10 percent.

As employment is linked to the level of economic activity, a slowdown results in job losses as companies lay off workers to cut costs. Add to this the thousands of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who lost employment as the COVID-19 wreaked havoc on economies across the globe. As such, the World Bank expects nearly three million Filipinos to fall below its poverty line of \$3.2 a day (about P160 per person per day) as job losses locally and lesser cash remittances from OFWs make life more difficult for Filipino families.

The poor and vulnerable sectors of society are especially likely to experience significant welfare losses because of their limited capacity to manage risks, according to the World Bank. These sectors have no money or

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

investments to fall back on when economic difficulties arise. Those in the middle-income class may still have some savings to tide them over the current crisis. The rich have no problem coping. But the lower-income population? A household survey conducted by the World Bank last August already showed that 88.6 percent of Filipino families "expressed concern over their finances" during this pandemic.

Results of a Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey last September reflected this grim reality. Of the 1,249 adult Filipinos surveyed from Sept. 17 to 20, 30.7 percent of them said they experienced "hunger due to lack of food to eat," higher than the 20.9 percent recorded in July. This translated to some 7.6 million Filipino households experiencing involuntary hunger, the highest hunger incidence since 2014. Worse, 2.2 million families experienced "severe hunger," the highest number on record. The SWS noted that the numbers have been rising since May, at the height of the strictest lockdown in the region that halted two-thirds of the Philippine economy from the middle of March. Only when the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic eases and business activities slowly return to normal will economic recovery contribute to poverty reduction.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## A new political journey

SIR, The Adhikari family of Kanthi, East Midnapore has a long history of fighting the Left in the undivided district of Midnapore and played a leadership role in the Nandigram land movement which contributed immensely to the ouster of the Left front government and catapulted the Trinamool Congress to power in 2011.

Being a political family out and out, father Sisir Adhikari and one of his sons are currently Members of Parliament and two other sons are MLAs in the West Bengal Assembly of whom Suvendu, the eldest, has now quit the Trinamool Congress in protest against the way the party is being run.

Media is agog with reports that he may join the

BJP. It is reported that at a meeting held recently in Midnapore town where the Chief Minister was the main speaker, the whole Adhikari family was absent.

The Adhikari family's contribution to the party's growth and development in the Jangalmahal districts of the two Midnapores, Bankura and Purulia cannot be denied.

But it is also a fact that the party gave them everything ~ from political power to social standing to popularity and influence.

It would be surprising if the family, so instrumental in helping the party come to power and being with it through thick and thin for so long, opts for a new political journey.

Anything and every-

thing can happen in politics and it is aptly called the 'art of the possible'.

Yours, etc., Dr. Narayan Datta, Burdwan, 16 December.

### RUNNING SCARED

SIR, Apropos your report "Govt says no winter session due to Covid" (December 16), it is really surprising to know that the Centre has officially cancelled the Winter Session of Parliament this year.

This is nothing but government running away from the Opposition's questions related to farmers' protests, economic fallout, etc.

That Covid-19 is being cited as the reason by the government is shocking as election rallies were and are being attended by BJP leaders and ministers in Bihar and West Bengal.

Moreover, all other ac-

tivities have been thrown open to the public, subject to precautions.

MPs should also attend the Parliament session after taking all precautions such as physical distancing, hand hygiene and wearing of masks. Cancelling the session is no solution. If the law makers of the country run away from pandemic fears, how can common citizens be expected to face it?

Government should hold the winter session of both houses as per schedule and face the questions from opposition in a healthy way instead of running away from debate.

Yours, etc., Vandana, Chandigarh, 16 December.

### EVASIVE

SIR, Evading debate in legislatures on crucial issues of public importance has become the order of the day, giving the glib excuse of the pandemic. Other things like elections are conducted with gleeful enthusiasm which runs counter to parliamentary democracy. It seems that leaders are afraid of facing the people's representatives. If so, then unwitting leaders are accepting that the laws they brought forth are not without flaw and will not stand scrutiny. This does not behove well for democracy.

Yours, etc., D S P Rao, Kakinada, 16 December.

### CARRIER OPTION?

SIR, With reference to your report, "Navy's proposal for third aircraft carrier not rejected: Rawat" (15 December), it is prudent to have mainland or island-based naval or Indian Air Force combat aircraft, with mid-air refuelling capability extending their reach, to keep shipping lanes safe rather than acquiring an



### VACCINE HOPE

SIR, Your editorial "European gloom" (15 Dec) is absolutely spot-on. It is already proved that lockdowns are no solution to Covid 19. The question of livelihood is raised with lockdowns.

Whenever restrictions are lifted, people come out of their shelters in droves and flout protective guidelines in inevitable spike. The same scenario prevails across the globe barring a few countries.

The trend is manifest mostly in democracies. It is really tough to tame the virus unless awareness grows. The only ray of hope is vaccination. The USA has already started the process. We, too, can be optimistic.

Yours, etc., Aranya Sanyal, Siliguri, 16 December.

additional aircraft carrier at an astronomical cost and a naval armada to protect it.

Moreover, an aircraft carrier is vulnerable to missile attack however well protected it might be.

We cannot expect a free run as Vikrant had in the 1971 Indo-Pak conflict; and even so it had its anxious moments. Upgrading the existing shore-based air

bases on the mainland and in the Andaman and Nicobar islands and creating facilities at Lakshadweep islands should be seriously pursued.

Resources should be utilised for building nuclear submarines which can patrol the seas for months undetected.

Yours, etc., Soumitra Pal, Kolkata, 16 December.



## 'Count VVPAT slips, not EVM tallies'

**F**ormer Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) **S Y QURAISHI**, who has a doctorate in communication and social marketing, is known for expressing his opinions freely and fearlessly. He headed the Election Commission (EC) from July 2010 to June 2012—the period when the EVM controversy erupted—and he was the one who proposed and implemented the VVPAT mechanism to address issues raised by various political parties. During his two-year tenure as the CEC, he planned and supervised several state assembly elections. He introduced many electoral reforms and introduced voter education and expenditure monitoring divisions in the EC. He has authored a book, 'An Undocumented Wonder—the Making of the Great Indian Election', which describes the enormity and complexity of Indian elections. He also set up the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management and launched NationalVotersDay. A former IAS officer, Quraishi held significant posts in Haryana as well as in the Union government. In an interview with **VIJAYTHAKUR**, Quraishi spoke on the EC's roadmap and its challenges in holding elections in pandemic times. Excerpts:

**Q.** You have recently called for a ban on opinion polls. Why are you not in favour of opinion polls?

A. There is no issue if the opinion polls are honest. But in a situation where the credibility of media has gone down, you can buy editorials, you can buy news items. That is why all political parties had approached the EC (in this regard). We agreed and told them to make a law against opinion polls. After that the Law Ministry sent us a draft for banning opinion and exit polls. The Election Commission vetted it. But surprisingly after a fortnight, we noticed that they only banned exit polls and left opinion polls. They demanded, we supported it, but when it came to making an Act, they



ignored it. Why we are against opinion polls is the trend of paid news. In a situation where we are reporting hundreds of cases of paid news, we cannot rule out 'bogus' opinion polls. And if a bogus opinion poll is projected it would influence public opinion and would affect the purity of the elections. So the banning of opinion polls is must for a free and fair election.

**Q.** To address EVM apprehensions, the Election Commission has introduced VVPAT (Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail) machines. You have now suggested counting of votes from VVPAT slips instead of EVMs. Why?

A. I was heading the CEC when VVPAT was introduced in 2010. When EVM controversy was quite high in 2010, we had an all-party meeting where all political parties agreed to VVPAT. In 2011 we had a dry run of the machine in five towns in different geographical regions. They encoun-

tered some errors and were sent back for improvement. A year later, another mock trial was run in the same towns which were successful. Finally, we decided to introduce it in some bye-elections. After its successful run, we finally ordered 20 lakh VVPAT machines and that's why VVPAT machine was used in 2019 elections. Despite all that, some political parties are still questioning EVM and demanding voting through ballot papers. I suggested two models. First was that the winner and runner up may appeal for recounting of two EVM machines where they suspect something. The second model was to do the reverse, instead of counting on EVMs, count on VVPAT machines. Actually counting of VVPAT and EVM machines take nearly 20 to 25 minutes each. So, instead of counting on EVM, let's count VVPAT slips, both would take same time, but the confidence level would go up among the contesting candidates. Let's do it on a pilot basis in some constituency.

Reversing the process, which means counting VVPAT slips, would enhance transparency and credibility of the electoral system.

**Q.** But by doing so, aren't you actually advocating for a return to paper ballots?

A. Counting of ballot papers is a long process. It was a big paper sheet. Opening it, checking it and then counting takes a much longer time. Whereas VVPAT is a 3-inch slip and hardly takes much time. Counting through a VVPAT machine or through an EVM, both take almost the same time. So in the end there would not be much difference whether we count EVMs or VVPAT slips. I discussed it with some officials of the EC and suggested these changes in the process to increase the credibility of the electoral system.

**Q.** What are your views on the issue of Electoral Bonds?

A. I am strongly of the view that

Electoral Bonds are undemocratic, have killed transparency and legitimised crony capitalism. The scheme introduced by the present government has apparently not only legalised crony capitalism but also taken away transparency from political funding. Earlier no company could donate more than 7.5 per cent of their last three years' profit. Unfortunately, this limit has been taken away and now a company can donate almost 100 per cent of profits. Obviously, there is no free lunch. If a company is giving up huge profit, it would definitely expect something back and may influence the government's decision in their favour. So the introduction of Electoral Bond is definitely a backward step, although it was pretended that it was a forward step. In the name of bringing transparency, in fact, they killed transparency. Earlier, all donations of more than Rs 20,000 were to be brought to the knowledge of the Election Commission. Today even if the donation is of Rs 20 crore, the EC would not come to know about the source of this funding.

**Q.** The EC recently conducted the Bihar Assembly polls successfully amid the Covid pandemic which continues to rage. There are some crucial state polls lined up for early next year. What is your take on elections in Covid times?

A. Election Commission has done an excellent job in Bihar assembly elections. It is for the first time that the Commission held four press conferences to bring more transparency. All the detailed guidelines and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) were scientific, intelligent and based on global experience. We hope it would do the same in the coming elections. India's Election Commission is always learning and improving itself. EC must have done post mortem of the Bihar assembly elections and I hope it would further improve its guidelines based on its Bihar experience.

surprised by the Republicans playing by different rules.

This ugly scenario will unfold if the Republicans block all Biden initiatives, domestic and foreign, to ensure that he does not deliver. By the 2022 mid-term elections, the Republicans will regain majority in Congress, and with the party controlling the Senate, House and Supreme Court, the right-wing shift in American values and ideology will be difficult to reverse. Whose rules apply when the game is fixed?

What does that mean for the Rest of the World? No one will feel secure with radical changes in US foreign policy that swing from moderation to possible extremism and back. All will feel insecure and few will think and act for the long-term.

Historically, the Greek and Roman empires went through the same shift, from an open Republican era to an Imperial and autocratic phase. The British empire did not go through this phase because it was always checked by the Europeans and then overtaken by American cousins. Global neoliberal rules of the game will not hold if the strongest military power does not play by its own rules. Great Power politics will get uglier.

Since we don't want to spoil the mood for the Christmas festive season, let us hope that the bad and ugly scenarios do not unfold. Most Hollywood films end up with the good guys winning.

But as the Good cowboy (Clint Eastwood) won over the Bad (Lee Van Cleef), it was the Ugly one (Eli Wallach), who asked the question many asked themselves during this pandemic: "If you work for a living, why do you kill yourself working?"

The answer is that most have no choice. So, let us pray for a good outcome in 2021.

The writer is a former central banker and financial regulator. The views are entirely his own.

NO 28169

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

Lord Birkenhead's views on the subject of an Imperial Court of Appeal will command the attention which is due to the opinions of a Lord Chancellor on such a subject. Probably there will be little dispute in regard to the tribute he pays to the appellate jurisdiction of the House of Lords at Home. Of wider interest are Lord Birkenhead's suggestions regarding the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Most people will agree that a tribunal of such importance should be housed in buildings corresponding better than its present unimpressive environment with the vast Imperial issues which the Committee has to decide. It is satisfactory to note that strong representations have been made to the Treasury that means must be found for strengthening the Indian representation on the Judicial Committee, whose Indian work, as Lord Birkenhead said, vastly exceeds the volume of all the work from other States of the Empire. Another point in Lord Birkenhead's article that will be noted with interest is the hope he expresses that, as the result of consultation between the Viceroy and the India Office, a decrease may be brought about in the cost of appeals together, perhaps, with a reduction of what Lord Birkenhead terms the "almost intolerable length and prolixity" of some Indian lawsuits.

### NEWS ITEMS

### DISPUTE OVER A TEMPLE

The Honorary Magistrate of Alipore disposed of a sensational case in which one Rampasad, a priest of the temple known as Sewnarayan Sanpati Society at old Baligunge, exclusively belonging to the cobblers who are followers of the said society, brought a case against one Raghbir Pandey, an upcountry Brahmin for mischief and wounding religious feelings. It transpired in evidence that about a lakh of cobblers are followers of the said sect, and they worship no idols but a holy book called granth and the cobblers of the said sect select their own priest from amongst themselves. On the night of the occurrence when the priest was performing the worship of the holy book the accused forcibly entered into the temple and set fire to the holy book which was in consequence reduced to ashes. The Magistrate found the accused guilty and sentenced him to pay a fine of Rs 25.

### EUROPEAN ARRESTED ON SUSPICION

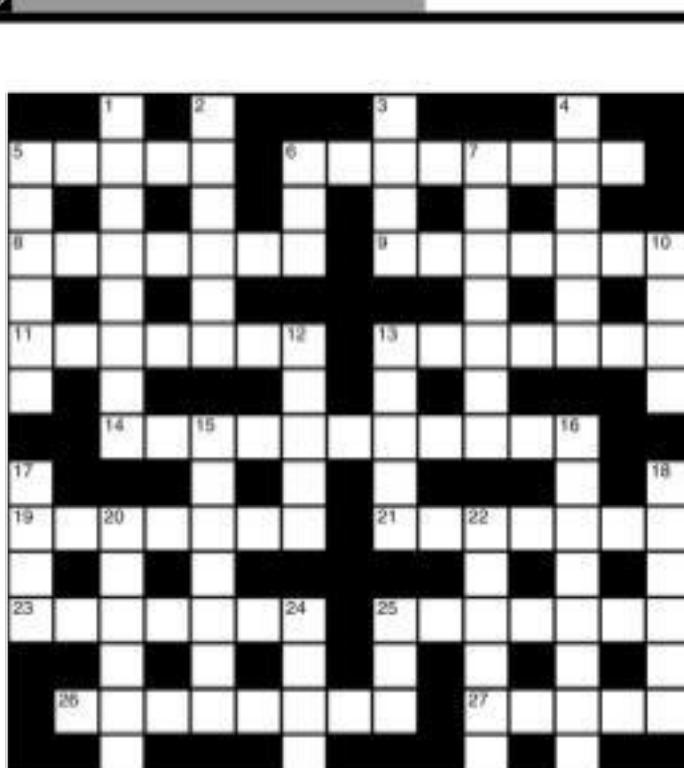
An European was found loitering on the Burdwan station platform on Thursday night, while the Up Punjab mail was waiting. A police officer challenged him and arrested him on suspicion, as on a search being made on his person, an iron hook was found concealed under his coat. He had also Rs 150 in his possession. Intimation of his arrest was communicated to the C.I.D. who left for Burdwan and brought the European under escort by the No. 6 Down Express last night. There was persistent rumour that this European was suspected to be the assassin of Colonel Tufnell, who was murdered in the Punjab Mail between Howrah and Burdwan. The police are making all sorts of enquiries to ascertain if the arrested European is the culprit.

### AIR SERVICES WITH THE DOMINIONS

LONDON, Dec 18  
Mr Sleeman, Secretary of the Australian Aero Club, lecturing in London on the possibilities of air services with the Dominions, said that it seemed imperative that air transport should be run in conjunction with the existing transport organisations. It could never be more than a high speed adjunct to the railway and shipping services. He predicted a ten-day airship service between England and Australia in the near future. Mr Chalmers Mitchell expressed the opinion that commercial aviation was a greater necessity to the Empire than to any other country. He enlarged upon the possibilities of bringing the Dominions' statesmen closer together.

### HORSE BREEDING IN MYSORE

Bangalore, Dec 18  
A report from the Kunigal stud farm which is maintained by the Mysore Government, under the control of the Chief Commandant of Mysore troops, states that on July 1 last, there were 13 stallions, 132 mares and 125 foals in the farm as against 15 stallions, 144 mares and 111 foals in the previous year. One stallion, Precious, died of old age during the year. The value of the stock on hand is estimated at Rs 1,37,979 excluding the value of six stallions presented to the farm. Seven thoroughbreds of the farm were sold in Calcutta for Rs 1,93,000 at an average price of Rs 757, as against Rs 2,603 realised in 1918-19. The Government has noted with satisfaction that locally bred horses find a good sale in the Calcutta market.



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

SOLUTION FOR 12 DECEMBER



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

#### ACROSS

- 5 Country set? (5)  
6/24/21 Show clue for Tom's tricycle? (8,4,7)
- 8 Note taken badly – it may suggest exposure (4,3)
- 9 Plebald surprisingly walking upright (7)
- 11 Extracts energy, legal up to a point (7)
- 13 With internal publicity, confronts illusions (7)
- 14 Bet tall girl, 21, gets 6 24 21 prize (11)
- 19 View five siblings on the air, or thousands on 6 24 21 (7)
- 21 See 6
- 23 Gloss given by oil company account (7)
- 25 Outlying motorway cuts through ruined Exeter (7)
- 26 Expose yourself to the mafia

#### in brief public assembly (5,3)

- 10 When hot, follows Latin beat (4)
- 12 References heard for positions (5)
- 13 Sacked or let off (5)
- 15 Here in France, caught the French descendants in cold weather? (7)
- 16 Gnarly old tree I hung around (8)
- 17 House-sitter keeps applications (4)
- 18 Matures, holds on, and settles (6)
- 20 Suppresses queens, replacing English nationalist with liberals (6)
- 22 Recognise description of fake diamonds? (6)
- 24 See 6 Across
- 25 Retreat from eager beaver's bossiness at first (3)



Scaling up of electronic manufacturing in the country can alone contribute \$1 trillion to the economy

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD  
COMMUNICATIONS AND IT MINISTER

## THUMBNAILS

**RBI reviews economic situation:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said its central board on Friday reviewed the current economic situation in the backdrop of global and domestic challenges. The central board met under the chairmanship of Governor Shaktikanta Das through video conferencing. It was the 586th meeting of the central board. "The board reviewed the current economic situation in the backdrop of global and domestic challenges and various areas of operations of the Reserve Bank including the customer education initiatives and resolution of customer complaints," it said in a statement.

PTI

**EPL receives global recognition:** EPL Limited (formerly known as Essel Propack Limited), one of the largest specialty packaging companies, received global recognition from the Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR), USA for its platinum tube with an HDPE closure. EPL MD & CEO Sudhanshu Vats said, "This recognition will motivate us to develop more innovative and sustainable solutions and consciously reduce our carbon footprint." SNS

**Keventer eStore:** Kolkata-based food & beverages company Keventer Agro on Friday announced the launch of online food & beverage platform ~ Keventer eStore app. With the launch of Keventer eStore, customers can now order from a wide range of Keventer products from the safety of indoors and get it home delivered at just a few clicks of a button, said a Press statement issued by the company.

SNS

**Daimler pact:** Daimler India Commercial Vehicles (DICV), manufacturer of the made-for-India brand BharatBenz, has signed MoU with 18 leading banks/NBFcs to deliver greater financing flexibility and convenience. Adequate finance schemes have long been a key challenge for the CV industry and the impact of Covid-19 has made it even more difficult to secure loans, the company said.

SNS

**Sharp solutions:** Sharp Business Systems (India) Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned Indian subsidiary of Sharp Corporation, has rolled out a special, integrated package of workplace solutions keeping in mind the requirements of working professionals operating remotely in the times of Covid-19, according to a Press release. SNS

**Mynta:** Mynta's 13th edition of End of Reason Sale (EORS) will be held from 20 to 24 December. Shoppers can look forward to choosing from 9 lakh styles, presented by over 3,000 brands. It is slated to cater to over 4 million unique customers, said a Press release.

SNS

**MG Motor to hike prices by up to 3%**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

MG Motor India today said it will increase prices of its vehicles by up to three per cent from January to offset the adverse impact of higher input cost.

The company also said it will introduce a seven-seater version of its Hector Plus model next month.

In a statement, MG Motor India said it would "undertake a price revision across its product range in view of the miscellaneous cost increase. The price hike will range up to 3 per cent, depending on the model and will be applicable from 1 January 2021". MG Motor India current-

# RIL, BP start gas production from Asia's deepest project

Located at a water depth of greater than 2,000 metres, it is the deepest offshore gas field in Asia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

**R**eliance Industries and its partner BP plc of the UK today announced the commencement of natural gas production from Asia's deepest project, putting the second wave of discoveries in the KG-D6 block onstream.

The production started from ultra-deepwater R-Cluster, the first of the three deepsea projects Reliance-BP are developing in the eastern offshore block, the two firms said in a statement.

Reliance and BP are developing three deepwater gas projects in block KG D6 ~ R Cluster, Satellites Cluster and MJ ~ which together are expected to meet about 15 per cent of India's gas demand by 2023.

"These projects will utilise the existing hub infrastructure in KG-D6 block," it said.

Reliance is the operator of KG D6 with a 66.67 per cent participating interest and BP holds a 33.33 per cent stake.

R-Cluster is the first of

## NEW MILESTONE

► The production started from ultra-deepwater R-Cluster, the first of the three deepsea projects Reliance-BP are developing in the eastern offshore block.

► R-Cluster is the first of



bines our expertise in commissioning gas projects expeditiously, under some of the most challenging geographical and weather conditions".

"This is a significant milestone in India's energy landscape, for a cleaner and greener gas-based economy. Through our deep-water infrastructure in the Krishna Godavari basin, we expect to produce gas and meet the growing clean energy requirements of the nation."

BP chief executive Bernard Looney said: "This start-up is another example of the possibility of our partnership with Reliance, bringing the best of both companies to help meet India's rapidly expanding energy needs. Growing India's own production of cleaner-burning gas to meet a significant portion of its energy demand, these three new KG D6 projects will support the country's drive to shape and improve its future energy mix".

Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Limited, said: "We are proud of our partnership with BP that com-

the three fields is expected to be around 30 mmscmd by 2023, which is expected to be about 25 per cent of India's domestic production and will help reduce the country's dependence on imported gas.

Gas from R-Series field was previously expected in June but Covid-19 lockdown disrupted the supply chain and the company could not complete the project in time.

R-Cluster will have a peak output of 12 mmscmd, while Satellites will produce a maximum of 7 mmscmd. MJ field will start production in the third quarter of 2022 and will have a peak output of 12 mmscmd.

Reliance in November last year auctioned the first set of 5 mmscmd of gas from the newer discoveries in the KG-D6 block by asking bidders to quote a price (expressed as a percentage of the dated Brent crude oil rate), supply period and the volume of gas required. Considering the current average Brent price of \$50 per barrel, the gas will cost around \$4.2 per million British thermal unit.

Peak gas production from

## Centre to expand capacity of DSP & IISCO Steel Plant

DEBJAYOTI CHAKRABORTY  
BURNPUR/DURGAPUR,  
18 DECEMBER

Barely five months before the assembly polls in West Bengal, Union steel minister Dhanendra Pradhan today, during his visit to Bumprur and Durgapur, announced brownfield expansion of IISCO Steel Plant (ISP) and Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP) and ruled out any plans of closure of Alloy Steel Plant (ASP).

His statement seems very significant as the local leadership of BJP, which had leads in all the nine assembly constituencies of Paschim Bardhaman district in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, feels the pressure of reviving and modernising the Central public sector units with two sitting MPs in Asansol and Durgapur.

About five years ago, during the launch of commercial production of Rs 18,000-crore modernised IISCO Steel Plant by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Asansol, the then Union steel minister Narendra Singh Tomar had announced the expansion of ISP and DSP by SAIL as per Vision-2030 of SAIL, but since then there has been hardly any progress.

"As per the Vision 2030 of PM Narendra Modi, the steel production target has been pegged at 300 million tons from around 150 million tons at present and to reach that target Durgapur Steel Plant and IISCO Steel Plant will play the lead role. That's why I have physically come here to make a primary assessment of these two projects," Pradhan said. He added that the expansion will further improve the socio-economic scenario of this region.

The Centre plans to pump in Rs 10 lakh crore to achieve the target of annual production of 300 million tons by 2030. At present India is the second largest producer of steel after China.

According to the expansion plan, SAIL will invest Rs 25,000 crore in Durgapur Steel Plant to enhance its steel-making capacity from 2 million tons to present 9 million tons and Rs 17,000 crore in ISP to enhance its steel-making capacity to 5.9 million tons from 2.9 million tons at present. The combined investment for these two projects will be around Rs 40,000 crore and will be one of the biggest Central investments in the state.

During the week, the Sensex rallied 861.68 points or 1.86 per cent, while the Nifty surged 246.70 points or 1.82 per cent.

Continuing their buying spree, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) purchased shares worth a net Rs 2,355.25 crore on Thursday, according to provisional exchange data.

FPIs have been net buyers in the domestic capital markets in each session this month so far, following record inflows of Rs 60,358 crore in November.

Domestic equities recovered from today's low in tandem with recovery in banking stocks. IT index was top performer today with strong buying in many IT counters

and TCS.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, ONGC, HDFC Bank, Maruti, Bajaj Finserv and Bharti Airtel were among the main losers, skidding up to 3.30 per cent.

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The 30-share BSE Sensex finished at a record

## FPIs ON BUYING SPREE

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► The 30-share BSE Sensex finished at a record

due to strong performance and upbeat commentary from Accenture.

"Record FPIs flows remain as a key driving force for the market despite DILs remaining net sellers. Strong prospects of earnings recovery, satisfactory progress on vaccina-

tion along with consistent improvement in recovery rate from Covid-19 cases, weak dollar and depressed interest rate scenario continue to act as key tailwinds for Indian equities to attract FPIs flows," said Binod Modi, head-strategy at Reliance Securities.

46,960.69 points, up 70.35 points or 0.15 per cent. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 19.85 points or 0.14 per cent to 13,760.55 points ~ its new closing record.

Meanwhile, the rupee appreciated by 3 paise to close at 73.56 against the US dollar today.

BSE IT, teck, consumer durables, healthcare, basic materials and FMCG indices climbed as much as 1.70 per cent, while telecom, oil and gas, realty, finance and power closed with losses.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices underperformed the benchmark, shedding up to 0.35 per cent.

Global markets were mixed as investors monitored the UK-EU Brexit talks as well as negotiations for fresh stimulus in the US.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Seoul ended on a positive note, while Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo were in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a mixed note in early deals.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude futures slipped 0.35 per cent to \$51.32 per barrel.

The rupee appreciated by 3 paise to close at 73.56 against the US dollar today.

## New textile policy on anvil: Irani

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

The textiles ministry is bringing to fore a structure under which the production linked incentive scheme for technical textiles and manmade fibre segment will be rolled out, Union minister Smriti Irani said today. She said the new textile policy is on the anvil, observing that the previous national textile policy was unveiled two decades ago.

"We are currently on the anvil of also bringing to the fore the new Indian textile policy, the last time India had a textile policy was two decades ago," Irani, minister for textiles and women & child development, said while virtually addressing Assocham Foundation Week 2020.

Highlighting the impact of agricultural reforms on Indian industry, Irani said: "The Government of India in a determined effort has ensured that the MSP operations undergo with the help of technology and those who participate in the MSP operation receive direct benefit transfer of their funds in their bank accounts.

"In 2013-14, in the cotton segment, the MSP operations



were only worth Rs 90 crore while last year, the MSP operations in the cotton segment alone reached a value in total of Rs 28,500 crore."

This season, in the cotton segment MSP operations worth Rs 14,659 crore have already been undertaken and 9.63 lakh farmers producing cotton in the country have directly received into their bank accounts an amount of Rs 11,799 crore. This has been done in only two months, said the minister. She said this means when we look at the policy reforms, the idea called Aatmanirbhar Bharat cannot come to a fruition when we work in silos.

"So while on one hand the Government of India undertakes agricultural reforms, on the other hand we leverage technology to provide farm support and undertake MSP operations," said the minister.

try in disposing surplus sugar stocks". He said the sugar output is expected to rise by 20 per cent in the current marketing year.

Goyal said the food ministry will also clear the subsidy worth Rs 5,361 crore of previous marketing year, to mills pertaining to exports and ethanol programme.

"We have received the funds, within a week we will disburse," he said, adding that this would help industry in clearing cane arrears.

The minister expressed concern over the sugarcane arrears to farmers, especially in Uttar Pradesh, and asked millers to clear at the earliest. Goyal said the government is regularly trying to support the sector but it was now time that the industry should look at its overall working to find alternative business model that can help in achieving sustainable growth.

## Govt rules out cut in cane prices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 DECEMBER

Let's be practical about it. We cannot reduce the FRP. It's an institutional mechanism going on for several years

PIYUSH GOYAL  
UNION FOOD MINISTER

Union food minister Piyush Goyal today said the government cannot reduce the FRP, the minimum price at which sugar mills buy cane from farmers, and asked the industry to be efficient, profitable and diversify product portfolio with less dependency on the Central subsidy.

Addressing the 86th annual general meeting (AGM) of industry body ISMA, Goyal, who is also the railway and commerce minister, said the government's decision to provide Rs 3,500 crore subsidy for exports of 60 lakh tons of sugar in the current marketing year 2020-21 (October-September) will help in liquidating surplus sugar stocks.

On the industry's demand that the sugarcane purchase price be linked with sugar price realisation, he said it is

not practical to reduce the fair and remunerative price (FRP) and told the industry leaders to produce more ethanol as well as other by-products to boost their income.

"Let's be practical about it. We cannot reduce the FRP. It's an institutional mechanism going on for several years," he said.

Goyal also expressed concern about some mills being profitable and others in bad shape and asked the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) to undertake a gap study to

make mills efficient and competitive.

He said a holistic assessment should be made to find a sustainable solution, which is workable and make industry efficient as well as profitable with "least stress" on the government's subsidy.

On the government's decision to give a subsidy of Rs 3,500 crore to sugar mills for the export of 60 lakh tons of the sweetener during the ongoing marketing year 2020-21, the minister said this will "give some comfort to indus-

try of this year.

In January 2020, cement price was around Rs 349 per 50-kilogram bag, which has now increased to around Rs 420-430 per bag in December 2020.

At the beginning of this year, the per ton rate of steel was at Rs 40,000 and has now risen to Rs 58,000 in December 2020, it said in a statement.

Credai has written to the Prime Minister and all concerned ministries, urging them to "take note of cartelisation by cement and steel manufacturers."

The association, which has more than 20,000 members, requested the government for an immediate intervention in regulating the prices of construction raw materials.

Credai said real estate is one of the worst-hit sectors due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Piyush Goyal, union minister for consumer affairs, food and public distribution, said the abrupt increase in prices is "highly unethical and amounts to unfair and restrictive trade practices" and is "a classic case of cartelisation by cement and steel manufacturers."

The association said cement prices have





*Our challenge now is to ensure that vaccines are treated as a public good accessible and affordable to everyone, everywhere*

UN SECRETARY GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES  
IN AN ADDRESS TO GERMANY'S PARLIAMENT

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	29	23 H
HONG KONG	19	12 H
TOKYO	9	2 CL
LONDON	12	10 R
DUBAI	26	18 H
SAN FRANCISCO	15	8 S
NEW YORK	-1	-6 H
MOSCOW	1	-5 H

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

## THUMBNAILS



Czech Republic's Ester Ledecka speeds down the course during an alpine ski, women's World Cup downhill, in Val d'Isere, France on Friday. ■ AGENCIES

**UK agency agrees not to photograph Meghan:** A news and photography agency has agreed not to take pictures of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and their son, Archie, the High Court in London was told at a hearing Friday. The agreement is part of a settlement between the former Meghan Markle and UK company Splash News and Picture Agency of a case she filed in March over photos of her and her son taken in a Canadian park in January. ■ AP

**Missile deterrence plan:** Japan's Cabinet on Friday adopted a plan to enhance the country's missile deterrence, including development of new cruise missiles, to counter potential threats from China and North Korea. Under the plan, the first major defense policy issued by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's government, Japan is to develop new extended-range missiles that can be fired from destroyers or fighter jets. ■ AP

## US lawmakers urge Biden to extend work authorisations

WASHINGTON, 18 DECEMBER

A group of 60 US lawmakers have urged President-elect Joe Biden to revoke a Trump administration policy and extend the validity of work authorisation documents for H4 visa holders, who are spouses of those possessing H-1B visas, with majority being highly-skilled Indian women.

An H-4 visa is issued by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to immediate family members (spouse and children under 21 years of age) of the H-1B visa holders, most of whom are Indian IT professionals.

It is normally issued to those who have already started the process of seeking employment-based lawful permanent resident status.

We respectfully request that the Department of Homeland Security publish a Federal Register notice on day one of your administration that would extend the validity period of all expired H4 EADs, the members of the US House of Representatives wrote to Biden in a letter on December 16. Biden, a Democrat, is scheduled to be inaugurated as the 46th US President on January 20.

In 2015 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a rule allowing certain H4 dependent spouses of H-1B visa holders to legally seek employment in the US, the letter said.

This rule presented an important step towards rectifying gender disparities in our immigration system, as around 95 per cent of H4 visa holders who have secured work authorisations are women, it added. ■ PTI

# No-deal Brexit very likely outcome: UK PM

Boris Johnson declares that a deal remains out of reach unless the EU is willing to change its stance significantly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON, 18 DECEMBER

**U**K Prime Minister Boris Johnson has warned that a no-deal Brexit is now a "very likely" outcome as a trade agreement with the European Union (EU) remained in a "serious situation" just under two weeks before the December 31 deadline for the end of the transition period.

The negotiators on both sides resumed discussions on Friday but after a phone call with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Thursday night, Johnson declared that a deal remains out of reach unless the EU is willing to change its stance significantly.



The prime minister repeated that little time was left. He said that, if no agreement could be reached, the UK and the EU would part as friends, with the UK trading with the EU on Australian-style terms.

The leaders agreed to remain in close contact, the spokesman added.

An Australian-style exit from the 27-member economic bloc would effectively mean no deal, with both sides trading on World Trade Organisation (WTO) norms and without the considerable quota-free, tariff-free regime that could be in place with a deal.

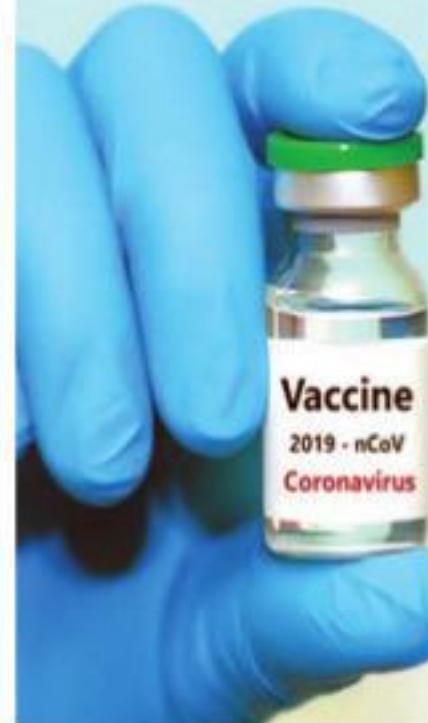
In his statement after the phone call, Von Der Leyen welcomed substantial progress on many issues.

to get the requisite parliamentary go-ahead as an agreement needs ratification on both sides by December 31 unless a compromise is reached over the legality of the final text. The UK and EU are now in a so-called extra mile deadline phase after repeated timelines have been missed amid significant divergences on key areas.

The UK had voted to leave the EU in a referendum in 2016 and under the Withdrawal Agreement, or the so-called divorce pact, they have until December 31 to define their future trading arrangements or part with no deal and start trading on WTO terms with tariffs in many sectors of the economy from January 1, 2021.

## FDA advisors recommend emergency use authorisation for Moderna Covid-19 vaccine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 18 DECEMBER



The US Food and Drug Administration's advisory panel, comprising external experts, has given an emergency use approval to Moderna Covid-19 vaccine, making it the second drug after Pfizer to receive such an authorisation in less than a week.

FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC), made up of independent scientific and public health experts, at its meeting on Thursday voted 20-0 with one abstention to recommend Emergency Use Authorization for the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine mRNA-1273.

The FDA on Friday allowed the emergency use of the country's first Covid-19 vaccine developed by American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech to combat the disease that has killed over 310,000 people in the country.

Commissioner of Food and Drugs Stephen Hahn said that following the positive advisory committee meeting outcome about the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine, the FDA has informed the company that it will rapidly work toward finalisation and issuance of an emergency use authorisation.

The agency has also notified the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Operation Warp Speed, so they can execute their plans for timely vaccine distribution, he said.

We were grateful for the opportunity to present the handling guidance for mRNA-1273 to include local

transport under controlled conditions in a liquid state at 2-8°C (36 to 46°F). In some cases, this may be the only practical means of distribution from clinics and for remote locations.

This important update will help facilitate distribution to the final site of administration. Recognising that shipping and handling of the product can be a barrier to vaccination, Moderna remains committed to supporting efficient distribution, the company said.

Dr. Michael Kurilla, director of the Division of Clinical Innovation at the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, was the only expert who abstained from the voting process.

"I abstained because I'm very uncomfortable with the language. I think in the midst of a pandemic, and with limited vaccine supply available, that blanket statements for individuals 18 years of age and older is just too broad," he said in a statement.

I'm not convinced that for all of those age groups, the benefits do actually outweigh the risks, and I would prefer to see it more targeted towards people at high risk of serious and life-threatening COVID disease," he said.

"I would have preferred to have seen, rather than an emergency use authorisation route -- an expanded access programme. I think it would have given us a lot more opportunities to continue to collect the data," Kurilla said. Congressman Ross Spano said that 150 hospitals in Florida are preparing to receive 300,000 to 400,000 doses of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine, which is set for approval later this week.

ed period and to be faced with fisheries quotas which hugely disadvantaged its own industry. The EU's position in this area was simply not reasonable and if there was to be an agreement it needed to shift significantly, the spokesperson said.

In his statement after the phone call, Von Der Leyen welcomed substantial progress on many issues.

### VACCINE DRIVE



US Vice-President Mike Pence receives a Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine shot at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House complex in Washington on Friday. ■ AGENCIES

## Some states say Pfizer vaccine allotments cut for next week

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
O'FALLON (US), 18 DECEMBER

Several states say they have been told to expect far fewer doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine in its second week of distribution, prompting worries about potential delays in shots for health care workers and long-term care residents.

But senior Trump administration officials on Thursday downplayed the risk of delays, citing a confusion over semantics, while Pfizer said its production levels have not changed.

The first US doses were administered Monday, and already this week, hundreds of thousands of people, mostly health care workers, have

been vaccinated. The pace is expected to increase next week, assuming Moderna gets federal authorisation for its vaccine.

Efforts to help ward off the coronavirus come amid a staggering death toll that surpassed 300,000 on Monday. Johns Hopkins University says about 2,400 people are dying daily in the U.S., which is averaging more than 210,000 cases per day.

In recent days, governors and health leaders in at least 10 states have said the federal government has told them that next week's shipment of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will be less than originally projected.

Little explanation was offered, leaving many state offi-

cials perplexed. This is disruptive and frustrating." Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat, wrote on Twitter Thursday after learning from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that the state's allocation would be cut by 40%. "We need accurate, predictable numbers to plan and ensure on-the-ground success."

Missouri's health director, Dr. Randall Williams, said his state will get 25% to 30% less of the vaccine next week than anticipated. A statement from the Iowa Department of Public Health said its allocation will be reduced by as much as 30%, however we are working to gain confirmation and additional details from our federal partners.

On December 15, Richmond travelled to Georgia for a campaign event with the Ossoff or Warnock campaign teams were in close contact with Richmond, nor were Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, Stacy Abrams or Nikema Williams, who also attended the Tuesday event, she said.

Richmond's interactions with the President-elect happened in open air, were masked and totalled less than 15 consecutive minutes, the CDC's timeframe for close contact. Richmond travelled to Georgia on his own and not with Biden, she said. ■ PTI

## States making bold new legal claims in two Google lawsuits

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 18 DECEMBER

**The latest case came Thursday as dozens of states filed an antitrust lawsuit against Google, alleging that it exercises an illegal monopoly over the online search market, hurting consumers and advertisers**

could include a forced spin-off of its prized Instagram and WhatsApp messaging services. There's not been a cluster of cases of this significance since the 1970s, said William Kovacic, a law professor at George Washington University and a former chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, pointing to the recent spate of antitrust actions by the states, the Justice Department and the FTC. This is a big deal. The DOJ brought an antitrust suit against AT&T in 1974 that led to its breakup.

The new lawsuit announced by Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser echoes the allegations leveled earlier by the Justice Department, pointing to the recent spate of antitrust actions by the states, the Justice Department and the FTC. This is a big deal. The DOJ brought an antitrust suit against AT&T in 1974 that led to its breakup.

And, it claims, the company discriminates against specialised search providers that offer travel, home repair and entertainment services, and denies access to its search advertising management tool to competitors like Bing.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Washington by the attorneys general of 35 states as well as the District of Columbia and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico.

Consumers are denied the benefits of competition, including the possibility of higher quality services and better privacy protections. Advertisers are harmed through lower quality and higher prices that are, in turn, passed along to consumers, Weiser said in announcing the action.

Google's director of economic policy, Adam Cohen, said in a blog post that big companies should be scrutinised and Google is prepared to answer questions about how it works. But this lawsuit seeks to redesign search in ways that would deprive Americans of helpful information and hurt businesses' ability to connect directly with customers, he wrote. We look forward to making that case in court, while remaining focused on delivering a high-quality search experience for our users. Consumer advocates welcomed the suit.

## Biden names key members of his climate team

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 18 DECEMBER

US

President-elect Joe Biden has announced his climate and energy team, which the transition said is ready on day one to advance his agenda and lead the world to confront the undeniable, accelerating and punishing reality of climate change.

The nominees are Congresswoman Deb Haaland as Secretary of Interior, Jennifer Granholm as Energy Secretary, Michael Regan as administrator for Environmental Protection Agency and Brenda Mallory as Chair of the Council of the Council on Environmental Quality.

Biden on Thursday also announced the appointment of Gina McCarthy as his National Climate Advisor and Ali Zaidi as his Deputy National Climate Advisor. Zaidi is the highest-ranking Pakistani-American appointed by Biden in his administration.

"This brilliant, tested, trailblazing team will be ready on day one to confront the existential threat of climate change with a unified national response rooted in science and equity. They share my belief that we have no time to waste to confront the climate crisis, protect our air and drinking water, and deliver justice to communities that have long shouldered the burdens of environmental harms," Biden said in a statement.

Biden is scheduled to be

inaugurated as the 46th US President on January 20. He has vowed to rejoin the Paris climate deal on the first day of his presidency.

The Trump administration last month formally withdrew from the Paris accord, a decision originally announced three years ago. The deal committed the US and 187 other countries to keeping rising global temperatures below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and attempting to limit them even more, to 1.5°C rise.

Observing that the undeniably accelerating, punishing reality of climate change is exacting an incalculable toll on lives and livelihoods in every community across the country, the transition said the team knows that science demands they address climate change immediately and that the response must be grounded in science.

The team will turn the climate crisis into an unpreced-

ented opportunity to create millions of good paying union jobs in communities across the country; powering the economy with clean energy and positioning the US as an exporter of 21st century products; and making the economy stronger and more resilient.

They will work closely with communities who bear the outsized burden of environmental injustice, including Tribal Nations and communities of colour, and young Americans who will live with the long-term consequences of climate change, the transition said.

Haaland is currently serving as Vice-Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources. If confirmed, she will make history as the first-ever Native American Cabinet secretary.

Granholm is a two-term Governor of Michigan whose work during and after her tenure has centred on creating clean energy jobs in America. Her leadership was instrumental in rescuing the US auto industry, saving one million jobs, and preparing Detroit for a clean energy future.

Nominated to serve as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Regan is the current Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. He has served in the EPA under both Democratic and Republican presidents and has a distinguished track record of bringing people

together across the public, private and non-profit sectors to advance environmental justice and seek solutions to environmental and climate challenges.

An accomplished public servant and environmental lawyer, Mallory is former General Counsel to the Council on Environmental Quality and current Director of Regulatory Policy at the Southern Environmental Law Centre. If confirmed, she would be the first African American to hold the position since its creation more than half a century ago.

McCarthy will serve as the first-ever National Climate Advisor, heading up the newly formed White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy, where she will drive an all-of-government approach to combating climate change.

Zaidi, a leading climate expert and longtime advisor to the president-elect, will serve as Deputy National Climate Advisor. He had helped draft and implement the Obama-Biden Administration's Climate Action Plan and negotiate the Paris accord. Zaidi immigrated from Pakistan and grew up in the Rust Belt outside Erie, Pennsylvania.



We need to make sure that the Taliban are not engaged in any terrorist activity

AFGHANISTAN'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN AMBASSADOR ADELA RAZ

AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING ON THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

The Statesman

11

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 19 DECEMBER 2020

# Iran builds at underground N-facility

Move comes amid tensions with the US over its atomic programme, though Iran has not publicly acknowledged it

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI, 18 DECEMBER

**I**ran has begun construction on a site at its underground nuclear facility at Fordo amid tensions with the US over its atomic programme, satellite photos obtained Friday by The Associated Press show.

Iran has not publicly acknowledged any new construction at Fordo, whose discovery by the West in 2009 came in an earlier round of brinkmanship before world powers struck the 2015 nuclear deal with Teheran.

While the purpose of the building remains unclear, any work at Fordo likely will trigger new concern in the waning days of the Trump administration before the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden. Already, Iran is building at its Natanz nuclear facility after a mysterious explosion in July there that Teheran described as a sabotage attack.

"Any changes at this site will be carefully watched as a sign of where Iran's nuclear programme is headed," said Jeffrey Lewis, an expert at the



James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies who studies Iran.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The International Atomic Energy Agency, whose inspectors are in Iran as part of the nuclear deal, also did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The IAEA as yet has not publicly disclosed if Iran informed it of any construction at Fordo.

Construction on the Fordo site began in late September. Satellite images obtained from Maxar Technologies by the AP show the construction taking

place at a northwest corner of the site, near the holy Shiite city of Qom some 90 kilometers southwest of Teheran.

A December 11 satellite photo shows what appears to be a dug foundation for a building with dozens of pillars. Such pillars can be used in construction to support buildings in earthquake zones.

The construction site sits northwest of Fordo's underground facility, built deep inside a mountain to protect it from potential airstrikes. The site is near other support and research-and-development buildings at Fordo.

Among those buildings is Iran's National Vacuum Tech-

nology Center. Vacuum technology is a crucial component of Iran's uranium-gas centrifuges, which enrich uranium.

A Twitter account called Observer IL earlier this week published an image of Fordo showing the construction, citing it as coming from South Korea's Korea Aerospace Research Institute.

The AP later reached the Twitter user, who identified himself as a retired Israeli Defense Forces soldier with a civil engineering background. He asked that his name not be published over previous threats he received online. The Korea Aerospace Research Institute acknowledged taking the satellite photo.

Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the US from Iran's nuclear deal, in which Tehran had agreed to limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Trump cited Iran's ballistic missile programme, its regional policies and other issues in withdrawing from the accord, though the deal focused entirely on Tehran's atomic pro-

gramme.

When the US ramped up sanctions, Iran gradually and publicly abandoned the deal's limits as a series of escalating incidents pushed the two countries to the brink of war at the beginning of the year. Tensions still remain high.

Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran agreed to stop enriching uranium at Fordo and instead make it a "nuclear, physics and technology center."

"This location was a major sticking point in negotiations leading to the Iran nuclear deal," Lewis said. "The US insisted Iran close it while Iran's supreme leader said keeping it was a red line."

Since the deal's collapse, Iran has resumed enrichment there. Shielded by the mountains, the facility also is ringed by anti-aircraft guns and other fortifications. It is about the size of a football field, large enough to house 3,000 centrifuges, but small and hardened enough to lead US officials to suspect it had a military purpose when they exposed the site publicly in 2009.

As of now, Iran is enriching uranium up to 4.5%, in violation of the accord's limit of 3.67%. Iran's parliament has passed a bill that requires Tehran to enrich up to 20%, a short technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. The bill also would throw out IAEA inspectors.

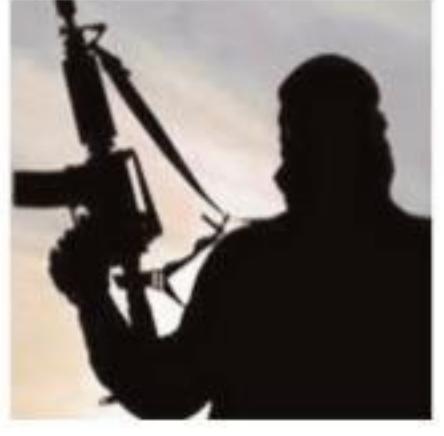
Experts say Iran now has enough low-enriched uranium stockpiled for at least two nuclear weapons, if it chose to pursue them. Iran long has maintained its nuclear programme is peaceful.

While Iranian President Hassan Rouhani opposed the bill, the country's Guardian Council later tweaked and approved it. The bill seeks to pressure European nations to provide relief from crippling US sanctions.

Meanwhile, an Iranian scientist who created its military nuclear programme two decades ago recently was killed in a shooting outside of Tehran. Iran has blamed Israel, which has long been suspected of killing Iranian nuclear scientists over the last decade, for the attack. Israel has not commented on the attack.

## 'Leniency on sanctions against Taliban will be counter-productive'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
UNITED NATIONS,  
18 DECEMBER



and Pakistan abstained.

Through the resolution, the General Assembly pledged its continued support to the government and people of Afghanistan as they rebuild a stable, secure and economically self-sufficient State, free of terrorism, narcotics, transnational organised crime, including trafficking in persons, and corruption, and strengthen the foundations of a constitutional democracy as a responsible member of the international community.

Raz said it was a landmark resolution in underlining the immediate need for a permanent ceasefire and support for the desire and prosperity of every Afghan, a long-lasting peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

These commitments are of particular importance in the overall progress of the peace process, but the international community must remain vigilant on the direct role it plays, she said.

Meanwhile, an Afghan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday met a high-level delegation of the Afghan Taliban, led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and underscored Pakistan's consistent support to an "inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive" political settlement in the war-torn country.

The discussions between the Prime Minister and the Taliban Political Commission delegation focused on the progress in the Afghan peace process and the way forward, the PM Office said in a statement.

The visit of the Taliban Political Commission delegation is part of Pakistan's policy to reach out to key Afghan parties in the Afghan peace process with a view to facilitating the Intra-Afghan Negotiations that commenced in Doha on September 12, 2020.

## Fiji cyclone kills at least 2, destroys dozens of homes



ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SUVA (FIJI), 18 DECEMBER

other homes on the island, which is Fiji's second largest.

The eye of the storm moved through Vanua Levu from about 6 pm Thursday. It missed the capital city Suva and the major tourist hub of Nadi on Fiji's largest island, Viti Levu.

"It's a nightmare," Labasa resident Banuve Lasaga Lusi told Radio New Zealand. "The thunderous sound of the wind and what is flying around is what's frightening."

She said many people's houses had been flattened, with some sheltering under their beds or escaping with just the clothes on their backs.

Authorities said the cyclone was weakening Friday as it moved southeast over some of Fiji's outer islands. However, they warned of danger from flooding.

Fiji's government said that the Rewa River was rising, with rain continuing intermittently. The Rewa skirts Suva and runs through Nausori, where Suva's airport is located.

Many had worried the storm could rival the destruction caused by Cyclone Winston, which killed 44 people and caused widespread damage when it hit in 2016.

The Fiji Times newspaper reported the cyclone had destroyed about 20 homes and a community hall in the village of Tiliva and that homes in other villages had also been damaged or destroyed.

The storm destroyed many

### TASTE OF FREEDOM



A group of schoolboys are escorted by Nigerian military and officials on Friday in Katsina, Nigeria following their release after they were kidnapped earlier this week. More than 300 schoolboys kidnapped last week in an attack on their school in northwest Nigeria, arrived in the capital of Katsina state to celebrate their release. The boys were abducted one week ago from the all-boys Government Science Secondary School in Kankara in Katsina state village.

AP

## 'CAATSA designed not to take punitive action against allies'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 18 DECEMBER



A tough US law which authorises the administration to impose sanctions on countries that purchase major defence hardware from Russia is not aimed at taking punitive actions against friends and allies, a senior American diplomat has said.

Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs R Clark Cooper's remarks on Thursday came after the US on Monday imposed sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act or CAATSA on its NATO ally, Turkey, for procuring Russia's advanced S-400 missile defence system.

The US law known as CAATSA is aimed at pushing back on Russian influence. It primarily deals with sanc-

tions on Russian interests such as its oil and gas industry, defence and security sectors, and financial institutions, following Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 and its alleged meddling in the 2016 US presidential election.

"The CAATSA sanctions

are not designed to be punitive to a partner and ally that has got a sustainment issue or an operation or maintenance issue. We're certainly not looking to disrupt that. Why? Well, we don't want a partner's sovereign defence capabilities to be degraded to put their readiness at risk," Cooper told reporters during a conference call.

He was responding to a question on the possibility of sanctions on India under CAATSA because of the purchase of S-400s from Russia.

In October 2018, India signed a USD 5 billion deal with Russia to buy five units of the S-400 air defence missile systems, notwithstanding warnings from the Trump administration that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanction.

In view of the evolving security scenario in its neigh-

bourhood, India recently requested Russia to explore the possibility of advancing the supply of the interceptor-based missile systems which can destroy incoming hostile aircraft, missiles and even drones at ranges of up to 400 km.

Last year, India made the first tranche of payment of around USD 800 million to Russia for the S-400 missile systems.

Cooper said CAATSA is designed to address new significant acquisitions, procurements of Russian systems that would put at risk anything that would be interoperable with US systems or NATO systems.

I would say that one thing, too, from an Indian perspective in particular, which is why I raised the legacy issue, CAATSA's not, again, designed to take punitive action in that

space. It's to mitigate and prevent the significant addition of high-level, high-tech Russian systems, he asserted.

Cooper said CAATSA sanctions are of a global nature. They are not limited to a particular state or region, and there is no timeline.

There had been questions posed to me and to other colleagues as to we thought sanctions weren't going to be issued to Turkey because nothing had been done in the last few months. That's to just remind that there's no clock (timeline) on the US government applying them, and there's also no blanket waiver either. I know some states have thought or sought that either Congress or the Executive Branch would apply a waiver on sanctions, and I just would offer that is definitely not the case, Cooper said.

The bomb went off after a man driving a motorised rickshaw entered a village in the Gilan district to sell goods and was soon surrounded by kids, according to Wahidullah Jumazada, spokesman for the Ghazni provincial gov-

**Rickshaw bomb kills 15 kids in Afghanistan**

KABUL, 18 DECEMBER

A bomb rigged to a rickshaw killed at least 15 children and wounded 20 others in a Taliban-controlled area in eastern Afghanistan on Friday, a provincial official said, as violence in the war-weary country continued to surge.

The bomb went off after a man driving a motorised rickshaw entered a village in the Gilan district to sell goods and was soon surrounded by kids, according to Wahidullah Jumazada, spokesman for the Ghazni provincial gov-

ernor. He said the casualty toll could rise further. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack and Jumazada said an investigation was underway into why children were targeted.

However, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid sent a message to the media claiming that the explosion was caused by the remains of unexploded ordnance in the area, which the children had allegedly picked up and brought to the merchant. Mujahid gave a lower death toll, saying 12 children were killed.

The conflicting reports could not be reconciled as the area is under Taliban control and off limits to reporters.

Violence in Afghanistan has spiked in recent months even as the Taliban and Afghan government negotiators hold talks in Qatar, trying to hammer out a peace deal that could put an end to decades of war.

Earlier this week, US General Mark Milley, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, held an unannounced meeting with Taliban leaders in Doha, Qatar.

## Shutdown by corona, Berlin restaurant opens for homeless

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BERLIN, 18 DECEMBER

restrictions, shifted gears to help the homeless.

"Other homeless people at the train station told me about this place," Breidaks said, removing a fury black hat with long ear flaps as he sat on a bench in the warm, spacious beer hall near Berlin's landmark Alexanderplatz square. "I came here for hot soup."

It was a restaurant employee who volunteers at a shelter who proposed opening up the shuttered Bavarian-style beer hall, patterned after the famous Munich establishment of the same name, to the homeless.

But on a chilly winter morning this week Breidaks found himself with a free hot meal and a place to warm up, after the German capital's biggest restaurant, the Hofbraeu Berlin, itself closed down due to coronavirus lockdown

and provides the restaurant with welcome income.

In cooperation with the city and two welfare organisations, the restaurant quickly developed a concept to take in up to 150 homeless people in two shifts every day until the end of the winter, and started serving meals on Tuesday. It's only a small number compared with the 3,000 restaurant guests, primarily tourists, who would pack the

establishment during good times. But the spacious halls have proved perfectly suited to bring in the homeless and give them each plenty of space to avoid infections.

In addition to serving food and non-alcoholic drinks and offering the warmth indoors, the restaurant provides its bathrooms for the homeless to wash up, and the GEBEWO and Berlin Kaeltehilfe relief groups have workers on hand to provide counseling and new clothes, if needed.

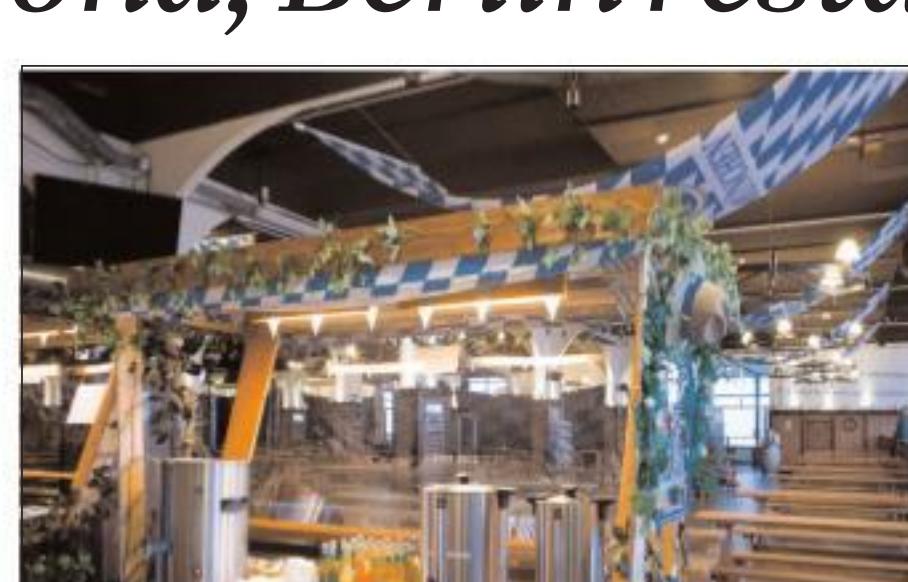
For its new clientele, the restaurant opened a second-floor, wooden-decorated hall, and put up 40 long tables. "We'll offer them something different from the regular soup kitchen food — real dishes on porcelain plates, with different sides, we'll try to offer Christmas-style dishes

with lot of flavors," Schwarz said.

Breidaks came to Germany three months ago looking for work. But he says a promised meat factory job never materialised and he ended up on the streets of Berlin begging for the money needed to replace a stolen passport and buy a bus ticket back home.

He's one of an estimated 2,000 to 12,000 people who remain homeless in this city of 3.6 million, even after another 34,000 were put up in community shelters, hostels and apartments by social services and private welfare groups.

"The corona pandemic has seriously worsened the situation for homeless people, they live in very precarious conditions," said Elke Breitenbach, the Berlin state gov-



ernment's senator for social issues, whose department supports the restaurant-shelter financially.

"They don't have enough to eat and when it's cold they must have places to warm up," Breitenbach added.

On Thursday, the first shivering group that entered the Hofbraeu along with Breidaks were served either Thuringia-style bratwurst with mashed potatoes, sauerkraut and onion sauce, or a vegetarian stew with potatoes, zucchini, bell pepper and carrots. For dessert there was apple strudel with vanilla sauce. For Breidaks, that was more than he had expected after spending a night with sub-zero temperatures huddled up next to the walls of a big department store on Alexanderplatz.



## SON ALSO RISES

Wayne Rooney's 11-year-old son Kai (photo, left) has signed for the Manchester United academy. Rooney posted a picture on social media beside his wife Coleen with Kai signing on the dotted line and his caption read: "Proud day. Kai signing for Manchester United. Keep up the hard work son."

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

## THUMBNAILS

Kohli's explanation: Virat Kohli says Indian fans taunting Steve Smith at last year's World Cup "wasn't right" and that's why he pleaded with them to stop. The gesture during a pool game earned him plenty of admirers as Smith and David Warner suffered abuse.

**Warne's tip:** Shane Warne said on Thursday pink balls should be used in all Test matches and not just day-night games as it does a lot more than the red one and offers something to bowlers. He also said it was better for spectators as "it looks fantastic on television."

**SA cricket:** Domestic cricket in South Africa has been put on hold following a "second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic." Cricket South Africa on Thursday confirmed the postponement of round six of the Domestic Series. Some host stadiums are in Covid-19 hotspots.

**New job:** Dav Whatmore was on Thursday appointed head coach of Nepal. The former batsman, who had played seven Tests for Australia, previously worked as a coach in three South Asian nations. Nepal will be his fourth country in the region.

**Mathews out:** Sri Lanka have named a 22-player squad for their Test series in South Africa and at home against England, though they will be without Angelo Mathews for the first of those because of an injury. Dimuth Karunaratne will skipper the weakened side.

**Worrall deal:** Right-arm fast bowler Dan Worrall will return to play for Gloucestershire in 2021. The Australia international will be eligible to play in all formats in 2021 having previously played in the County Championship and Royal London Cup for them.

**Akhtar's charge:** After Mohammad Amir's retirement, Shoaib Akhtar has claimed he too was not treated well by the Pakistan Cricket Board management during the 2011 World Cup when he was about to call it quits. Amir alleged "mentally torture" by the PCB.

**Double strike:** Marcus Rashford scored twice as Manchester United extended their 100 per cent record on the road, rallying to win 3-2 at the Premier League's bottom club Sheffield United on Thursday. United have now won all six away league games so far this season.

**Roma rise:** Roma rose to fourth place in Serie A with a 3-1 home victory over relegation-threatened Torino on Thursday, aided by an early red card for the visitors. Torino back Wifried Singo was shown a second yellow card to leave his side depleted.

**Plan rejected:** Premier League clubs again rejected a motion to allow five substitutes this season after a third vote on the matter was held at the year's final shareholders' meeting despite repeated calls from the likes of Jurgen Klopp to allow more rotation during games.

**Sood Memorial Cricket Tournament:** Deadly spell of bowling by Delhi Ranji medium pacer Kulwant Khejroliya (8-0-35-4) enabled LB Shastri CC beat Swami Shraddhanand College enter the final of 30th All India Om Nath Sood Memorial Cricket Tournament after 5 years.

## Bowlers put India in control

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ADELAIDE, 18 DECEMBER



Senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin produced one of his most memorable overseas performances as Indian bowlers collectively terrorised Australia into submission, bowling them out for 191 on the second day of the opening Day/Night Test here on Friday. Courtesy Ashwin's 18-3-55-4, India successfully managed to neutralise a sub-par first innings score of 244. Rival skipper Tim Paine (75 off 99 balls) was the only home batsman to show stomach for a fight.

With a handy first innings lead of 53 runs, India found their opener Prithvi Shaw's defence being breached again before ending the day at 9/1 -- with an overall lead of 62 runs.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah (21-7-52-2) played the night watchman's role after Shaw's dismissal, giving company to Mayank Agarwal (5) when stumps were drawn.

Indian magnificent bowling effort during the day could be

segregated into three phases.

In the early afternoon, Bumrah bowled the fuller length to make the first inroads.

Ashwin then took charge of late afternoon with his perfect length and made use of the additional bounce to blow away the middle-order.

And then under lights, Umesh Yadav (16-1-540-3) was brilliant with the old pink kookaburra as he bowled back of the length to get rid of the dangerous Marnus Labuschagne and Pat Cummins.

Mohammed Shami (17-4-

41-0) was also immaculate with his length but he was let down by the fielders as the only glitch in their second day's performance was a poor catching effort.

But Virat Kohli wouldn't mind even four dropped chances as his bowlers forced the Australian batsman to go into a defensive shell in their 72.1 overs on second day.

It was one of the most 'Un-Australian' batting by a team that prides itself on intent.

Save for Labuschagne (47 off 119 balls), who couldn't capi-

talise on three reprieves, and skipper Paine, no other batsman seemed to know how to bat on a surface, which picked pace on the second day.

After Bumrah removed the two openers in the first session, Ashwin did the star turn in the second session.

Ashwin set up Smith with a few that were flighted with the angle and then bowled one that straightened and bounced a touch more. Smith, expecting turn, squared up and Ajinkya Rahane at first slip made no mistake.

Travis Head (7) wasn't reading Ashwin well and the left-

## SCOREBOARD

INDIA 1ST INNINGS: 224	Extras: (lb 3)	3
AUSTRALIA 1ST INNINGS	TOTAL: (72.1 Ov, RR: 2.64)	191
M Wade lbw b Bumrah	8	
J Burns lbw b Bumrah	8	
M Labuschagne lbw b Yadav	47	
S Smith c Rahane b Ashwin	1	
Travis Head c & b Ashwin	7	
C Green c Kohli b Ashwin	11	
Tim Paine not out	73	
P Cummins c Rahane b Yadav	0	
M Starc run out (Shaw/Saha)	15	
N Lyon c Kohli b Ashwin	10	
J Hazlewood c Pujara b Yadav	8	
Pat Cummins 3,2,6		

INDIA 2ND INNINGS	3
Prithvi Shaw b Cummins	4
Mayank Agarwal not out	5
Jasprit Bumrah not out	0
TOTAL: (6 Ov, RR: 1.50)	9/1
BOWLING: M Starc 3,1,3,0	
Pat Cummins 3,2,6	

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Perez to race with Red Bull: Mexican driver Sergio Perez will race alongside Max Verstappen at Red Bull next season, the Formula One team said Friday. Perez, who will replace Alexander Albon, became Mexico's first F1 winner in 50 years with his victory this month at the Sakhir Grand Prix in Bahrain. Red Bull said that historic performance helped make Perez the favored choice over Albon.

## New Zealand beats Pakistan by 5 wickets in 1st T20

AGENCIES

AUCKLAND, 18 DECEMBER



who made 34, and Mitchell Santner, who was 12 not out at the end.

Duffy, a right armer from Otago province who generates late swing and bounce from an energetic action, took his first wicket with his fourth ball in international cricket and took two more with the fifth and sixth balls of his second over.

Always in the action, he missed his hat trick from the first ball of his third over and was also denied a magnificent outfield catch when he flew high at deep third man to grab a one-hander from the

bowling of Blair Tickner only for the television umpire to rule his hand had grazed the boundary rope.

Returning in the 18th over, Duffy took his fourth wicket by dismissing captain Shadab Khan for 42. At that stage, Duffy had 4-13.

"There was a bit of hot and cold stuff in there," Duffy said. "To be honest, on debut I was just hoping not to get hit all over the park."

The pitch at Eden Park was a quick one when it was used in the first T20 between New Zealand and the West Indies a month ago. But it was

slower Friday and, with the ball stopping, playing shots early was difficult.

Duffy and fellow New Zealand quicks Scott Guggelein and Blair Tickner crowded the Pakistani batsmen with full deliveries and also surprised them with bounce.

Determined to play their shots, the Pakistani top order batsmen gave up their wickets cheaply as they hit out before taking the pace of the pitch. Several fell to catches in front of the wicket as the ball held up.

Left-arm spinner Santner bowled the first over and Duffy had the first wicket in the

Duffy returned to claim the wicket of Shadab, who was caught in the deep by Sodhi.

Pakistan was in trouble at 79-6 but Faheem Ashraf hit 31 from 18 balls to boost the total.

New Zealand also had nervous moments, falling to 2-21 before Seifert and Glenn Phillips (23) put the innings on an even keel. Seifert and Mark Chapman (34) then added 55.

**Brief scores:** Pakistan 153/9 (Shadab Khan 42; Jacob Duffy 4/33) lost to New Zealand 156/5 (Tim Seifert 57; Haris Rauf 3/29)

## Why ban on Russia is just a 'farcical facade'

AGENCIES  
LOS ANGELES, 18 DECEMBER

The Court of Arbitration for Sport's decision to halve Russia's doping ban on Thursday has been decried as a "tragedy" for the global fight against drug cheats by several bodies.

Leading the criticism was United States Anti-Doping Agency chief executive Travis Tygart, who said the CAS decision - which cut Russia's proposed four-year ban to two years - represented a "significant loss" for the World Anti-Doping Agency and clean athletes.

He added: "While the first

instinct is to express obvious shock, the fact is we should have all seen this coming. Wada and Russian government officials could still attend the Games if invited by host nations. Similar rules were in effect for Russian athletes at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.

Tygart was not alone in being upset.

Global Athlete and The Athletes Association said: "The fact that Russian athletes can complete as 'Neutral Athletes from Russia' is another farcical facade that makes a mockery of the system."

"If athletes from Russia can still compete, it is not a sanction. Russia has not been

banned; they have simply been rebranded."

British Paralympic silver medallist Ali Jawad added: "The events of the last five years, the lack of athlete voices, and the constant compromise with Russia have made me realise that Wada is not fit for purpose."

"It's riddled with so many loopholes," Tygart said. "IOC members are exempt from the ban. Athlete support personnel and government officials are exempt from it. There's no consequence on those folks even if they were involved with directly perpetrating fraud in the past."

Both sides were unable to break the deadlock in the first half as they managed to cancel out each other's threat. As a result, no shots on target were registered.

NorthEast nearly had the chance to go ahead in the 18th minute when Idrissa Sylla and Appiah combined well at the edge of the box. However, the Ghanaian striker placed his effort wide. Jamshedpur, too, had

their chance to grab the lead and it arrived just before the break. Alexander Lima found Stephen Eze in the box with a long ball but the towering defender failed to get his header on target.

NorthEast started the second half with great intensity in pursuit of the opening goal. But a quick counter-attack from Jamshedpur saw them concede first.

Isaac Vannmalsanwma and Jackichand Singh linked up well in the opposition box. The latter then swung in a cross for an unmarked Jadhav, who found the back of the net with ease.

## Lewandowski wins men's Fifa prize

THE INDEPENDENT  
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season won yet another treble - consisting of the Women's Champions League, Division 1 Feminine and Coupe de France Feminine.

Elsewhere at the ceremony, Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford won the Fifa Foundation Award for his efforts to combat child food poverty during the

Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Son Heung-min won the Puskas Award for best goal, for his incredible solo effort against Burnley in the Premier League in December 2019.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was unimpressed by the decision to allow Premier League teams to have nine players on the bench instead of seven, saying Friday it wasn't a compromise for rival clubs again voting against the use of five substitutes.

England's top division is the only major league in Europe this season to have not increased the number of substitutes allowed to be made during a match from three to five. Even England's lower leagues and the FA Cup now allow five subs to be brought on.

Klopp has been a vocal critic, saying using only a maximum of three substitutes is impacting player welfare amid a season when there have been more muscle injuries.

On Friday, a day after Premier League clubs allowed a bench of nine players for games but rejected for a third time the chance to make the change from three to five in-game subs, Klopp's mood was one of puzzlement.

In Europe, all the leagues have it so there must be a good reason for it in all these leagues there is competition, no?

In all these leagues, every

club wants to stay in the league, some clubs want to win the league, but for sure all of them want to stay in the league.

Here is the only country, pretty much the only league, where we do it differently.

Aston Villa, Burnley, Crystal Palace, Fulham, Leicester, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield United, West Ham and Wolverhampton Wanderers were the teams that voted against the change to five in-match subs, having the view that making the switch would benefit the clubs with bigger squads.

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has also criticized the rule because of player-welfare reasons, yet

opted to make no substitutions in his team's 2-0 win over Fulham on Dec. 5.

Similarly, Klopp didn't make a single change during his team's 2-1 win over Tottenham in a match between the top two in the league on Wednesday. The last time Liverpool made no substitutions in a game was in 2004.

Klopp made that decision despite his team having to play on Saturday lunchtime at Crystal Palace, in the earliest kickoff time in the 14th round of league games.

He has previously complained about having to play Wednesday night in the Champions League and then in the league on Saturday, say-</