



US LIFTS CURBS
ON CONTACTS
WITH TAIWAN



'TRUMP COMMITTED
IMPEACHABLE
OFFENCES'

P9



ALTERED CONTOURS
OF MOBILISATION

SHAME: PLAYERS
SLAM RACIST ABUSE

P11



P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Mist/shallow fog in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 17 and 06 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 59%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 16.2°C (-4) Min: 07.8°C (+1)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

07:15 hrs 17:44 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

06:23 hrs 15:51 hrs

THUMBNAILS



During the Kolkata International Film Festival at Nandan in Kolkata on Sunday. SNS (P4)

Debris found after Indonesia plane crash: Indonesian rescuers pulled out body parts, pieces of clothing and scraps of metal from the Java Sea early Sunday morning, a day after a Boeing 737-500 with 62 people onboard crashed shortly after takeoff from Jakarta, officials said. Officials were hopeful they were honing in on the wreckage of Sriwijaya Air Flight 182 after sonar equipment detected a signal from the aircraft.

P9

Bird flu scare: Amidst an avian influenza scare in various states, officials in Uttar Pradesh have sounded an alert, with the Kanpur Zoological Park being closed for the public till further orders. Fresh avian deaths were reported from various parts of the country, with the Centre confirming a bird flu outbreak in seven states.

P5

SC ruling on Aadhaar scheme review today: The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce on Monday its verdict on pleas seeking review of a verdict upholding the Centre's flagship Aadhaar scheme as constitutionally valid but striking down some of its provisions, including its linking with bank accounts, mobile phones and school admissions.

Mamata pledges free Covid vaccination

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 10 JANUARY

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has announced free Covid vaccination for all citizens of West Bengal.

In an open letter to frontline workers, Miss Banerjee indicated that her government has the vision of providing the vaccine to every citizen of the state free of any charge

In an open letter to frontline workers, Miss Banerjee indicated that her government has the vision of providing the vaccine to every citizen of the state free of any charge," she wrote.

Earlier, at a public meeting, Miss Banerjee had said that her government was fully prepared to procure Covid-19 vaccines. The nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive is expect-

ment is making arrangements for reaching the vaccine to all people of the state free of any charge," she wrote.

Earlier, at a public meeting, Miss Banerjee had said that her government was fully prepared to procure Covid-19 vaccines. The nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive is expect-

Co-Win foundation of inoculation drive: The Centre on Sunday said Co-WIN, an online platform for monitoring Covid-19 vaccine delivery, shall form the foundation for the anti-coronavirus inoculation drive which shall be citizen-centric so that the vaccine is available anytime and anywhere.

India will launch its Covid-19 vaccination drive from 16 January. As part of preparations for the nationwide rollout of Covid-19 vaccine, the Health Ministry on Sunday held a video conference with officials from states and UTs to discuss feedback on the Co-WIN software and its operational use.

ed to start from next week.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a meeting via video conferencing with chief ministers of all states on Monday over the vaccination roll-out plan.

The Centre has stated that in the Covid vaccine

roll-out, priority will be given to the healthcare workers and the frontline workers who are estimated to be around 3 crores followed by those above 50 years of age and the under-50 population groups with co-morbidities, numbering around 27 crore.

18,444 new Covid cases, 201 deaths

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY

India reported 18,444 new cases of Covid-19 while 201 people succumbed to the deadly virus in the last 24 hours.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare data revealed that a total of 1,04,50,284 people have been affected with the virus so far. While the active cases stand at 2,23,335, a total of 1,00,75,950 have recovered and have been discharged after battling Covid-19.

Maharashtra remains the worst affected state with total cases mounting to 19,15,529 while a total of 50,027 people have died so far of which 57 succumbed to the virus in the last 24

FACT FILE

TOTAL CASES
1,04,50,284

ACTIVE CASES
2,23,335

NEW CASES
18,645

NEW RECOVERIES
19,299

TOTAL DEATHS
1,50,999

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8:00 A.M.
SUNDAY 10 JANUARY 2021

Farmers raze CM Khattar's pro-agri laws rally venue

KARNAL, 10 JANUARY

Protesting farmers on Sunday vandalised the venue of a 'kisan mahapanchayat' programme at Kaimali village here where Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar was to address people to highlight the benefits of the Centre's three agriculture laws. The Haryana Police used water cannons and lobbed teargas shells to prevent the farmers from marching towards the village.

The farmers, however, reached the venue and damaged the makeshift helipad where Khattar's chopper was to land despite elaborate security arrangements made by the police.

They later took control of the helipad and squatted on it. Some protesters also uprooted the tiles of the helipad.

The farmers disrupted the kisan mahapanchayat programme by damaging the stage and breaking chairs, tables and flower pots at the venue. In the melee, stones were also pelted as police personnel ran for cover.

Angry farmers, mainly comprising youths, damaged the stage, tent and speakers at the venue. They also tore BJP hoardings and uprooted banners in the presence of policemen. Under the banner of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni), farmers, who have been demanding that the laws be repealed, had earlier announced to oppose the 'kisan mahapanchayat'.

DETAILS ON PAGE 5

Maha govt reduces security cover of rivals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 10 JANUARY



not impact his plans to travel and meet people.

However, state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh rejected the Opposition BJP's charge and said the security of political leaders was reviewed as per the prevailing threat perception.

As per a government notification issued on 8 January, Fadnavis will now get 'Y-plus' security with escort, instead

of the 'Z-plus' cover. The security of his wife Amruta Fadnavis and daughter Divija has been downgraded from 'Y-plus with escort' to 'X' category. Former Uttar Pradesh governor Ram Naik will now get 'Y' cover instead of 'Y-plus'.

MNS chief Raj Thackeray's security cover has been downgraded from 'Z' to 'Y plus with escort'. The security covers of BJP leader and former

chief minister Narayan Rane, state BJP chief Chandrakant Patil and senior party leader Sudhir Mungantiwar have been withdrawn. Rane had 'Y-plus' security. Besides, the security of state Lokayukta M T Tahiliani has been downgraded from 'Z' to 'Y'.

The government, as per the notification, has upgraded the security of two persons, downgraded of 11, withdrawn of 16, while 13 new people have got security cover.

Prominent among the new persons to get security are Sumitra Pawar, wife of state Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, and Varun Sardesai, secretary of the Yuva Sena and nephew of CM Uddhav Thackeray's wife Rashmi Thackeray.

BEATDOWN



Farmers organise a dangal (wrestling match) during protests against the new agricultural laws at Ghaziabad in the Capital on Sunday. DEEPAK

Door-to-door survey to gauge Covid impact on students

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY



COVID-WORRY

► The Ministry has recommended relaxing detention norms to prevent drop-outs this year as well as a slew of measures to address learning loss due to the coronavirus-induced shutdown of schools.

► The move is particularly aimed at admission and education of migrant children who have been affected during the pandemic

ing the pandemic, they said. "In order to mitigate the impact of challenges thrown by the Covid-19 pandemic for out-of-school children, it was felt necessary for every state and UT to devise a proper strategy for preventing increased dropouts, lower enrolments, loss of learning

and deterioration in the gains made in providing universal access, quality and equity in the recent years," a senior ministry official said.

"The states and UTs have been advised to carry out proper identification of Out-of-School Children (OoS) for 6 to 18 years age group

through a comprehensive door-to-door survey and prepare an action plan for their enrolment," the official added.

The Ministry has also issued guidelines for offering support to students during the closure of schools and when they reopen.

"To ensure that school-going children have access to education with quality and equity and to minimize the impact of the pandemic on school education across the country, the Ministry of Education has prepared and issued detailed guidelines on steps to be taken by the States and UTs during school closure and when the schools reopen," the official said.

Exploring the option of classroom-on-wheels and classes in small groups at

the village level, increasing the access of children to online and digital resources, use of TV and radio to reduce learning losses and ensuring easy and timely access to the provisions of uniforms, textbooks and mid-day meals are among the recommendations made by the ministry for student support during the closure of schools.

Similarly, the guidelines for student support when schools reopen after prolonged closure include preparation and running of school readiness modules and bridge course for the initial period so that they can adjust to the school environment. Large-scale remedial programmes and learning enhancement programmes should be held to mitigate learning loss.

Additional Director and Superintendent In-Charge of the hospital Dr Subodh Sharma said the girl was brought to the hospital in serious condition and her health deteriorated further. Despite best efforts by the doctors, she could not be saved, he added.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Bareilly, Rohit Singh

Sajwan said, "The post-mortem report says that the death took place due to infection."

The father of the girl, who was mentally unsound, said the family came to know about their daughter being six-month pregnant on 6 December.

He said she was raped allegedly by a 30-year-old man in a sugarcane field in June last year when she had gone out of the house for some work. The accused had threatened her that he will kill her family members if she revealed the incident to them. The victim's father filed a complaint at Fatehganj West police station on 4 December following which a case under POCSO Act and IPC was registered against the accused. The accused was arrested on 6 December.

Detailed on page 5

Rape survivor who was 7-months pregnant dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BAREILLY (UP), 10 JANUARY

A 15-year-old rape survivor who was seven months pregnant died of pregnancy-related complications at the district hospital here, police said on Sunday. She was admitted to the hospital on Saturday night and passed away on Thursday night, they said.

Additional Director and Superintendent In-Charge of the hospital Dr Subodh Sharma said the girl was brought to the hospital in serious condition and her health deteriorated further. Despite best efforts by the doctors, she could not be saved, he added.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Bareilly, Rohit Singh



Arvind Kejriwal was always the sneaky little fellow of AAP but it's surprising that his other party leaders are also following suit and spreading a web of lies to deceive the farmers of Punjab.

CAPTAIN AMARINDER SINGH

PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

Delhi set to roll out Covid vaccination from 16 Jan

AAP govt has finalised 89 sites to kick off the first phase of Covid vaccination drive in Delhi, says health minister Satyendar Jain; 2.25L healthcare workers will get jabs during this phase

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY

The Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP government is all set to kick off the vaccination drive against Covid-19 in Delhi on 16 January.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain today said that for this first phase of vaccination, which will be rolled out countrywide from 16 January, the AAP government has finalised 89 hospitals in the city, of which 40 are those run by the government and 49 are privately managed.

Delhi has 2,25,000 healthcare workers who will be administered the vaccine during this phase.

"In the first phase, health care workers will be vaccinated. Thereafter, frontline workers and those aged above 50 will be given the doses," Jain reportedly said.

Jain said that the Covid vaccines will start reaching Delhi between 12 and 14 January. The Delhi government has prepared a "very strong and robust" storage system to keep the vaccines safe.

Jain said, "The Delhi government has prepared 89 sites for Covid-19 vaccination. The Central government has finalised around 5,000 sites across India. As per the instructions of the Central government, the Delhi government has prepared these 89 sites which are different hospitals.

At every centre, there will be eight-nine people who will handle the drive. With this preparation, the Delhi government will start the first phase of vaccination on 16 January."

He said, "The Delhi government has prepared a very strong storage system to keep the Covid-19 vaccine safe. The whole system of vaccination is ready and we are fully prepared to start the vaccination drive. Right now we are only waiting for the arrival of the Covid-19 vaccines, and as soon as the vaccines start arriving, work will begin immediately."

Yesterday, Delhi chief minister Kejriwal urged the Central government to provide free

vaccines to everyone.

Jain also pointed out that for more than 15 days Delhi has been witnessing less than 1,000 coronavirus cases per day. "The Covid-19 situation in Delhi is now under control," he said.

Delhi today recorded 399 Covid cases detected out of 77,600 tests. The city's coronavirus caseload thus rose to 6,30,200. The positivity rate dipped to 0.51 percent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The national capital logged 12 fresh Covid-linked fatalities, which pushed its toll to 10,678, the health bulletin said.

The Covid patients who recovered during the last 24

hours numbered 602, which raised the cumulative count of such recoveries in the city to 6,16,054 so far, the bulletin said. The recovery rate climbed to 97.75 per cent.

The number of Delhi's active Covid cases was stated to be 3,468, including 1,585 patients under home isolation.

Delhi yesterday recorded 519 fresh coronavirus cases and 12 Covid-linked deaths. These cases were detected out of 80,275 tests. The city's Covid positivity rate was 0.65 percent.

This month, 585 coronavirus cases were logged in Delhi on 1 January and 494 cases on 2 January, 424 on 3 January, 384 on 4 January, 442 on 5 January, 654 on 6 Jan-

uary, 486 on 7 January, and 444 on 8 January. On 29 and 30 December, the city had recorded 703 and 677 cases respectively. On 31 December, it reported 574 cases.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF
DR. VIJAY KUMAR DAHIA
Additional District Judge-01
Court No. 205, 2nd Floor
South West District,
Dwarka Courts,
New Delhi-110075
Notice for Publication
(Order 5, Rule 20 of the CPC)
SUMMON FOR SETTLEMENT
OF ISSUES

RCA No. 5021/2021

Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board

— Appellant

Smt. Rabiya Khatoon — Respondents

To,

Smt. Rabiya Khatoon, w/o Late Sh. Abdur Raslam @ Islam, r/o House No. 49, Darbar Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi

Whereas Appellant has instituted that above Suit for Appeal Under Section 96 of CPC against the defendant you are hereby summoned to appear in this Court in person or by a pleader on the 29th day of January, 2021 at 10:00 O'Clock, to answer the same, failing which the Suit will be disposed of ex parte.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court, this 07th day of November, 2020.

Additional District Judge-02

South West District,
Dwarka Courts,
New Delhi-110075

Seal of the Court

(Publication Notice/
Citation)

IN THE COURT OF
Sh. Dhammesh Sharma,
District & Sessions Judge,
(West), Room No. 201,
1Ind Floor, Tis Hazari
Courts, Delhi-110054.

Guardianship No. 07/2020

Smt. Kumkum Malhotra W/o Sh.

Sanjay Narang, R/o E-5,
BG-6/24-A, Paschim Vihar,
West Delhi, New Delhi-110065.

The Petitioner above named Bhumika Malhotra W/o Late Sh. Ayush Narang R/o E-5, Rohtak Road, Multan Nagar, Delhi-110056 having file Petition U.S Section 8 of Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 R/W Section 299 The Guardian & Ward Act, who is the natural Guardian and Mother of the minor child, namely Samarath Narang born on 12.12.2018 to obtain the permission from this Honble Court to sell the 1/3rd undivided share of the minor Samarath Narang in the property one Western side shop bearing Private No.3, Land area measuring 14.17 Square Yards equivalent to 11.85 Sq. Meters approx. (ie. Size 9' X 14') on ground floor, without roof/terrace rights, part of entire free hold built up property bearing Municipal No. WZ-10, out of Khasra Nos. 42, 43 & 44 situated in the old Lal Dora (1908-1909) Abadi of Village Jawaliheri, New Delhi.

Whereas the 13-11-2021 has been fixed for hearing of the case. Notice is hereby given that any person having any

110063. Along with the undivided proportionate rights/share in the free land underneath.

The date 23rd day of January 2021 has been fixed for hearing on the above mentioned petition and notice is hereby issued that the General Public is advised if any other relative/friends, kinsman or well-wisher of the aforesaid Minor-Samarath Narang S/o Late Sh. Ayush Narang & also permission to sell 1/3rd undivided share of the minor Samarath Narang in the property one Western side shop bearing Private No.3, Land area measuring 14.17 Square Yards equivalent to 11.85 Sq. Meters approx. (ie. Size 9' X 14') on ground floor. Without roof/terrace rights, part of entire free hold built up property bearing Municipal No. WZ-10, out of Khasra Nos. 42, 43 & 44 situated in the old Lal Dora (1908-1909) Abadi of Village Jawaliheri, New Delhi.

Whereas the 13-11-2021 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 may if he/she desires to appear in this court on the said 13-01-2021 and see the proceedings before the Grant of Probate (or for Letter of Administration).

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

Addl. District Judge-02
Dwarka Courts, New Delhi.

PC No. 02/2020

Yuvraj Vermaan

Versus State & Anrs.

CITATION UNDER INDIAN
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

Whereas an application under Section 276 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, for Grant of Probate/Letters of Administration to the estate of Late Sh. J.C. Verma, s/o Late Sh. Acharya Ramendra, who died on 14-01-2019 has been made by Sh. Yuvraj Verma, s/o Mukul Verma and Madhav Verma (Minor) Through Natural Guardian Sh. Mukul Verma (Father, both r/o G-10, Hauzkhaz, New Delhi in respect of the immovable property bearing No. Municipal A. No. 2-251, Janakpuri, New Delhi Measuring 189 square meters.

Whereas the 06-01-2021 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 may if he/she desires to appear in this court on the said 14-01-2021 and see the proceedings before the Grant of Probate (or for Letter of Administration).

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

Addl. District Judge-02
Dwarka Courts, New Delhi.

PC No. 02/2020

Yuvraj Vermaan

Versus State & Anrs.

CITATION UNDER INDIAN
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

Whereas an application under Section 276 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, for Grant of Probate/Letters of Administration to the estate of Late Smt. Sita Guha, w/o Late Major D.R. Guha, who died on 06-08-2011 has been made by Mr. Dipak Kumar Guha, s/o Late Shrimati Sita Guha, r/o C-115B, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058 having file Petition U.S Section 8 of Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 R/W Section 299 The Guardian & Ward Act, who is the natural Guardian and Mother of the minor child, namely Samarath Narang born on 12.12.2018 to obtain the permission from this Honble Court to sell the 1/3rd undivided share of the minor Samarath Narang in the property one Western side shop bearing Private No.3, Land area measuring 14.17 Square Yards equivalent to 11.85 Sq. Meters approx. (ie. Size 9' X 14') on ground floor, without roof/terrace rights, part of entire free hold built up property bearing Municipal No. WZ-10, out of Khasra Nos. 42, 43 & 44 situated in the old Lal Dora (1908-1909) Abadi of Village Jawaliheri, New Delhi.

Whereas the 13-11-2021 has been fixed for hearing of the case. Notice is hereby given that any person having any

2. Built-up Property built on the portion of Plot No. 3 (R-3) admeasuring 194.44 sq. yards ours to Khasras No. 75, 76, 85-89, 92-105 & 120 in Village Bindapu & Colony known as R-Block, Vani Vihar, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi.

3. Built-up Property built on the portion of Plot No. 3 (R-50) admeasuring 56.26 sq. yards ours out of Khasras No. 75, 76, 85-89, 92-97, 105 & 120 in Village Bindapu & Colony known as R-Block, Vani Vihar, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi.

Whereas the 14-01-2021 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 may if he/she desires to appear in this court on the said 14-01-2021 and see the proceedings before the Grant of Probate (or for Letter of Administration).

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

Addl. District Judge-02
Dwarka Courts, New Delhi.

PC No. 02/2020

Yuvraj Vermaan

Versus State & Anrs.

CITATION UNDER INDIAN
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

Whereas an application under Section 276 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, for Grant of Probate/Letters of Administration to the estate of Late Smt. Sita Guha, w/o Late Major D.R. Guha, who died on 06-08-2011 has been made by Mr. Dipak Kumar Guha, s/o Late Shrimati Sita Guha, r/o C-115B, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058 having file Petition U.S Section 8 of Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 R/W Section 299 The Guardian & Ward Act, who is the natural Guardian and Mother of the minor child, namely Samarath Narang born on 12.12.2018 to obtain the permission from this Honble Court to sell the 1/3rd undivided share of the minor Samarath Narang in the property one Western side shop bearing Private No.3, Land area measuring 14.17 Square Yards equivalent to 11.85 Sq. Meters approx. (ie. Size 9' X 14') on ground floor, without roof/terrace rights, part of entire free hold built up property bearing Municipal No. WZ-10, out of Khasra Nos. 42, 43 & 44 situated in the old Lal Dora (1908-1909) Abadi of Village Jawaliheri, New Delhi.

Whereas the 13-11-2021 has been fixed for hearing of the case. Notice is hereby given that any person having any

I, Santosh Rani, m/o Swatanter Kumar Trehan, r/o B-16 DDA Flats, Saket Delhi-110077, Lost & Found/ DDA/Demand Letter/Property collection FIR No. 430/2014 L- No. 861221/2020 dated 31-12-2020 IF Found Contact 9871315220.

Seal of the Court

LOST & FOUND

I, Santosh Rani, m/o Swatanter Kumar Trehan, r/o B-16 DDA Flats, Saket Delhi-110077, Lost & Found/ DDA/Demand Letter/Property collection FIR No. 430/2014 L- No. 861221/2020 dated 31-12-2020 IF Found Contact 9871315220.

Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF
SH. HARGURVINDER
SINGH

Addl. District Judge-02
Room No. 605, 6th Floor,
Dwarka Courts, New Delhi.

PC No. 29/2020

Mr. Dipak Kumar Guha

Versus State & Anrs.

CITATION UNDER INDIAN
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

Whereas an application under Section 276 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, for Grant of Probate/Letters of Administration to the estate of Late Smt. Sita Guha, w/o Late Major D.R. Guha, who died on 06-08-2011 has been made by Mr. Dipak Kumar Guha, s/o Late Shrimati Sita Guha, r/o C-115B, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058 having file Petition U.S Section 8 of Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 R/W Section 299 The Guardian & Ward Act, who is the natural Guardian and Mother of the minor child, namely Samarath Narang born on 12.12.2018 to obtain the permission from this Honble Court to sell the 1/3rd undivided share of the minor Samarath Narang in the property one Western side shop bearing Private No.3, Land area measuring 14.17 Square Yards equivalent to 11.85 Sq. Meters approx. (ie. Size 9' X 14') on ground floor, without roof/terrace rights, part of entire free hold built up property bearing Municipal No. WZ-10, out of Khasra Nos. 42, 43 & 44 situated in the old Lal Dora (1908-1909) Abadi of Village Jawaliheri, New Delhi.

Whereas the 13-11-2021 has been fixed for hearing of the case. Notice is hereby given that any person having any

IN THE COURT OF
SH. HARGURVINDER
SINGH

Addl. District Judge-02
Room No. 605, 6th Floor,
Dwarka Courts, New Delhi.

PC No. 19/2020

Deepak Pandey

Versus Ram Darsh Pandey And & Others

CITATION UNDER INDIAN
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

FOOD DELIVERY



Food delivery platforms are once again doing a pretty decent business now that Covid-related restrictions have been lifted one by one. Though a Covid-19 vaccine is now around the corner and the fear of the infection is also decreasing, people, especially those under 40, prefer to place their food orders through WhatsApp. The biting cold in Delhi is another factor that is forcing people not to venture out and order food either direct-

ly from restaurants or through food delivery platforms. Christmas, New Year and other such festive occasions provided a huge opportunity to restaurants and these platforms to do a roaring business. But one sympathises with young boys who deliver food to customers at home, braving the intense cold. Delhi was lashed by heavy rains last week but these boys were still working tirelessly, delivering food from one door to another despite the downpour. Restaurants and

Getting back on track

Life in Delhi is gradually returning to normal, after ugly memories of 2020. Once again, the Metro is running to its full capacity. During peak hours, its coaches have passengers rubbing shoulders with each other. Social distancing is not even heard of in the Metro, it seems. Except that every other seat is kept vacant as per Covid protocols, although they don't appear vacant because of large backpacks placed on them. The mask has been a significant gain from 2020. It certainly has a capacity to create distances. One can't get over memories of people sneezing and coughing on others in the tightly-shut coaches. A particular irritant in Metro travel inherited from Covid-peaks days is the closure of half the Metro entrances. This defies reason when everything about Metro is now back to the old days. The closure of the Metro gates means longer walks to the alternative entrances. This is tiring due to the dusty and uneven pathways at most places. After office hours, unusually long queues are back at Connaught Place and Central Secretariat. Sooner or later, they will be taken note of by the authorities. In some

ways, life in Delhi was not affected much even during the Lockdown's harsh days. Delhi Traffic Police merrily challaned vehicles, even when a road showed a rare passing car. According to official data, the police netted on an average Rs 20 crore per month during 2020 from traffic challans. These were issued under the amended Motor Vehicle Act, made effective during the Lockdown days. Even on deserted roads, the hidden CCTV cameras were doing their jobs. Their number has been constantly increasing. The total penalties during the last year were Rs 235 crore, compared to Rs 188

crore of 2019. There were not only more challans but they were more remunerative too because of the steep rise in fines. The number of private cars in Delhi runs into millions. A prominent national TV channel telecast a special programme on "excessive" car challans post-imposition of the Lockdown, where a joint commissioner of Delhi Traffic Police explained the recent amendments in the law. Several viewers who had paid fines for various "offences" under the amended Act, wanted to know why there was not enough publicity on the new law and its penal provisions. The amended law lists over

90 violations with massive penalties up to Rs 25,000 and more, it was explained. A common penalty is of Rs 2000. A case was cited of a person who was fined thousands of rupees in repeated challans. The viewers wanted to know if there was any way they could contest the challans. The reply was that lakhs of offences like over-speeding were captured by the cameras and the photographic evidence could be easily downloaded from the challans! Delhiites will have to get used to the pain, it seems. Another legacy of 2020 is of continuing fines for high security registration plates (HSRP) and colour coded

fuel stickers for cars. Delhi car owners continue to be challenged for these requirements by the hundred, although the authorities say the process for acquiring them has been simplified. Well, only those who have been working on the designated website know how far the process has been simplified. As if the record breaking cold, and the sword of Covid-19 hanging over their heads were not enough for Delhiites, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways proposes to make airbag "mandatory" for the passenger seated on the front seat of a vehicle, next to the driver from 1 April 2021, for new models, and from 1 June, 2021, for existing models. This is intended "to boost passenger safety." A draft notification has been published on the Ministry's website on 28 December, 2020. The "stakeholders" are invited to give their suggestions within 30 days of the notification. The stakeholders will be definitely interested in giving their suggestions before the deadline, only if they are through with their HSRPs, and memorise the revised Motor Vehicle Act by heart, without missing out on the Covid vaccine updates!



NUMBERED ROOFS

As TV news about the recent cyclones that battered the Indian coast showed the ferocity of winds and the destruction wrought, an acquaintance, who had been posted in the Philippines recalled that the archipelago

was frequently battered by typhoons and cyclones. The people were used to it and had resorted to some unusual means to cope with nature's fury. One of them was that their tin or asbestos roofs were numbered. While it sounded strange, it soon emerged that

there was a practical reason behind this. After a high-speed wind had passed over the islands, most houses found their roofs blown away. Once the storm subsided, people would go looking for the roofs, identifying them by the numbers. At times, when one found

a numbered roof in the backyard, the residents of that house would inform the rightful owner and have it taken away.

TAILPIECE
A teenager was heard grumbling, "It's so unfair, only men

have a natural air filter and mask in the form of moustache and beard! In fact, they don't even need to use a mask."

Contributed by: Deepak Razdan, Ashok Tuteja and Asha Ramachandran

India

HP records 73 pc voter turnout in ULBs polls

The polling for 50 Urban Local Bodies including 29 Municipal Councils and 21 Nagar Panchayats was held with 1,196 candidates in the fray in 401 wards in 10 districts; voting remains peaceful across Himachal Pradesh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 10 JANUARY

Himachal Pradesh today witnessed 73 per cent voter turnout in elections to 50 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), which include 29 Municipal Councils and 21 Nagar Panchayats in 10 districts of the state.

The voting for the 50 ULBs was held across the state today in which 1,196 candidates were in the fray in 401 wards of 10 districts of the state.

"Around 73 per cent (polling) has been recorded in 50 ULBs of the state and the data may change as voting percentage is still being compiled," HP State Election Commission Electoral Officer Sanjeev Mahajan said.

The voting, which was held in 441 polling booths in 10 districts of the state, remained peaceful across the state.

Thirteen candidates were elected unopposed in ULBs elections, with 9 candidates



SNS

getting elected unopposed in Shimla district while 2 candidates were elected unopposed in Una and one each in Kangra and Solan districts. There were reports of voters boycotting elections in two wards in Karsog and Ner Chowk in Mandi district, home district of Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur. The highest voting percentage was recorded in Una

arrangements for Covid-19 infected voters who exercised their franchise after 5 pm.

The counting of votes had started after the polling concluded and the results were expected by late in the evening.

Though the ULBs elections were not being held on party symbol but both the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress were looking to secure their win in maximum number of seats to boost morale of party cadres for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) elections that are scheduled to be held on 17, 19 and 21 January. The PRIs elections result will be declared on 22 January.

The PRIs elections would also be significant as it will reflect the mood of people of the state ahead of 2022 Assembly elections.

While the BJP has made the development in the state its main poll plank, the Congress party was accusing the BJP government of not delivering on poll promises and for

its "failure" to carry forward development process in the state.

State BJP chief Suresh Kashyap claimed victory in the ULBs elections and said the voters of the state had supported the Jai Ram Thakur government for pro-people policies and for carrying out all-round development in the state.

"Of the 102 panchayats where candidates had been elected unopposed, the party supported candidates have secured win in 94 per cent seats," he added.

State Congress organizational secretary Rajneesh Kimita, too, claimed victory in ULBs elections and said the people had neglected "fake narrative of development" in the state.

"The people have voted against the BJP as the government has not delivered on poll promises and has also failed in carrying forward development process in the state," he said.

He said that he hoped his death would bring success to the farmers' movement.

Another tragic incident

Farm law protesters eating chicken biriyani to 'spread nationwide bird flu': BJP MLA

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY

BJP legislator from Rajasthan, Ramganj Mandi MLA Madan Dilawar, in a video said that the raging farmers' agitation around the national capital could lead to a nationwide bird flu problem since the protesters are eating chicken biriyani to spread the epidemic.

He is also seen saying that those who are conspiring to create such a crisis in the country could be "terrorists, robbers, and thieves".

"They are merely relishing biriyani. They are eating kaju-badam (dryfruits). They are enjoying in all ways. They are changing their appearances frequently. There could be many terrorists among them. Thieves and looters, too. They could be the enemies of farmers," Dilawar said.

"I suspect that if the government does not remove them in the next few days, either by pleading or by use of force, then the country will face the problem of bird flu," he added.

Another tragic incident happened at the protest site at Singhu where the farmers are protesting against the farm laws as a 40-year-old farmer from Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib died by suicide.

The body of the deceased was sent to the mortuary at the Government Hospital, where a post-mortem has been scheduled for Sunday morning.

Last month, a lawyer from



The farmer identified as Amarinder Singh died after consuming a poisonous substance.

Punjab allegedly died by suicide a few kilometres away from the protest site.

The lawyers who have been identified as Amarjeet Singh, a resident of Jalalabad in Fazilka district, Punjab reportedly consumed poison near the protest site, was rushed to hospital in Rohtak where the doctors declared him dead on arrival.

In his purported suicide note, the 63-year-old lawyer said that he was "sacrificing his life" to support the farmers' protest against the three farm laws so that the government is forced to listen to their demands.

He said that he hoped his death would bring success to the farmers' movement.

Amarinder Singh had earlier been rushed to Sonipat's FIMS Hospital but he died during treatment.

The body of the deceased was sent to the mortuary at the Government Hospital, where a post-mortem has been scheduled for Sunday morning.

Last month, a lawyer from

He is also seen saying that those who are conspiring to create such a crisis in the country could be "terrorists, robbers, and thieves".

Punjab allegedly died by suicide a few kilometres away from the protest site.

The lawyers who have been identified as Amarjeet Singh, a resident of Jalalabad in Fazilka district, Punjab reportedly consumed poison near the protest site, was rushed to hospital in Rohtak where the doctors declared him dead on arrival.

In his purported suicide note, the 63-year-old lawyer said that he was "sacrificing his life" to support the farmers' protest against the three farm laws so that the government is forced to listen to their demands.

He said that he hoped his death would bring success to the farmers' movement.

As reported by NDTV, he told his friends that he was forced to take this step because the government had refused to listen to their demands.

He said that he hoped his death would bring success to the farmers' movement.

As reported by NDTV, he told his friends that he was forced to take this step because the government had refused to listen to their demands.

He said that he hoped his death would bring success to the farmers' movement.

Prior to that, a 65-year-old Sikh priest, Sant Ram Singh had also allegedly died by suicide near the Singhu border protest site claiming that he was "unable to bear the pain of the farmers."

A 22-year-old farmer also died by suicide in Bathinda, Punjab after he returned from the protest near Delhi border.

40-year-old farmer from Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib commits suicide at Singhu border

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY

Another tragic incident happened at the protest site at Singhu where the farmers are protesting against the farm laws as a 40-year-old farmer from Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib died by suicide.

The farmer identified as Amarinder Singh died after consuming a poisonous substance. As reported by NDTV, he told his friends that he was forced to take this step because the government had refused to listen to their demands.

He said that he hoped his death would bring success to the farmers' movement.

Amarinder Singh had earlier been rushed to Sonipat's FIMS Hospital but he died during treatment.

The body of the deceased was sent to the mortuary at the Government Hospital, where a post-mortem has been scheduled for Sunday morning.

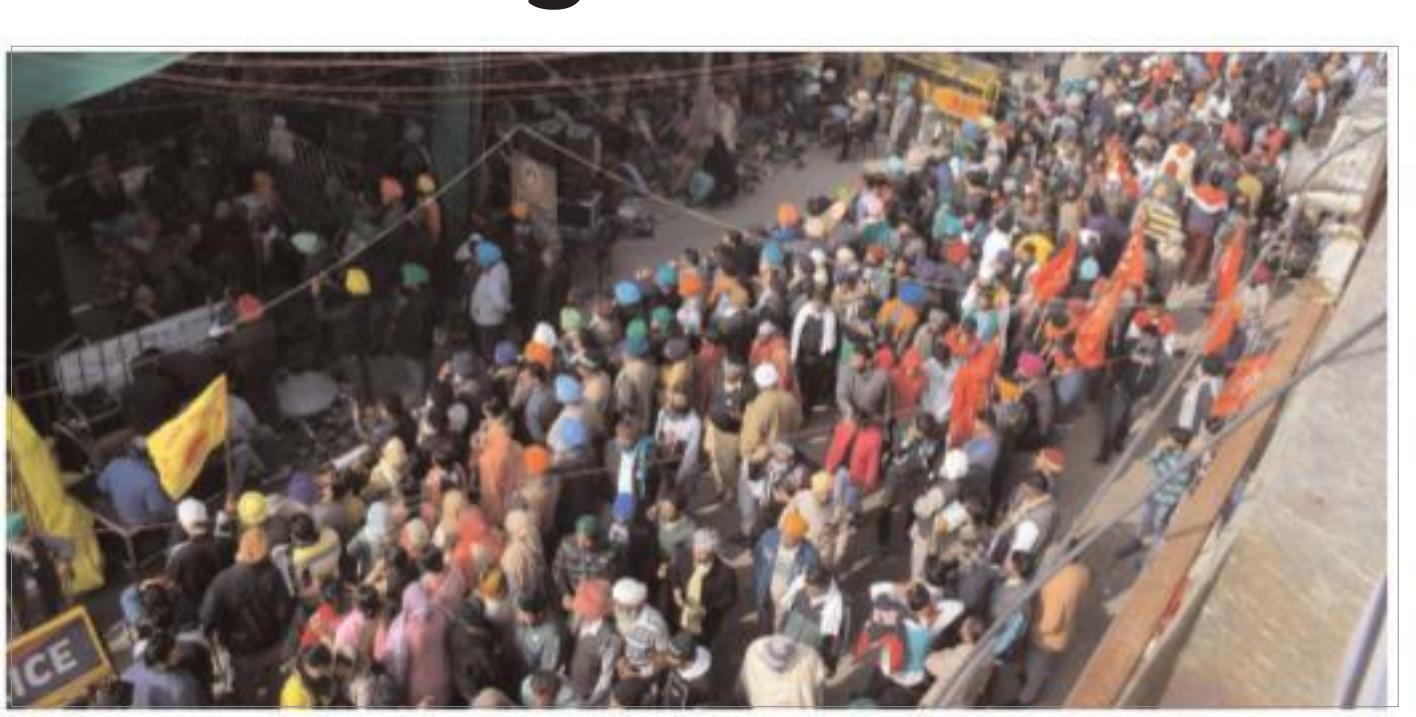
Last month, a lawyer from

Punjab allegedly died by suicide a few kilometres away from the protest site.

The lawyers who have been identified as Amarjeet Singh, a resident of Jalalabad in Fazilka district, Punjab reportedly consumed poison near the protest site, was rushed to hospital in Rohtak where the doctors declared him dead on arrival.

In his purported suicide note, the 63-year-old lawyer said that he was "sacrificing his life" to support the farmers' protest against the three farm laws so that the government is forced to listen to their demands.

Prior to that, a 65-year-old

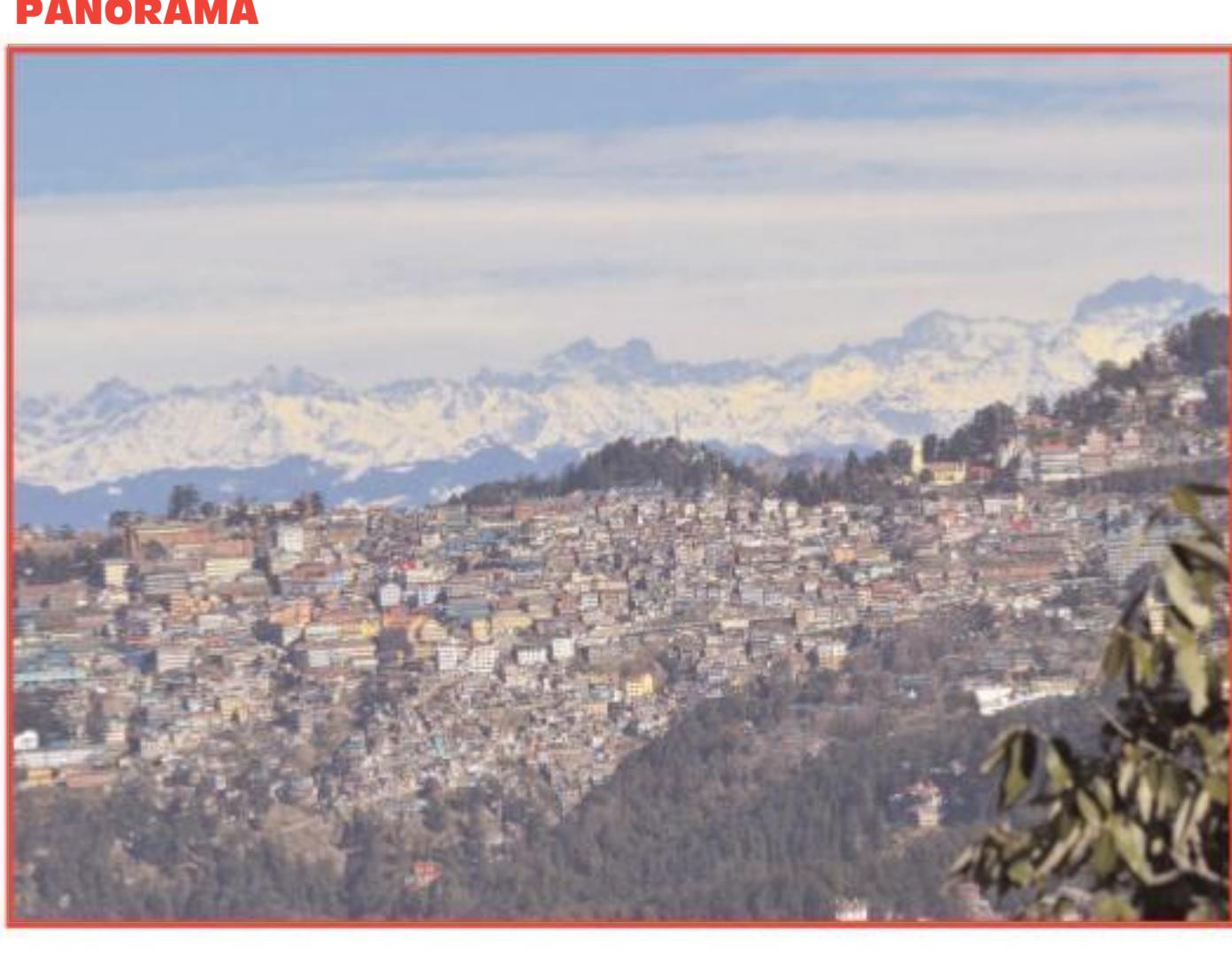


Farmers during their continuing protest against the Centre's controversial agri laws, at Singhu border on a cold Sunday.

Sikh priest, Sant Ram Singh had also allegedly died by suicide near the Singhu border protest site claiming that he was "unable to bear the pain of the farmers."

A 22-year-old farmer also

PANORAMA



LALIT KUMAR

A view of Shimla against the backdrop of snow-clad mountains on Sunday.



'Bengal's health care system on ventilator'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI, 10 JANUARY

BJP's national spokesperson Raju Bista, today, criticised the public health care system in West Bengal. "Public healthcare system in West Bengal has been in ventilator for the past ten years and no one knows this better than the doctors, nurses, healthcare staff, pharmacists, ambulance drivers and those associated with the healthcare sector," Darjeeling MP Mr Bista said, adding, "West Bengal is suffering from acute healthcare crisis and if remedial actions are not taken urgently, soon the entire system is bound to collapse."

According to him, the hospitals are short-staffed, overburdened and under-equipped across the state, as a result of which the doctors, nurses and all other health care workers have been working under considerable stress at a great risk to their personal health and well-being.

The MP also claimed that in north Bengal, the situation is even more precarious. "Even we do not have proper health care infrastructure to begin with and acute shortage of health facilities has jeopardized numerous lives across the region," he added.

BSY meets Amit Shah to discuss Karnataka's political scenario

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU,
10 JANUARY



Karnataka chief minister BS Yediyurappa on Sunday met home minister Amit Shah in Delhi to discuss the state's political scenario and finalise BJP's candidates for the upcoming bypolls in the state as he arrived in the national capital on a day-long visit.

Before he left for Delhi earlier in the day, Yediyurappa had hinted that the much-awaited Cabinet rejig in the state might come up for discussion during his meeting.

"Recently, we won the gram panchayat elections in a very big way. Within a month, we are going to face two parliamentary and an Assembly bypolls. We have to finalise the candidates. We will discuss all these issues with Amit Shah and other important leaders," he told reporters.

The BJP leader said while his appointment with the home minister is confirmed, he will also try to meet party's national president JP Nadda.

Asked about the steps taken to check the spread of Covid-19 in the state, the chief minister said: "In Karnataka, the situation is under control. We are taking all precautions."

The state can have a total of 34 ministers and it has 27 now.

Bypolls are scheduled for Maski and Basavakalyan, Assema segments, and Belagavi Lok Sabha constituency.

The Cabinet expansion in the state has been on the cards for over a year now, but could not take place, giving some anxious moments to ministerial aspirants and also leading to dissatisfaction.

Among those in the ministerial race are MLAs Umesh Katti, Munirathna, Basangouda Patil Yatnal, M P Renukaracharya, Aravind Limbavali and S R Vishwanath. Three MLCS - C P Yogeshwar, MTB Nagaraj and R Shankar - are also aspiring for a ministerial berth.

Another MLC, A H Vishwanath, too, was in the race but his hopes dashed when the Karnataka High Court on 30 November barred him from becoming a minister until at least May this year.

It was different in the old days when people like M G Ramachandran (MGR), Sivaji Ganesan and even Jayalalithaa were involved in films that carried a revolutionary social message, he said.

Noting that former Tamil Nadu chief ministers M Karunanidhi and CN Annadurai were also deeply involved in cinema, he said the powerful scripts written by Annadurai and extremely powerful dialogues by Karunanidhi that were delivered magnificently by MGR resulted in films in Tamil cinema having in the 1950s the same role as social media is today having in determining the politics of northern India.

"When he (Rajinikanth) said he was going to come into politics, I said it is not going to make a tinker's difference, now that he has decided not to come into politics, I repeat what I said, it is not going to make a tinker's difference," Aiyar said in an interview.

"It was different in the old days when people like M G Ramachandran (MGR), Sivaji Ganesan and even Jayalalithaa were involved in films that carried a revolutionary social message, he said.

He argued that there have been no two actors more popular on the Hindi silver screen than Amitabh Bachchan and Rajesh Khan-

We will boycott Assembly session if it is truncated

RJD DE FACTO LEADER TEJASHWI YADAV
ON HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

Rajini, Haasan 'marginal players' in politics: Aiyar

Says they cannot attract public opinion to their point of view in political terms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY



Describing Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan as "marginal political players", senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar has said they remain very popular film stars but are unable to attract public opinion to their point of view in political terms.

Aiyar, who has been named in three key panels set up by the Congress for Tamil Nadu polls, asserted that superstar Rajinikanth's decision that he will not enter electoral politics will not make a tinker's difference as the state readies for the Assembly polls.

"When he (Rajinikanth) said he was going to come into politics, I said it is not going to make a tinker's difference, now that he has decided not to come into politics, I repeat what I said, it is not going to make a tinker's difference," Aiyar said in an interview.

"It was different in the old days when people like M G Ramachandran (MGR), Sivaji Ganesan and even Jayalalithaa were involved in films that carried a revolutionary social message, he said.

He argued that there have been no two actors more popular on the Hindi silver screen than Amitabh

Bachchan and Rajesh Khan- na, but "what flops they were in politics".

The same thing applies in the South, he added.

Making a U-turn, superstar Rajinikanth last month announced he will not enter politics in view of his frail health, putting an end to his long-nurtured plans and describing his recent hospitalisation as God's warning.

"Only I know the pain behind making this announcement," the 70-year-old actor had said, just days before he was to spell out the contours of his party based on spiritual politics aimed at bringing a total change in the Dravidian heartland Tamil Nadu in the 2021 Assembly elections.

Haasan had launched Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) in February 2018 and the party had faced the 2019 Lok Sabha elections but could not win a single seat.

Haasan, through his ongoing poll campaign, has latched on to the welfare legacy of MGR and has been attacking both the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) over alleged corruption.

EC advisory for smooth conduct of Assembly polls

NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY

The EC has reminded states where Assembly polls are due in the coming months not to assign any election-related duty to officials who have been charged for any lapse in any election in the past.

In an advisory to the chief secretaries of Assam, Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, the Election Commission (EC) has also said that officers against whom it had recommended disciplinary action in the past and which is pending or has resulted in a penalty should not be deployed for poll-related work.

The advisory, sent last month, said any officer, who is due to retire within the coming six months, should not be associated with any election-related duty.

The terms of the legislative assemblies of Bengal, TN, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry end in May and June this year. Assembly elections are likely to take place sometime in April-May.

Those involved in Pollachi sex abuse case will be brought to book: Kanimozi



COIMBATORE, 10 JANUARY

DMK leader M Kanimozi on Sunday said her party would ensure that victims in the Pollachi sexual harassment case got justice and all those involved would be punished, once it returned to power.

Addressing a protest rally in nearby Pollachi, Kanimozi alleged that the ruling AI-ADMK was attempting to protect the party's student wing leader, Arulalanda, arrested in connection with the case recently, and many others involved in the case as they belonged to the party.

The accused, however influential they are, will be brought to book, as there would be a 'change in regime' after the coming Assembly elections, Kanimozi, the women's wing secretary of DMK, added.

Referring to the images of some accused with AIADMK leaders doing rounds online, the DMK MP claimed that it was clear evidence of their links with the ministers. PTI

TMC-BJP clashes rock parts of Bengal, few injured

SNS & PTI
BURDWAN, KOLKATA 10 JANUARY

of party's state youth front vice-president Sohom Chakraborty in the town this afternoon.

The state animal resource minister Swapan Debnath, Zilla Parishad Sabhadhipati Shampa Dhara also joined the crowded road-show that ran from Town Hall to Golap Bagh a stretch of 2 km in the town, which was arranged to counter Nadda's yesterday's road-show.

Meanwhile clashes also broke out between supporters of the TMC and the BJP at several locations, including in East and West Midnapore districts, leaving a few of them injured.

Maintaining that the TMC launched an attack on the activists of his party, BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari said such harassment would only help the saffron camp grow from strength to strength.

"With every attack on our party workers, more people would come out in our support," Adhikari, who quit the Mamata Banerjee camp to join the BJP last month, told reporters during a roadshow in Purulia.

Workers of the two parties crossed swords at Bhajachauli in Kanthi area of East Midnapore district, sources in the two parties said.

Local BJP leaders alleged that a few of its workers sustained injuries in the attack, even as the TMC claimed that infighting in the saffron camp led to the clashes. Violence was also reported from Marishda in East Midnapore district.

The TMC meanwhile claimed that the trouble broke out when the BJP cadres were trying to restrict one of the TMC vehicles campaigning for today's road-show at Bar area.

Rasbehari Haldar, Youth TMC district president alleged: "They scuffled with our men and were abusing our leaders, which triggered off trouble there." Thousands of TMC supporters meanwhile joined at the road-show

RIGHT CALL



Members of Karnataka Students and Parents' Forum protest against state education minister S Suresh Kumar, demanding regulation of school fees, in Bengaluru on Sunday. IANS

Dollar smuggling case: Customs to quiz Speaker

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
10 JANUARY

Assistant Solicitor General P Vijayakumar has reportedly given legal advice that the Speaker can be questioned as per Customs Act. The Speaker is likely to be questioned after the current Assembly session that began on Friday. Vijayakumar has advised the Customs to avoid questioning the Speaker during the Assembly session. The Customs are believed to have received

permission in this regard from Delhi too.

The Customs had the other day questioned the Speaker's assistant private secretary K Ayyappan in connection with the case. The interrogation, reportedly extended to the Speaker based on accusations given by Swapna Suresh and P S Saritha, was reportedly extended to the Speaker based on accusations given by Swapna Suresh and P S Saritha.

Swapna and Saritha had stated that Speaker Sreeramakrishnan had handed over a bag containing dollars to him to deliver to UAE Consulate. The two accused had levelled serious allegations against the Speaker in their statements to the magistrate.

Meanwhile, two Dubai-based Keraleites, Lafir Mohammad and Kiran figured in the statements given by Swapna and Saritha would be quizzed by the Customs next week.

Feeding a revolution: How fire in kitchens sustaining farmers' fight in streets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY

The massive farmers' agitation against the new farm laws has stretched to over 40 days at Singhu border of Delhi and Haryana, but two things that they haven't run out of are food and an unrelenting spirit.

The centre stage of this protracted battle remains the streets, but the fire in the belly of these farmers has been sustained by flames burning in kitchens backstage.

Aggrieved farmers, mostly drawn from Punjab, had arrived at Singhu border on 26 November, answering the 'Dilli Chalo' call of their leaders who are seeking repeal of the farm laws which they allege will "wreck the lives of hard-working peasants".

On a long stretch straddling the Delhi-Haryana border, fiery speeches on stage, songs of resistance in the streets and cries of 'Sadda Haq, Aithe Rakha' and 'Jo Bole So Nihal' are part of the daily life at the protest site now.

Community kitchens or 'langars' punctuate the sea of farmers who have descended on the site

now. "...We are not feeding just men and women, we are feeding a revolution," Palwinder Singh from Gurdaspur had arrived at Singhu border on day one of the protest along with a 'jatha' to set up a kitchen right in the middle of the highway. He begins his day early, every morning by taking bath in the open in biting cold and offering prayers to the 'Waheguru'.

"A revolution cannot run on empty stomachs. We are farmers who follow teachings of our revered Sikh Gurus, and this is Guru ka Langar, all his grace and we are just the agents of his will. So we are keeping the fire burning in the kitchen," Palwinder said.

All men and women running makeshift kitchens at the protest site refuse to take any credit for the 'sewa' they are offering for over 40 days

WB govt decides to bring country's oldest music college under Bankura varsity

KANCHAN SIDDIQUI
BISHNUPUR, 10 JANUARY

As the terracotta charm of the Porambari Haat within the ancient Jorshree temples reverberated with the conventional rhythms of Bengal's lone classical music gharana at the three days Bishnupur Music Festival that blends tradition, art, architecture and music, the temple town this evening however was further allured with the state's decision of inclusion of the oldest music college in the country with the Bankura University. Ramsharan College of Music stands as the oldest music colleges in the country and was established in 1885 during the regime of Mallya Raj Ramkrishna Singhadev.

Initially it was a music school but in 1943, the school was elevated to a music college mainly to teach classical music of Bishnupur gharana. Currently, the college offers two courses-one is certificate course of four years duration and the other is diploma course of two years.

Gadadhar Bhattacharya was the Sanskrit teacher at the Mallya king's court and he'd sent his son Ramshankar to Benaras for learning better Sanskrit where Ramshankar came in touch with the classical music of Benaras gharana.

Umesh Kushwaha is new Bihar JD(U) chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PATNA, 10 JANUARY

Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh told reporters here at a Press conference in the party office.

Kushwaha's election signals the ruling party going back to its original support base of "Luv-Kush" (OBC Kurmi and Kushwaha castes combination). It also reflects party going for young leadership apparently to blunt the attack of Tejashwi Yadav of the RJD and Chirag Paswan who heads Lok Janshakti Party.

Since 2005 when the JD(U)-BJP together ousted RJD from the power in Bihar, Kumar himself Kurmi by caste has been leveraging Luv-Kush equation to corner major portion of non-Yadav OBC castes in the Bihar polities.

KIFF ground comes alive with Sunday revellers



During Kolkata International Film Festival at Nandan complex in Kolkata on Sunday. ■SNS

one of the busiest places at the ground. Apart from the cine buff, there were several people who visited the KIFF ground just to enjoy a winter evening amid beautiful lights and decorations.

From toddlers to kids, teenagers, adults and elderly, the citizens of Kolkata did not want to miss any opportunity to enjoy a slice of the film festival in their own way.

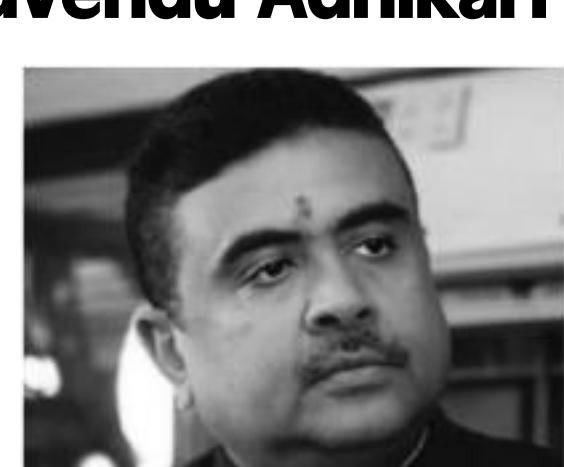
Nilanjan Saha, resident of Garia had come to see Victoria Memorial and spend the day in the open ground with his two-year-old son. After the sunset, he walked into the KIFF ground with his family to spend some quality time by listening to music and enjoying the lively atmosphere.

"Before returning home, I came here with my wife and son to have some snacks and spend some time," said Nilanjan. "We have not come here to watch films. The selfie zones are quite attractive. My family and I want to sit and enjoy the ambience for some now," he pointed out.

Like Nilanjan, Sukanta Ghosh, echoed, "I came with my friends to the zoo. Later, seeing the buzz around we decided to visit this place. We loved the energetic and lively ambience here," added the second year student.

TMC govt appropriating central schemes, says Suvendu Adhikari

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PURULIA, 10 JANUARY



Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Sunday accused the Mamata Banerjee dispensation of appropriating central projects, and said only three to four people in the state government call the shots, with the rest functioning as rubber stamps.



Govt should rather repeal farm Acts as desired by the peasantry and avoid confrontation by holding functions like the mahapanchayat

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA

REACTING TO THE KARNAL INCIDENT

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, MONDAY 11 JANUARY 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



Wrestlers put up a show during the farmers' protest at the Delhi-UP's Ghazipur Border on Sunday.

PTI

Batla House dhobighat demolition: The Delhi High Court has granted three weeks to an organisation to approach an appropriate forum for relief against demolition of the Batla House dhobighat, which is used by washermen here to earn a living. Granting the three-week period to Muslim Kassar Vikas Sangathan, the high court said the Delhi Development Authority will not take any precipitate measure in the meanwhile. PTI

Pilgrims injured in J&K road accident: At least 16 pilgrims, hailing from Delhi, were injured when a mini-bus enroute to the famous Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine skidded off the road and fell into a 15-feet deep ditch in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Sunday. The accident took place near Chenani late Saturday night when the vehicle was returning from snow-bound Patnitop hill resort, the officials said. PTI

Pak violates ceasefire along IB, LoC: Pakistani troops violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked mortar shelling and firing on forward posts and villages in different sectors along the LoC and the International Border (IB) in Rajouri, Poonch and Kathua districts of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Sunday. However, there was no immediate report of any damage on the Indian side, they said. PTI

IED-fitted motorcycle detected in Poonch: A major tragedy was averted with the timely detection of a 2.4 kg Improvised Explosive Device (IED) fitted on a motorcycle in Mendhar sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, a police officer said on Sunday. The IED was found planted on the roadside along Gohald Reelan-Mendhar Road by a police party around 10 p.m. on Saturday and was destroyed in a controlled explosion by the bomb disposal squad around 1 p.m. on Sunday, Poonch Senior SP Ramesh Angral said. PTI

Man held with pistol: Police have arrested a 25-year-old man, identified as Hasan Abdul Pathan, a resident of suburban Andheri, for illegally carrying a country-made pistol and a live cartridge in Mumbai. Acting on a tip-off, police team reached the spot and arrested the accused. PTI

Farmers vandalise Khattar's rally venue in Haryana's Karnal

Police use water cannons, lob teargas shells to prevent farmers from marching towards the village

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARNAL (HAR), 10 JANUARY



IANS

Protesting farmers on Sunday vandalised the venue of a 'kisan mahapanchayat' programme at Kaimla village here where Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar was to address people to highlight the benefits of the Centre's three agriculture laws.

The Haryana Police used water cannons and lobbed teargas shells to prevent the farmers from marching towards the village.

The farmers, however, reached the venue and damaged the makeshift helipad where Khattar's chopper was to land despite elaborate security arrangements made by the police.

They later took control of the helipad and squatted on it. Some protesters also uprooted the tiles of the helipad.

The farmers disrupted the 'kisan mahapanchayat' programme by damaging the stage and breaking chairs, tables and flower pots at the venue.

In the melee, stones were

also pelted as police personnel ran for cover. Angry farmers, mainly comprising youths, damaged the stage, tent and speakers at the venue. They also tore BJP hoardings and uprooted banners in the presence of policemen.

Under the banner of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni), farmers, who have been demanding that the laws be repealed, had earlier announced to oppose the 'kisan mahapanchayat'.

Haryana ministers Kanwar Pal Gujjar, Krishan Lal Panwar, Karnal MP Sanjay Bhartia and Gharaunda MLA Harvinder Kalyan were part

of the programme before the agitating farmers took control of the venue.

The programme was cancelled due to an unruly act by farmers at the behest of BKU leader Gurnam Singh Charuni, BJP leader Raman Malik said.

Police had made elaborate security arrangements for the chief minister's visit to the village where he was to speak to people to highlight the benefits of the new farm laws.

Director General of Police (Crime) Muhammad Akil was also present at the spot.

The protesting farmers earlier carried black flags and shouted slogans against the BJP-led government as they attempted to march towards

Kaimla village. Police had put up barricades at the entry points of the village to prevent the protesters from reaching the programme venue. However, the farmers crossed the barricade put up at Gharaunda on the Kaimla road.

The police had also parked several trucks carrying sand at one of the roads to prevent the farmers from entering Kaimla village. Karnal Superintendent of Police Ganga Ram Punia also tried to pacify the agitators, but in vain.

"All the farmers are here. The CM *sahib* intends to explain the farm laws. We will not allow the government to hold this programme", a protestor said.

The farmers lambasted the Khattar-led dispensation in the state, saying it was holding a programme on the Central farm laws at this point of time when farmers across the country have been protesting against the same.

The government is trying to rub salt into our wounds with this *kisan mahapanchayat* programme, another protester added. Some local villagers and BJP workers also had a face-off with the protesters after the latter reached the venue. The policemen, who tried to pacify the agitating farmers, had also used mild canes to disperse them.

The authorisation will be done by the Switzerland-headquartered INSARAG (or the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) which is a network of more than 90 countries and organisations under the UN umbrella to deal with urban search and rescue related issues.

"Just like we have the Bureau of Indian Standards in the country, the UN agency INSARAG standardises disaster response teams across the world. It is an international gold standard," NDRF director general S N Pradhan told.

"We are very much in thick of it and hopefully we will get the standardisation in 2021."

He further explained the purpose of this categorisation that is possessed by some of India's neighbours like China

and Pakistan.

"If there is a call from the UN to respond to some disaster you will be called upon...you will be an international response force," Pradhan said.

"It is not that we have not been doing that (going for international rescue operations) but when NDRF went to Japan and Nepal in the past it was a bilateral decision between two countries but with this standardisation it will be a UN mandated task," he said.

The authorisation will be done by the Switzerland-headquartered INSARAG (or the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) which is a network of more than 90 countries and organisations under the UN umbrella to deal with urban search and rescue related issues.

"Just like we have the Bureau of Indian Standards in the country, the UN agency INSARAG standardises disaster response teams across the world. It is an international gold standard," NDRF director general S N Pradhan told.

"We are very much in thick of it and hopefully we will get the standardisation in 2021."

He further explained the purpose of this categorisation that is possessed by some of India's neighbours like China

J&K Lt-Governor declares heavy snow as natural calamity



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 10 JANUARY

Srinagar-Jammu NH reopens for traffic

SRINAGAR, 10 JANUARY

The Srinagar-Jammu national highway was reopened on Sunday after seven days in the wake of heavy snowfall last week, even as the city and some other parts of Kashmir received another spell of snowfall, officials said.

The 260-kilometre-long highway - the only all-weather road connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country - was re-opened for fresh traffic on Sunday morning, the officials said.

The highway was blocked on 3 January due to accumulation of snow and landslides and shooting stones in the wake of heavy snowfall. Many vehicles were stranded on the highway which remained closed for traffic for five days.

The road was cleared on Friday, but only stranded vehicles were allowed to move that day and Saturday.

However, as the weather improved and the condition of the road was also better, fresh traffic was allowed to ply this morning, the officials said. PTI

and other issues.

He emphasised on provision of all basic services to the people, in particular, power, water, road connectivity, food, LPG and other essential commodities without any interruption.

He further directed the officers to keep a check on the increase in prices of essential commodities, if any, and take corrective measures.

Bird flu: Centre directs zoos to submit daily report to Central Zoo Authority

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY



A worker sprays disinfectant at the Assam State Zoo as a precautionary measure against bird flu in Guwahati on Sunday. IANS

A day after over 1,200 birds were found dead in the country with seven states confirming outbreak of avian influenza, the Centre on Sunday directed zoo management to submit daily report to the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) till their area is declared free from the disease.

The CZA, under the environment ministry, issued an office memorandum directing management of all zoos to strengthen surveillance and aviary management.

"In endemic areas, entry aviary sections may be monitored and restricted, and all vehicles entering the zoo may be sanitised. All water bodies within the zoo should be monitored and artificial water bodies may be drained. Bird exchange programmes (both national and international may be stopped until further notice). Entry points of migratory birds to be strictly monitored.

Aviary enclosures may be disinfected and all keepers in the sections may be instructed to follow disinfection protocol and use PPE kits which may be destroyed as per standard protocols," it said.

"In the event of declaration of infected area within a zoo, either due to outbreak within the zoo or if the zoo is located within the surveillance zone as notified by central/state government, the officer in charge of the zoo shall submit a daily report to the office of the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) till the area is declared free from avian influenza by the competent authority," the memorandum stated.

Reporting and monitoring format in the daily report will have the name of the zoo, district, total number of bird species housed there, total number of birds in the zoo, free ranging birds (species

and any other data observations as available), number of suspected cases, number of samples sent for confirmation and name of laboratory to which samples were sent.

The CZA also advised that strict hygiene protocols must be maintained in all aviaries and all droppings must be collected, disinfected and disposed of appropriately.

Kanpur zoo shut

The Kanpur Zoological Park has been closed for visitors till further orders after samples taken from two dead birds found there tested positive for the avian influenza virus, an official said on Sunday.

The area up to one kilometre of the zoo has been declared an infected zone and the culling of birds has begun there, said Additional District Magistrate (City) Atul Kumar.

"Four fowls and two parrots were found dead in the zoo in the last five days. Of these, two birds tested positive," Kumar said.

According to the official, the samples of dead birds were sent to the animal disease laboratory in Bhopal which confirmed the presence of H5N1 strain of bird flu in them.

The zoo has been closed for visitors and morning walkers," Kumar said.

An area of 10 kilometres around the zoo has been cordoned off and declared containment zone for an indefinite period by the authorities and shops selling chicken and eggs there have been asked to down shutters for an indefinite period, an official said.

"We have imposed an indefinite ban on the transportation and entry of poultry products including live birds, unprocessed poultry meat in the district as a precautionary measure," District Magistrate Alok Tiwari said.

Six crows found dead in UP's Amethi

Six crows were found dead under mysterious circumstances in the Sangrampur area, officials said.

Chief Veterinary Officer of Amethi Dr MP Singh said the crows were found dead at different places of Kaiti village in the Sangrampur police station area. A team of doctors, along with forest officers, is being sent to the village and the samples of the dead birds will be sent for testing.

Bihar bird festival

A three-day state bird festival titled 'Kalra' will be held from 15 January in Bihar's Jamui district to create awareness about birds especially migratory birds, an official said.

The first state bird festival will be organised between 15 to 17 January, in Nagi-Nakti bird sanctuaries in Jamui district as migratory birds visit the sanctuaries in large numbers during this season.

Avian flu cases confirmed in 13 MP districts

BHOPAL, 10 JANUARY

Bird flu cases have so far been confirmed in 13 districts of Madhya Pradesh, while around 1,100 crows and other wild birds have been found dead across 27 districts since the flu virus was first detected in the state last month, a government official said on Sunday.

A poultry market in Agar Malwa district has been shut for a week after the bird flu virus was detected in one sample there, an official from the public relations department said.

The district administration has started culling and burying of poultry birds as per guidelines, she said.

The state government a few days back ordered closure of poultry shops in Neemuch and Indore for a week.

"The presence of the avian flu in crows and other birds (including poultry birds) has so far been confirmed in 13 districts - Indore, Mandsaur, Agar Malwa, Neemuch, Dewas, Ujjain, Khanda, Khargone, Guna, Shiypuri, Rajgarh, Shahapur and Vidisha," the official said. Till Saturday evening, deaths of about 1,100 crows and wild birds were reported from 27 districts of the state, she said.

5 peacocks found dead

Five peacocks were found dead on Sunday in a village field in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district, officials said.

Samples from the carcasses, found in Madantri, have been sent for examination and post mortem will also be conducted.

Bhandara hosp fire: Parents blame staff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BHANDARA, 10 JANUARY

Many parents whose newborn babies were among those dead in the Bhandara hospital fire have blamed the staff there for dereliction of duty. Ten babies died after

the fire broke out on Saturday at the Special Newborn Care Unit of the four-storeyed district hospital in Maharashtra's Bhandara district town, about 900 km from the state capital Mumbai.

Kin of Geeta and Vishwanath Behere, whose two-

MP's Kuno National Park leads race for Cheetah reintroduction

RAJU GUSAIN

DEHRADUN, 10 JANUARY

Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh has emerged as the most ideal location for Cheetah reintroduction in India. A team of scientists from the Dehradun based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) recently conducted a study tour of six sites - two in Rajasthan and four others in Madhya Pradesh. The scientists study rates Kuno park higher than others due to availability of prey, vegetation and other factors.

The process for reintroduction of Cheetahs, which had become extinct from India long back, is in discussion for many years. The Supreme Court of India approved reintroduction of Cheetah on an experimental basis last year. In consequence of the Supreme Court direction an expert committee appointed by the apex court held meetings on 6 March and 30 September last year to decide on the future course of action.

After getting nod from the apex court a team of scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India visited Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve, Sherghat Wildlife Sanctuary (both in Rajasthan), Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, Kuno National Park, Madhav National Park and Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary (all in Madhya Pradesh).

According to a Wildlife Institute of India (WII), an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (Govt. of India), report - 'Assessment of cheetah introduction sites and proposed actions' - among all the sites

Cheetah reintroduction can be done with minimum investment at Kuno National Park.

The report states, "For free ranging cheetah that would serve as a flagship and also perform their ecological role in a restored savannah-woodland system, clearly Kuno National Park (Sheopur Forest landscape) and Gandhi Sagar-Chittorgarh-Bhaindrigarh WLS with parts of

Virus reactions

From London to Tokyo and across the choppy seas, there has been a frightful resurgence of the dreadful coronavirus. The government of the Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshihide Suga, declared a state of emergency for Tokyo and its three neighbouring prefectures on Thursday, nine months after the first coronavirus-related declaration in April 2020. A dreadful situation calls for drastic action, and so it has been in two very different parts of the world. Tokyo reported more than 2,000 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, about 1.5 times higher than the previous day. The Osaka prefectural government has confirmed more than 600 daily cases for the first time; it has pledged to ask the administration in the nation's capital to issue the same declaration for the prefecture. It is pretty obvious that the alarming rise in the graph of the affected and casualties could have prompted the Suga administration to promulgate the emergency. To the consternation of some, marked by increasing concern over the loss of livelihood and income, the digital display on a building showed the news of the declaration at Tokyo's iconic Shibuya Crossing. A piece of breaking news has quite totally shocked the nation's populace. The subtext must be that on the first anniversary of the outbreak so to speak, the latest coronavirus surge has unnerved governments in different parts of the world. An enormous responsibility thus devolves on Japan's new Prime Minister, who recently took over from Shinzo Abe, indeed when Covid-19 was at its peak almost throughout the world. "The last time the previous state of emergency was declared, I was desperate not to get infected, but this time I'm more worried about my family's finances," was the response of a housewife in Tokyo. In parallel, rail, air and highway connections to Hebei in China have been suspended and prevention and control measures tightened. Japan's emergency order is not repressive. The declaration carries no penalties; it will work as an earnest appeal by the Prime Minister as the country struggles to reconstruct its blighted economy. The entities that defy the request will be publicised in a list. At another remove, those that comply will be eligible for assistance. Shopping malls and schools will remain open while film theatres and museums will be asked to curb attendance. Efforts are under way to get the vaccine approved and delivered. "Please take this matter seriously as your own, to protect all precious life, your parents, your grandparents, family and friends over generations," was Mr Suga's appeal to the nation on Thursday. The appeal is suitably robust. Japan's Prime Minister has spoken appropriately at a time when across the world a largely rudderless United States has clocked a record 3,998 deaths and nearly 300,000 afflictions on a single day but appears so trapped by its politics that it has been forced to abandon governance.

Full bloom

Mo Zedong may not quite be centrally relevant to Test cricket but something akin to his delectable desire for a hundred flowers to blossom - even if his focus was actually on new ideas in the arts and sciences - seems to have fructified in this country in a way which we have been relishing. If Australia, after Adelaide, had been counted on comprehensively to wring India's neck, they ended up wringing their own hands in Melbourne. A measure and symptom of the hosts' infirmity was that they had never mustered more than 200 in any of the innings they had played till then in the four-match series currently deadlocked 1-1, a simple but stark bit of statistics when the third Test in Sydney was being gone into. While Ravichandran Ashwin, the off-spinner, has already been acknowledged as the man scheming the Indian attack - the way he dealt with Steve Smith was a lesson in taking the mickey out of someone who was expected to remind the world of King Arthur with his Excalibur each time he stepped forth - fast bowling has been an area in which the visitors have been just as potent a threat.

If India have traditionally been so short on this that Budhi Kunderan and later Sunil Gavaskar found themselves opening the bowling, the change in the circumstances is overwhelming. And it was not as if India were on velvet. Ishant Sharma, injured, never made the trip. Then Mohammad Shami pulled out too, his forearm fractured by a sharpish delivery. Umesh Yadav was injured as well. But Mohammad Siraj had turned up like he had long been used to appearing in the cometh-the-hour-cometh-the-man role, eminently capable of administering the shock treatment. And when you reckoned also with T Natarajan and Navdeep Saini, who was to be chosen for Sydney, the picture spoke of a countrywide surge, with Jasprit Bumrah and Shardul Thakur signifying the proud presence of western India. True, the east were unrepresented in this assembly of pace purveyors but there was no bar on regional youngsters striving for recognition and inclusion in the future, taking their cue from those who had made it. Arguably, this is the most important feature of Indian cricket today, given that we have always had solid, even spectacular, batsmen and wily spinners of the highest aristocracy.

When Kapil Dev, back in 1978, began bowling with so many slips and a gully, the sheer run to the bowling mark gave us an unforgettable frisson of thrill. What today's young brigade unleashes upon India's rivals is an inspired continuation of the energetic drive, one that has altered our cricketing experience, embellishing it with a power we once missed in Indian performances. The Haryana Hurricane, of course, was someone who could have single-handedly swung a game our way batting or bowling. But if India's new boys only get it right with the new ball, we shall want hundreds of them in full bloom, always.

Dragon and Kabul

China remains convinced about the imminent rupture to the delicate equilibrium in Afghanistan right now and is sure that the return of the Taliban or even an indecisive civil war between rival factions is to the net detriment of Chinese interests



Chinese leadership tends to spike the stilted and tedious domain of diplomats and geopolitics with well-aimed aphorisms from its ancient and civilizational wisdom. In 2014, when President Xi Jinping was barely a couple of years into the top job, he had alluded to dangers of cross-border terrorism at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. He had said, "As the proverb goes, 'Strength does not come from the muscle of the arms, but from the union of the heart.' We should engage in sincere and in-depth dialogue and communication to increase strategic mutual trust, reduce mutual misgivings, seek common ground while resolving differences and live in harmony with each other."

Even though Xi Jinping did not mention it then, he could have added 'cheque-book diplomacy', 'debt-traps' or plain 'coercion', to the alternative strategies deployed by China subsequently, besides the proverbial 'muscle of the arms' and the 'union of the heart'. However, there is yet another sophisticated Chinese philosophy at play, that is deliberately low key and seeks invisibility - rooted in its Daoist strategic tradition that is based on five key pillars i.e. rationalism, aloofness, optimisation, restraint and flexibility.

The hallmarks of this elusive approach were visible in Beijing's handling of Afghanistan, with which it shares a 76-kilometre-long land border. China's historical appreciation of Afghanistan as the 'graveyard of empires', has spared it the expansionist eye that governs, militarily or economically, all its other neighbours under the 'going out' strategem. The singular aspiration that China harbours for Afghanistan is 'stability'; this breeds complicated, contradictory and unmen-

tional moves distinct from the usual Chinese tact, which warrants a constant hawk eye and subtle manipulations, but without getting dragged into the no-win swamp of Afghanistan.

China has historically tiptoed gingerly around Afghanistan by tacitly supporting the Afghan Mujahideen in the Soviet-Afghan war owing to Beijing's own competitive rift with Moscow - though the subsequent experience of the rule in the 1990s would scar Beijing's outlook towards dispensations in Kabul, very counterintuitively, from the preferences of its 'all-weather friend' in Islamabad. Contrary to the expected hullabaloo of having American troops in its 'backyard', China

would rather punt

on Afghan 'stability' with American soldiers-on-ground, rather than hope for the same through a puritanical dispensation like the Taliban. The primary motivation for China to seek 'stability' in Kabul is premised on a moderate Afghan dispensation's ability to rein-in Chinese Islamist insurgents like Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) or East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which seek to establish an Islamic state of East Turkestan in China's contiguous Xinjiang province. These China-facing Islamist groups had been given active support, training and afforded bases by the Taliban-Al Qaida groups, prior to the disruption of that eco-system by the current pro-West Afghan dispensation, in conjunction with the American/NATO troops. So, while Pakistan continuously pinned its hope on 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan via the return of the Taliban, the Chinese would realistically not have the Taliban.

The Chinese have a very pessimistic outlook about the fate of ongoing US-Taliban peace talks. China remains convinced about the imminent rupture to the delicate equilibrium in Afghanistan right now and is sure that the return of the Taliban or even an indecisive civil war between rival factions is to the net detriment of Chinese interests. Beijing views the American urgency to 'pull-out' troops from Afghanistan as imprudent, as that is sure to lead to chaos and a bloodshed in the region, with vulnerable neighbours like China left to face consequences and spillovers. China is paranoid about religious radicalisation and violence on its side, especially given its ongoing

purge against its own Uyghur populace. China picked on the possibilities of this awkward development early and shifted gears from 'calculated indifference' to 'strategic engagement'. China has since made strategic moves in Afghanistan in terms of mediation across the board, flaunting its ostensible 'neutrality'. It has opened talks with Taliban

directly, facilitated joint dialogues (e.g. through Shanghai Cooperation Organization) as key participant, as also invested in building a military base in Badakhshan province, for the current Ashraf Ghani government. Last week in a curious development, the Afghan National Security Adviser, Hamdullah Mohib, met the Chinese special envoy for Afghanistan, Liu Jian, to discuss issues of cooperation on peace and security! Clearly, the Chinese haven't forsaken the incumbent and beleaguered Ashraf Ghani government yet.

For once and uniquely so,

the Chinese preference for a government in Afghanistan would be more aligned to the preferences of New Delhi, than to those of Islamabad.

The comparative delta of upsetting the applecart as it is cast now (as opposed to a Pakistan-supported Taliban government), is a net loss to Beijing. Despite covert assurances by Taliban leadership to Chinese mediators not to target its investments and assets, the Chinese know that the Taliban are not a monolithic, disciplined and trustworthy entity. The current facilitatory game of the Chinese is very tentative and they have not put their weight behind the Taliban, as done by the Pakistanis.

The Chinese would ideally seek a status quo situation that keeps the moderate government in Kabul on perennial tenterhooks, desperate for more international investments (where it can outplay, 'outfund' and control Indian influence), but without risking having a lawless Taliban-like revisionist government. Even the CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) assets in Pakistan are susceptible to attacks from China's own Islamist insurgent groups, and while it can exert formal pressure on the Pakistani Military to squeeze them in Pakistan, the same may not be possible with a Taliban government in Kabul.

Pursuing a unilateral role in the 'graveyard of empires' is a clear no-no, and Beijing's international credibility in mustering a multilateral force (beyond Pakistan, which has its own complicated angularities), would prove challenging.

The Dragon is confused and persisting with engagement in the interim to salvage the situation in Afghanistan, betting that the incoming Biden dispensation does a rethink on the proposed 'pull-out', which will be inadvertently preferable to both Beijing and Delhi.

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

ASIAN VOICES
Vigilance is best antidote for new strains

Fresh fears have arisen that the pandemic could be prolonged after new strains of Sars-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes Covid-19, were detected last month. The good news is that there is no evidence that the new strains, thought to have originated in England and South Africa, are deadlier or more resistant to vaccines. What is evident is that the new strains are more transmissible. One study has shown that the new variant increases the reproduction, or R, ratio - the average number of people an infected person infects - by between 0.4 and 0.7. An added source of worry is that it has been spreading more quickly among all age groups, including young adults and secondary school-age children. The concerns are understandable, and heightened vigilance and containment efforts will be needed in what has been a year-long battle that has overwhelmed hospitals, officials and the man in the street.

But the best defence against new strains remains the same: control transmission through testing, tracing, isolating, wearing masks and observing safe distancing. Vaccines developed thus far have been aimed at the original strain of the coronavirus but are thought to generate a wide immune response that can also offer protection against mutations. Infection rates, therefore, ought to recede

THE STRAITS TIMES

as vaccination drives make headway in Asia, the United States and Europe, and new lockdowns and travel restrictions rein in the winter surge in the Northern Hemisphere. It is imperative that along with public health efforts, the scientific community continues to unlock new information on how viruses mutate, how the mutations spread and how they can be contained. Last week, the World Health Organisation (WHO) called on nations to step up genomic sequencing of the coronavirus because only through such efforts can new variants be detected - this was how Britain discovered the B117 strain - and coping strategies adjusted. While mutations are a normal part of the evolution of a pandemic, they must be matched by quick and transparent sharing of data and best practices. More than a year after the virus was first detected in Wuhan, gaps remain in the understanding of the scourge that has killed nearly two million people and felled economies worldwide.

A WHO team will visit China this month to learn how the virus emerged and spread to humans. With the imminent inauguration of US President-elect Joe Biden, the US-China tensions that have hobbled this search may ease. The detailed epidemiological investigations to be undertaken by the WHO team require access and support from China. The intention must be to unearth useful information, not to shovel blame. A pandemic is, after all, a shared concern.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Trump must be held accountable

SIR, This refers to the editorial, 'Tyranny of power' (8 January). The attack on the United States Capitol will remain a blot on American democracy, for it was instigated by President Donald Trump through his speeches and tweets filled with lies, disinformation and fake news. He is solely responsible for the death of four and injury to scores of rioters, whom he unleashed in an attempt to derail the joint session of Congress certifying Joe Biden's presidential victory.

A leader obsessed with building a personality cult, who has no hesitation in trampling over constitutional processes and institutions, and who has a strong streak of ethno-nationalism based on demonizing minorities, can easily turn into an undemocratic and authoritarian figure. Those committed to democracy and its ideals may take heart from the fact that Biden's triumph is now formal and those who dismissed Trump as merely idiosyncratic rather than as a danger to democracy itself underestimated his destructive instincts.

The law must act swiftly and decisively against the storm-troopers and their general. The challenge to reclaim democracy from the grip of the Trumpian vision

remains formidable. The office of the US President will overcome this temporary loss of glory on January 20 when Trump makes way for Biden, for which upholders of institutional integrity should be applauded. The US has, for long, preached the values of democracy and accountability. It is time to put it in practice.

Yours, etc., SS Paul,
Nadia, 8 January.

SOCIAL MEDIA CURBS

SIR, Apropos of 'Anything goes' (January 9), the carnage at the US Capitol building has re-triggered debate on the role of social media in providing a platform to wrong information that finally ends with violence. A fallout of the widespread outrage was that President Donald Trump was locked out of his social media accounts for inciting violence. While Twitter and YouTube have served serious warnings about permanent

removal, Facebook and Instagram have frozen his accounts.

Social media companies have taken some steps to curb the spread of fake news but these are not adequate. Nobody can miss that serious action against Trump is coming only at the end of his term. With American democracy coming under serious threat this week, there is a much stronger case now for ushering in a sophisticated regulatory mechanism to oversee dissemination of information on social media, without compromise on the benefits these platforms provide.

Social media should not continue to roam free of accountability and the compliances which are mandatory for traditional media like newspapers.

These are issues that must be debated in Parliament, which is in the process of crafting a personal data protection bill. Of

course in India the normal approach to maintaining public order in the age of social media is to shut down the internet.

This imposes huge social and economic costs. Moreover, an internet shutdown is in contrast to the government's Digital India policy. We therefore need a more sophisticated approach to regulating social media companies and checking their spread of fake news.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra,
Mohali, 9 January.

IRRATIONAL

SIR, As per media reports, on 6 January, a Muslim trader was hauled up by the police in Bulandshahar's Gulawati area on a complaint of members of the Bajrang Dal that he was selling shoes sporting the "Thakur" brand. The plea of the poor trader that he did not brand the shoes himself but that it was done by the manufacturer fell on deaf

ears. Now in our Bengal, elderly people often use sandals by the name of Vidyasagar. Though Vidyasagar is not a divine personality, but he is highly respected. Does it dishonour him in any manner? If such excesses are perpetrated frequently, "Hindutva" will become a dreaded term.

Yours, etc., NK Das Gupta,
Kolkata, 7 January.

ROHIT VEMULA

SIR, Come 17th January, a black day for Indian democracy. On this day in the year 2016 a tragic incident had rocked the entire nation, Rohit Vemula, a 26-year-old young and bright Dalit scholar who was engaged as a Research Fellow at the PhD level in Hyderabad Central University (HCU), was forced to commit suicide due to the alleged high-handedness and abetment, which ultimately led to this extreme step. In 2015 the then Vice-Chancellor of

HCU had not only expelled Rohit but also evicted from the hostel. His scholarship disbursement when he was in dire need of money for his sustenance in Hyderabad, far away from his native place. He found it difficult to continue with his Ph.D, et al alone prepare his thesis.

Over the past five years, Rohit's mother, Radhika Vemula, has fought a lone battle against the gross injustice meted out to her son, ostensibly because he belonged to a Dalit his only fault was being from a dalit family and her younger son Raja has become a qualified law year and took the crusader against social injustice to the dalits - the down trodden community and he has already started an outfit 'Rohit Vemula Seva Sangram' to extend help to migrant labourers 'in this hour of pandemics by providing free food to them. Yours, etc., Baniprasanna Dutta, Kolkata, 6 January.



R-DAY GUEST

SIR, With reference to your report, 'Boris Johnson cancels R-Day visit' (January 6), a few points merit consideration. India was under British rule for 190 years (1757-1947). During that period our country was exploited by the colonial rulers in all possible ways. The country achieved independence through the sustained struggle of its brave sons and daughters. They made sacrifices, undergoing torture, imprisonment and even their lives.

The tallest among them formed an army abroad and bravely fought the enemy in the battlefield. Is it not a gross insult to the sacred memory of those martyrs to invite the head of the country of that colonial power as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade?

Yours, etc., Sanjit Ghatak, Narendrapur, 8 January.

THUMBNAILS

Irdai to general insurers: The Irdai has asked general insurance companies to mandatorily offer three standard products covering risk of fire and allied perils from 1 April. The regulator said the Standard Fire and Special Perils (SFSP) Policy will be replaced by the three standard products - Bharat Gridha Raksha, Bharat Sookshma Udyam Suraksha and Bharat Laghu Udyam Suraksha. It shall be mandatorily offered by all general insurers carrying on fire and allied perils insurance business with effect from 1 April 2021.

PTI

BharatPe cash chase: Financial technology firm BharatPe said it plans to raise over Rs 5,000 crore in debt funding in next 2 years to build its lending business. The company further announced that it has received Rs 60 crore from Innovent Capital, a venture debt and specialty lending firm. "As we build the lending business at BharatPe, raising institutional debt is important to us. We plan to raise \$500-700 million (Rs 3,600 crore - Rs 5,118 crore) of debt capital over the next 2 years," it said.

PTI

HMSI initiates VRS: Two-wheeler major Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) has initiated a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) for permanent workers amid challenging market conditions, as per a company notice. The VRS would run from 5 January till 23 January this year and cover permanent employees barring director level officials, according to a communication sent by the company management to the Manesar plant employees.

PTI

Titan Jewellery unit: Tata Group firm Titan said its jewellery division has recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic jolt, entering the growth phase, and other divisions have moved closer to full recovery led by festive season sales in the third quarter of the current fiscal.

PTI

Aviation industry likely to see 57% revenue growth in FY22

Industry's net losses may reduce to ₹14,600 crore from an estimated ₹21,000 crore this financial year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 10 JANUARY

With around 57 per cent growth expected in revenue in FY22 on the back of a likely higher passenger traffic, the domestic aviation industry's net losses may reduce to ₹14,600 crore from an estimated net loss of ₹21,000 crore this fiscal, ratings agency Icra said.

However, the ratings agency has maintained its "negative" credit outlook on the Indian aviation industry. It expects debt levels to remain high in 2020-21 and 2021-22, and the industry may require a capital infusion of Rs 35,000 crore-37,000 crore between 2020-21 and 2022-23.

"With an improvement in passenger traffic in 2021-22, Icra expects the Indian aviation industry to report a year-on-year growth of around 57 per cent in revenues, with the industry's net loss reducing to ₹146 billion (Rs 14,600 crore) from an estimated net loss of ₹210 billion (21,000 crore) in 2020-21," said Icra vice-president Kinjal Shah.

ICRA ESTIMATES

► "With an improvement in passenger traffic in 2021-22, Icra expects the Indian aviation industry to report a year-on-year growth of around 57 per cent in revenues, with the industry's net loss reducing to ₹146 billion (Rs 14,600 crore) from an estimated net loss of ₹210 billion (21,000 crore) in 2020-21," said Icra vice-president Kinjal Shah.

► The rating agency said the financial year 2021-22 will witness a robust 78 per cent year-on-growth in domestic air passenger, owing to the low base of 2020-21, rising leisure travel and gradual opening up of corporate offices.

► There is likely to be around 164 per cent growth in international air passenger traffic, it said.



ability, Icra said domestic air passenger traffic could witness a further upside in 2021-22, with an estimated growth of about 93 per cent. International air passenger traffic could witness an estimated growth of about 235 per cent.

The recovery in domestic air passenger traffic is contingent upon five factors - containment of the spread of Covid-19; willingness of consumers to undertake leisure travel; recovery in macroeconomic growth; central and various state government-mandated travel restrictions and quarantine norms; and recovery in business travel, Icra said.

Continuous addition of fresh Covid-19 positive cases and concerns over non-availability of a vaccine on a wide scale until the second half of 2021 will continue to impact consumers' willingness to undertake leisure travel and even business travel, it stated.

Besides, the recent reports of a new virus strain and consequent temporary suspen-

sion of flights from the UK to India by the Government of India are an additional concern, according to the ratings agency.

The impact of the pandemic will be more profound and last longer on international travel compared to domestic travel, it said.

In the near-term, the balance sheets of Indian carriers will remain stressed until the carriers are able to reduce their debt burden through a combination of improvement in operating performance and/or through equity infusion, Icra said.

The debt levels will remain high for the industry and are estimated to be range bound at around Rs 500 billion (excluding lease liabilities) in FY2021 and FY2022, with the industry requiring an additional funding of Rs 350-370 billion (Rs 35,000 crore-37,000 crore) over FY2021 to FY2023," said Shah.

Despite an improvement in the credit metrics, they will remain stressed in 2021-22, she added.

Reserve Bank scheme to boost digital payments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 10 JANUARY

The Reserve Bank of India said payments infrastructure development fund (PIDF) has been operationalised to create 30 lakh new touch points every year for digital payments in tier-3 to tier-6 centres.

In June last year, the RBI had announced the creation of payments infrastructure development fund (PIDF). The fund intended to subsidise deployment of payment acceptance infrastructure in tier-3 to tier-6 centres, with special focus on the north-eastern states.

In a statement, the central bank said an advisory council (AC), under the chairmanship of RBI deputy governor BP Kanungo, has been constituted for managing the

and QR code-based payments, will be the types of acceptance devices to be covered under the scheme.

"As the cost structure of acceptance devices vary, subsidy amounts shall accordingly differ by the type of payment acceptance device deployed. A subsidy of 30 per cent to 50 per cent of cost of physical PoS and 50 per cent to 75 per cent subsidy for digital PoS shall be offered," the RBI said.

However, payment methods that are not inter-operable would not be considered under the PIDF. The objective of PIDF is to increase the number of acceptance devices multi-fold in the country. The scheme is expected to benefit the acquiring banks/non-banks and merchants by lowering overall acceptance infrastructure cost."

Sugar production rises by 42%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY

India's sugar production increased by 42 per cent year-on-year during October-December period to 110.22 lakh tons on higher cane output and an early start of mills in Maharashtra, according to trade data. Sugar marketing year runs from October to September.

Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said in a statement that mills produced 110.22 lakh tons of sugar during October-December period of 2020-21 sugar marketing year as against 77.63 lakh tons in the corresponding period of the previous year.

In Maharashtra, sugar production stood at 39.86 lakh tons during the period under review as against 16.50 lakh tons in the year-ago period. Sugar output in Uttar Pradesh rose marginally to 33.66 lakh tons

from 33.16 lakh tons.

Around 10 lakh tons of sugar export contracts are said to have been entered into by now and sugar has already started moving for exports. The government has set a target of 60 lakh tons of sugar exports during the 2020-21 marketing year, ending September, to liquidate surplus stock.

On the sugar export subsidy, ISMA said: "Considering that the world sugar prices were better in December 2020 as compared to what it was in September 2019, when the government had announced last year's export programme for 2019-20, the export subsidy for the sugar exports has been restricted by the government at Rs 6,000 per ton."

However, it said the actual expenses incurred on internal transport, ocean freight and marketing and promotion charges are much higher.



"Sugar production in the second largest sugar exporting nation i.e. Thailand, is almost 80-90 lakh tons less than what they usually produce. Therefore, India has an opportunity to export its sugar to the Asian importing countries, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, in addition to its own traditional markets in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, East Africa etc," the statement said.

Considering that the world wants Indian sugar, and the fact that sugar production is lower in Thailand, EU etc, India should be able to export its targeted volumes with the support of the Rs 6,000 per ton of export subsidy during 2020-21," ISMA said.

"The world trade happens in relation to the futures prices in the London ICE exchange for white sugar and New York exchange for raw sugar. Currently, sugar contracts are happening in relation to the March futures, but in a couple of months, the same will happen with respect to May futures, which is substantially lower as compared to March futures."

"The global futures market is inverse and therefore, as the season progresses, the sugar export prices are expected to be lower as compared to what one is getting currently," ISMA said.

Inbound M&As fall 7% to \$73.6 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 10 JANUARY



Despite Reliance Group closing a slew of equity investments in its telecom and retail arms to the tune of \$23 billion in 2020, the overall inbound M&As failed to notch up the 2019 tally with the value falling by 7 per cent to \$73.6 billion last year, according to a report.

Last year, outbound M&As touched \$4.4 billion, up 58.4 per cent compared to 2019 and over 80 per cent of the money landed in US assets, according to tally of mergers & acquisitions (M&As) by global financial markets data provider Refinitiv.

Overall inbound deals faltered due to the pandemic, pulling down the deal value by 7 per cent and down 11.5 per cent in volume over 2019.

With \$73.6 billion worth inbound deals, M&A value last year was way below the all-time high it scaled in 2018 at

\$132.2 billion and up from 2017 when it was at a low \$58.3 billion, according to Elaine Tan, a senior analyst at Refinitiv.

The numbers would have been much lower had it not been for the litany of deals by Reliance - \$16 billion into Jio and over \$6.4 billion into Reliance Retail.

However, domestic M&As dropped 12.4 per cent in value to \$36.8 billion while the number of announced domestic deals fell 11.5 per cent from 2019.

The biggest deal was by

Facebook acquiring 9.9 per cent stake in Jio Platforms for \$5.7 billion through its subsidiary Jaadhu Holdings. During the third quarter, Google International also acquired 7.73 per cent stake in Jio for \$4.5 billion.

Thanks to the big deals by Reliance with Facebook and Google, the US was the most active foreign asset acquirer in terms of value and volume. While value doubled to \$19.1 billion from 147 deals, it captured 51.9 per cent of the inbound M&A market share.



I represent the government and all Indonesians in expressing my deep condolences for this tragedy

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT JOKO WIDODO
AFTER THE PLANE CRASH

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, MONDAY 11 JANUARY 2021

09

US lifts self-imposed curbs on contacts with Taiwan

China regards Taiwan as a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland, even by force

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 10 JANUARY



The US has lifted the "self-imposed restrictions" on contacts between American and Taiwanese diplomats and officials, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has announced, ending a long-standing policy to "appease" China.

The move on Taiwan is likely to anger China and increase tensions between Washington and Beijing as the Trump administration enters its final days ahead of the inauguration of Joe Biden as president on January 20.

China regards Taiwan as a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland, even by force. But Taiwan's leaders assert that it is a sovereign state.

In a statement on Saturday, Pompeo said, for several decades the State Department has created complex internal restrictions to regulate our diplomats, service members, and other officials'

interactions with their Taiwanese counterparts. The US has maintained close ties with Taiwan since it split from mainland China in 1949 after the end of a civil war. But until recently Washington has avoided major displays of friendship so as to not antagonise Beijing, which continues to view the self-governing democracy of around 24 million people as an inseparable part of its territory.

Referring to Taiwan as a reliable and unofficial partner, Pompeo, a staunch critic of China, added that the US executive branch agencies should consider contact guidelines regarding relations with Taiwan previously issued by the State Department to be null and void.

"The United States government took these actions

unilaterally, in an attempt to appease the Communist regime in Beijing. No more," he said. "Today I am announcing that I am lifting all of these self-imposed restrictions," the US top diplomat said. The United States government maintains relationships with unofficial partners around the world, and Taiwan is no exception, he said.

"Our two democracies share common values of individual freedom, the rule of law, and a respect for human dignity. Today's statement recognises that the US-Taiwan relationship need not, and should not, be shackled by self-imposed restrictions of our permanent bureaucracy," Pompeo said. The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly Craft, is set to visit Taiwan this week to "reinforce the US government's strong and ongoing support for Taiwan's international space," Pompeo announced last week.

The latest move by the US has been welcomed by Taiwan. "I'm grateful to @SecPompeo for

peo & StateDept for lifting restrictions unnecessarily limiting our engagements these past years. I'm also thankful for strong bipartisan support in Congress for the #TaiwanFlag of Taiwan Assurance Act, which advocates a review of prior guidelines," Taiwan's Foreign Minister Jaushieh Joseph Wu tweeted.

"The closer partnership between #TaiwanFlag of Taiwan & the #USFlag of United States is firmly based on our shared values, common interests & unshakeable belief in freedom & democracy. We'll continue working in the months & years ahead to ensure Taiwan is & continues to be a force for good in the world," he wrote in another tweet.

Tensions between China and the US over a range of issues, including trade, human rights, Hong Kong and Taiwan, have worsened in recent months. Beijing has escalated pressure on Taiwan through a series of military drills and aircraft incursions. China's state media lashed out at the latest move on Taiwan by the departing Trump administration, accusing US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of "seeking to maliciously inflict a long-lasting scar on China-US ties."

A writer for the official Xinhua News Agency said in a commentary on Sunday that the lifting of longstanding restrictions on US government contacts with Taiwanese counterparts proves that Pompeo "is only interested in stoking unwarranted confrontations, and has no interest in world peace." A commentary posted online by CGTN, the English-language channel of state broadcaster CCTV, called Pompeo's announcement "a cowardly act of sabotage" of the next US administration. AP

Voters in Kyrgyzstan cast ballots in early presidential vote

MOSCOW, 10 JANUARY

Voters in Kyrgyzstan cast ballots Sunday in an early presidential election that will also determine how much power the next president has. The vote follows the ouster of the previous president in October.

The ex-Soviet Central Asian nation sank into turmoil after a parliamentary election that was swept by pro-government parties. Opposition supporters accused authorities of rigging the vote and forced President Sooronbai Jeenbekov to step down on October 15.

Sadyr Zhaparov, a 52-year-old politician who was freed from jail by protesters and then spearheaded Jeenbekov's removal from office, is widely expected to win.

The unrest marked the third time in 15 years when a leader of the 6.5-million nation on the border with China was forced out by a popular uprising. Kyrgyzstan, which is a member of Russia-dominated economic and security alliances, depends on Moscow. Russia has voiced concerns about the turmoil in Kyrgyzstan but refrained from supporting any of the candidates.

RESTRICTED



Chinese paramilitary policemen wearing face masks stand guard at the quiet Tiananmen Gate in Beijing, on Sunday. AP

China reports 380 cases south of Beijing

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING, 10 JANUARY

The outbreak has raised particular concern because Hebei borders the nation's capital.

More than 380 people have tested positive in a growing Covid outbreak south of Beijing in China's Hebei province.

Hebei health authorities said that 40 new cases had been confirmed Sunday morning, bringing the total to 223. Another 161 people tested positive but showed no symptoms. China does not include such asymptomatic cases in

its official tally. The outbreak has raised particular concern because Hebei borders the nation's capital. Travel between the two has been restricted, with workers from Hebei having to show proof of employment in Beijing to

enter the city. Almost all the cases are in Shijiazhuang, the provincial capital, which is about 260 kilometers southwest of Beijing. A handful have also been found in Xingtai city, 110 kilometers farther south. Both cities have conducted mass testing of millions of residents, suspended public transportation and taxis, and restricted residents to their communities or villages for one week.

Earlier Sunday, China's National Health Commission reported that 69 new cases had been confirmed nationwide the previous day, most of them in Hebei. The others included 21 people who had arrived recently from overseas.

Beijing had one new case, bringing the number of confirmed cases to 32 in a smaller outbreak that surfaced about three weeks ago. Almost all the cases have been in Shunyi in the city's northeastern suburbs.

Pakistan faces massive power outage

ISLAMABAD, 10 JANUARY

Several cities and towns across Pakistan plunged into darkness overnight following a major technical fault in the country's power generation and distribution system, the energy minister said on Sunday.

The power outage was reported shortly before midnight almost simultaneously in many cities.

Residents of Karachi, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Islamabad, Multan and others faced the blackout. Pakistan Energy Minister Omar Ayub Khan, along with Information Minister Shibli Faraz, said that the power supply snapped at 11:41 pm on Saturday after a technical fault at Guddu power plant in Sindh province.

The minister said that the power plant's safety systems started shutting off automatically soon after it developed a fault, *the Express Tribune* reported. PTI

Israelis protest Netanyahu amid 3rd virus lockdown

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM, 10 JANUARY

Thousands of Israelis renewed weekly demonstrations against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, calling for the long-serving leader to resign over corruption charges against him and his alleged mishandling of the coronavirus crisis.

Protesters on Saturday held signs reading Go, and Bibi, let my people go, referring to Netanyahu by his nickname.

The protest in a Jerusalem square near Netanyahu's official residence comes as Israel is in the midst of its third national lockdown, which was recently tightened to shutter schools, and as the country presses forward with a world-leading vaccination drive. Netanyahu's trial was set to resume this week, but was postponed indefinitely amid the tighter restrictions.

Netanyahu has been indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust connected to three long-run-

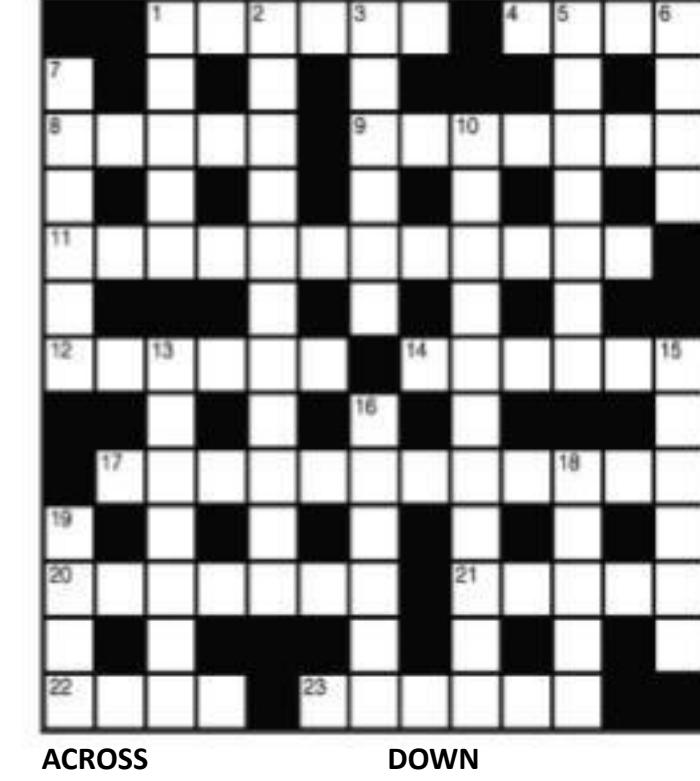
ning investigations. He has denied any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a witch hunt by hostile media, law enforcement and judicial officials. Protesters argue that Netanyahu cannot properly lead the country while under indictment.

Israel has seen a recent surge in cases despite unleashing one of the world's fastest vaccination campaigns. The country has given the first of two vaccine doses to nearly 20 percent of its population, and Netanyahu said Thursday that Israel has secured enough vaccines to inoculate the whole adult population by the end of March.

Netanyahu has placed the vaccination drive at the center of his campaign for reelection that same month. On March 23, Israel will hold its fourth nationwide vote in less than two years. In the meantime, he has called on Israelis to make one last big effort to halt transmission by adhering to the tightened restrictions.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Severity (6)
- US theatre award (4)
- Board game (5)
- Conspirator (7)
- Made more robust (12)
- Nevertheless (4,2)
- Renowned (6)
- Type of murderer (6,6)
- 20 ft (7)
- Courage (5)
- Farm building (4)
- Theatre seating area (6)
- 12 Febra-
- 16 Spatula,
- 18 Disco,
- 20 Conga,
- 21 Grumble,
- 22 Sit,
- 23 Kent,
- 13 Against,
- 14 Avail,
- 15 Covert,
- 16 Socks,
- 17 Utah,
- 19 Sabre.
- DOWN
- Measuring stick (5)
- Green-skinned apple (6)
- Informal (6)
- Active (2,3,2)
- Thread (4)
- Pure (6)
- In working order (11)
- Glasses, goggles, etc (7)
- Fruit dessert (6)
- Red wine (6)
- Cricket ground (5)
- 19 Mop (4)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Hoar,
- 16 Spatula,
- 18 Disco,
- 20 Conga,
- 21 Grumble,
- 22 Sit,
- 23 Kent,
- 13 Against,
- 14 Avail,
- 15 Covert,
- 16 Socks,
- 17 Utah,
- 19 Sabre.
- DOWN
- 1 Handless,
- 3 Arrows,
- 4 Allevy,
- 5 Litter,
- 6 Interchange,
- 7 Arms,
- 10 Aspirin,
- 11 Arrows,
- 12 Arrows,
- 13 Arrows,
- 14 Arrows,
- 15 Arrows,
- 16 Arrows,
- 17 Arrows,
- 18 Arrows,
- 19 Arrows,
- 20 Arrows,
- 21 Arrows,
- 22 Arrows,
- 23 Arrows,
- 24 Arrows,
- 25 Arrows,
- 26 Arrows,
- 27 Arrows,
- 28 Arrows,
- 29 Arrows,
- 30 Arrows,
- 31 Arrows,
- 32 Arrows,
- 33 Arrows,
- 34 Arrows,
- 35 Arrows,
- 36 Arrows,
- 37 Arrows,
- 38 Arrows,
- 39 Arrows,
- 40 Arrows,
- 41 Arrows,
- 42 Arrows,
- 43 Arrows,
- 44 Arrows,
- 45 Arrows,
- 46 Arrows,
- 47 Arrows,
- 48 Arrows,
- 49 Arrows,
- 50 Arrows,
- 51 Arrows,
- 52 Arrows,
- 53 Arrows,
- 54 Arrows,
- 55 Arrows,
- 56 Arrows,
- 57 Arrows,
- 58 Arrows,
- 59 Arrows,
- 60 Arrows,
- 61 Arrows,
- 62 Arrows,
- 63 Arrows,
- 64 Arrows,
- 65 Arrows,
- 66 Arrows,
- 67 Arrows,
- 68 Arrows,
- 69 Arrows,
- 70 Arrows,
- 71 Arrows,
- 72 Arrows,
- 73 Arrows,
- 74 Arrows,
- 75 Arrows,
- 76 Arrows,
- 77 Arrows,
- 78 Arrows,
- 79 Arrows,
- 80 Arrows,
- 81 Arrows,
- 82 Arrows,
- 83 Arrows,
- 84 Arrows,
- 85 Arrows,
- 86 Arrows,
- 87 Arrows,
- 88 Arrows,
- 89 Arrows,
- 90 Arrows,
- 91 Arrows,
- 92 Arrows,
- 93 Arrows,
- 94 Arrows,
- 95 Arrows,
- 96 Arrows,
- 97 Arrows,
- 98 Arrows,
- 99 Arrows,
- 100 Arrows,
- 101 Arrows,
- 102 Arrows,
- 103 Arrows,
- 104 Arrows,
- 105 Arrows,
- 106 Arrows,
- 107 Arrows,
- 108 Arrows,
- 109 Arrows,
- 110 Arrows,
- 111 Arrows,
- 112 Arrows,
- 113 Arrows,
- 114 Arrows,
- 115 Arrows,
- 116 Arrows,
- 117 Arrows,
- 118 Arrows,
- 119 Arrows,
- 120 Arrows,
- 121 Arrows,
- 122 Arrows,
- 123 Arrows,
- 124 Arrows,
- 125 Arrows,
- 126 Arrows,
- 127 Arrows,
- 128 Arrows,
- 129 Arrows,
- 130 Arrows,
- 131 Arrows,
- 132 Arrows,
- 133 Arrows,
- 134 Arrows,
- 135 Arrows,
- 136 Arrows,
- 137 Arrows,
- 138 Arrows,
- 139 Arrows,
- 140 Arrows,
- 141 Arrows,
- 142 Arrows,
- 143 Arrows,
- 144 Arrows,
- 145 Arrows,
- 146 Arrows,
- 147 Arrows,
- 148 Arrows,
- 149 Arrows,
- 150 Arrows,
- 151 Arrows,
- 152 Arrows,
- 153 Arrows,
- 154 Arrows,
- 155 Arrows,
- 156 Arrows,
- 157 Arrows,
- 158 Arrows,
- 159 Arrows,
- 160 Arrows,
- 161 Arrows,
- 162 Arrows,
- 163 Arrows,
- 164 Arrows,
- 165 Arrows,
- 166 Arrows,
- 167 Arrows,
- 168 Arrows,
- 169 Arrows,
- 170 Arrows,
- 171 Arrows,
- 172 Arrows,
- 173 Arrows,
- 174 Arrows,
- 175 Arrows,
- 176 Arrows,
- 177 Arrows,
- 178 Arrows,
- 179 Arrows,
- 180 Arrows,
- 181 Arrows,
- 182 Arrows,
- 183 Arrows,
- 184 Arrows,
- 185 Arrows,
- 186 Arrows,
- 187 Arrows,
- 188 Arrows,
- 189 Arrows,
- 190 Arrows,
- 191 Arrows,
- 192 Arrows,
- 193 Arrows,
- 194 Arrows,
- 195 Arrows,
- 196 Arrows,
- 197 Arrows,
- 198 Arrows,
- 199 Arrows,
- 200 Arrows,
- 201 Arrows,
- 202 Arrows,
- 203 Arrows,
- 204 Arrows,
- 205 Arrows,
- 206 Arrows,
- 207 Arrows,
- 208 Arrows,
- 209 Arrows,
- 210 Arrows,
- 211 Arrows,
- 212 Arrows,
- 213 Arrows,
- 214 Arrows,
- 215 Arrows,
- 216 Arrows,
- 217 Arrows,
- 218 Arrows,
- 219 Arrows,
- 220 Arrows,
- 221 Arrows,
- 222 Arrows,
- 223 Arrows,
- 224 Arrows,
- 225 Arrows,
- 226 Arrows,
- 227 Arrows,
- 228 Arrows,
- 229 Arrows,
- 230 Arrows,
- 231 Arrows,
- 232 Arrows,
- 233 Arrows,
- 234 Arrows,
- 235 Arrows,
- 236 Arrows,
- 237 Arrows,
- 238 Arrows,
- 239 Arrows,
- 240 Arrows,
- 241 Arrows,
- 242 Arrows,
- 243 Arrows,
- 244 Arrows,
- 245 Arrows,
- 246 Arrows,
- 247 Arrows,
- 248 Arrows,
- 249 Arrows,
- 250 Arrows,
- 251 Arrows,
- 252 Arrows,
- 253 Arrows,
- 254 Arrows,
- 255 Arrows,
- 256 Arrows,
- 257 Arrows,
- 258 Arrows,
- 259 Arrows,
- 260 Arrows,
- 261 Arrows,
- 262 Arrows,
- 263 Arrows,
- 264 Arrows,
- 265 Arrows,
- 266 Arrows,
- 267 Arrows,
- 268 Arrows,
- 269 Arrows,
- 270 Arrows,
- 271 Arrows,
- 272 Arrows,
- 273 Arrows,
- 274 Arrows,
- 275 Arrows,
- 276 Arrows,
- 277 Arrows,
- 278 Arrows,
- 279 Arrows,
- 280 Arrows,
- 281 Arrows,
- 282 Arrows,
- 283 Arrows,
- 284 Arrows,
- 285 Arrows,
- 286 Arrows,
- 287 Arrows,
- 288 Arrows,
- 289 Arrows,
- 290 Arrows,
- 291 Arrows,
- 292 Arrows,
- 293 Arrows,
- 294 Arrows,
- 295 Arrows,
- 296 Arrows,
- 297 Arrows,
- 298 Arrows,
- 299 Arrows,
- 300 Arrows,
- 301 Arrows,
- 302 Arrows,
- 303 Arrows,
- 304 Arrows,
- 305 Arrows,
- 306 Arrows,
- 307 Arrows,
- 308 Arrows,
- 309 Arrows,
- 310 Ar



The vaccine is a present from God. To ask God for help but then refuse it makes no more sense than calling 911 when your house is on fire, but refusing to allow the firemen in

BAPTIST MEGACHURCH PASTOR ROBERT JEFFRESS,
THE ANTI-ABORTION FAITH LEADER SUPPORTS USE OF COVID VACCINES

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C H
HONG KONG	11°C	8°C H
TOKYO	18°C	12°C CL
LONDON	03°C	01°C H
DUBAI	19°C	12°C H
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	04°C C
NEW YORK	02°C	01°C S
MOSCOW	-08°C	-01°C H

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

THUMBNAILS



A woman takes photos on a street in Moscow, Russia, on Sunday. ■ IANS

Indonesia landslide: Two landslides triggered by heavy rain in Indonesia left at least 11 dead and 18 injured, officials said Sunday. The second landslide in Cianjur village in the Sumedang district occurred as rescuers were still evacuating people following the first disaster, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman. AP

NZ bank data hacked: New Zealand's central bank said on Sunday that one of its data systems has been breached by an unidentified hacker who potential accessed commercially and personally sensitive information. Governor Adrian Orr said the breach has been contained. The bank's core functions remain operational, he said. AP

Prince Harry and Meghan to quit social media: Report

LONDON, 10 JANUARY

Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, have reportedly decided to quit social media as they focus on their roles in the US away from frontline British royalty. According to *The Sunday Times*, the couple who had announced their decision to step back from official royal duties to relocate with their one-year-old son Archie last year will no longer use platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

The duo, who amassed more than 10 million Instagram followers as working royals, are reportedly rejecting social media as part of their new progressive role in America. As close to the couple told the newspaper they had no plans to use social media for their new Archewell Foundation and were very unlikely to return to platforms in a personal capacity.

The couple are understood to have become disillusioned by the hate they encountered on social media. Meghan Markle, has spoken about the almost unsurvivable experience of online trolling.

Before her marriage, the 39-year-old had a lifestyle website and blog called The Tig and used the sites for her commercial fashion and beauty partnerships, to promote her friends' businesses, offer food and travel tips.

However, she had shut those down soon after she began dating the 36-year-old prince and the couple together created the @SussexRoyal Instagram account. However, they stopped posting on the account as part of branding negotiations with the royal family after stepping down from official duties.

According to the news paper report, instead of using social media, Harry and Meghan are poised to continue promoting their work in online video and television appearances, through selected publications and via their Archewell website, which they launched fully on New Year's Eve. They also have production and podcast deals in place with the streaming giants Netflix and Spotify. PTI



'Trump committed impeachable offenses'

Democratic lawmakers plan to formally introduce impeachment proposal on Monday in the House of Representatives

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 10 JANUARY

Democrats' momentum for a fresh drive to quickly impeach outgoing President Donald Trump has gained support, even as two Republican Senators said it was time for the president to resign.

Senator Pat Toomey, of Pennsylvania, who on Saturday said he believed Trump had committed "impeachable offenses", on Sunday joined Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski in calling for Trump to "resign and go away as soon as possible." Murkowski, who has long voiced her exasperation with Trump's conduct in office, told the *Anchorage Daily News* Friday that Trump simply "needs to get out."

Toomey said that even though he believes Trump committed impeachable offenses in encouraging loyalists in the Capitol siege on Wednesday, he did not think there was enough time for the impeachment process to play out. He said that resignation was the "best path forward, the best way to get this person in the rear view mirror for us." But he was not optimistic that Trump would step down before his term ends on January 20.

Earlier, speaking to Fox News on Saturday, Toomey did not explicitly say whether he would vote to remove the president from office at the conclusion of a Senate trial if the House sent over articles of impeachment.

"I don't know what they are going to send over and one of the things that I'm concerned about, frankly, is whether the House would completely politicize something," Toomey said, speaking of the Democratic-controlled House. "I do think the president committed impeachable offenses, but I don't know what is going to land on the Senate floor, if anything," Toomey said.

Later Saturday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi sent a letter to her Democratic colleagues reiterating that Trump must be held accountable —

Trump to visit US-Mexico border to laud border wall

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 10 JANUARY

President Donald Trump is expected to travel to the US-Mexico border on Tuesday to highlight his administration's work on the border wall, the White House said Saturday.

Trump will travel to the town of Alamo, Texas. He will mark the completion of 400 miles of border wall and his administration's efforts to reform what the White House described as the nation's broken immigration system.

Trump's campaign for the presidency in 2016 focused extensively on the president's desire to construct a border wall. He also promised that Mexico would pay for the wall, but it has been paid for by US taxpayers. While most of the wall went up in areas that had smaller barriers, the gov-

ernment has built hundreds of miles of fencing as high as 30 feet (9 meters) in a short amount of time most of this year.

The administration prioritized areas where the wall could be built more quickly, and crews have blasted hills and bulldozed sensitive habitats in national wildlife refuges and on American Indian land to do it.

The visit will likely be the president's first public appearance since he addressed supporters on Wednesday riling up a crowd that later staged a violent siege of the U.S. Capitol. He is anxious to highlight accomplishments as his presidency winds down.

Meanwhile, Democrats in the House are pushing for an impeachment vote next week and are planning to formally introduce their proposal Monday with a vote possible by Wednesday.

but stopped short of committing to an impeachment vote. Still, she told her caucus, "I urge you to be prepared to return to Washington this week."

"It is absolutely essential that those who perpetrated the assault on our democracy be held accountable," Pelosi wrote. "There must be a recognition that this desecration was instigated by the President."

Pelosi said House Democrats "will be proceeding with meetings with Members and Constitutional experts and others." The new Democratic effort to stamp Trump's presidential record — for the second time and days before his term ends — with the indelible mark of impeachment gained more supporters Saturday. Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., a leader of the House effort to draft impeachment articles — or charges — accusing Trump of inciting insurrection, said his group had grown to include 185 co-

sponsors.

Lawmakers plan to formally introduce the proposal on Monday in the House, where articles of impeachment must originate. If Democrats decide to move forward, a vote could be possible by Wednesday — exactly one week before Democrat Joe Biden becomes president at noon on Jan. 20.

The articles, if passed by the House, could then be transmitted to the Senate for a trial, with senators acting as jurors who would ultimately vote on whether to acquit or convict Trump. If convicted, Trump would be removed from office and succeeded by the vice president. Earlier Saturday, Pelosi told her San Francisco constituents during an online video conference that it is "a decision that we have to make." Potentially complicating that decision is what it means for Biden and the beginning of his presidency. While reiterating that he has long viewed Trump as unfit for

office, Biden on Friday sidestepped a question about impeachment, saying what Congress does "is for them to decide." If the House decided to impeach, the soonest the Senate could begin an impeachment trial under the current calendar would be Jan. 20, Inauguration Day.

A violent and largely white mob of Trump supporters overpowered police, broke through security lines and rampaged through the Capitol on Wednesday, forcing lawmakers to scatter as they were putting the final, formal touches on Biden's victory over Trump in the Electoral College.

The crowd surged to the domed symbol of American democracy following a rally near the White House, where Trump repeated his bogus claims that the election was stolen from him and urged his supporters to march in force toward the Capitol.

Five people, including a Capitol police officer, died as a result of the siege.

"It has been an epiphany for the world to see that there are people in our country by this president, for the moment, who have chosen their whiteness over democracy," Pelosi said of the attack.

She added: "This cannot be exaggerated. The complicity, not only the complicity, the instigation of the president of United States, must and will be addressed."

No. 4 House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York reiterated support for moving against what he deemed "an act of sedition that was incited and encouraged by Donald Trump." Speaking of Trump, Jeffries said Saturday: "He should be impeached, convicted and thrown out of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and forever banished to the dustbin of history."

Outrage over the attack and Trump's role in egging it on capped a divisive, chaotic presidency like few others in the nation's history. There are less than two weeks until Trump is out of office but Democrats have made clear they don't want to wait that long.

AP

Squelched by Twitter, Trump seeks new online megaphone

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BOSTON, 10 JANUARY

One Twitter wag joked about lights flickering on and off at the White House being Donald Trump signaling to his followers in Morse code after Twitter and Facebook squelched the president for inciting rebellion.

Though deprived of his big online megaphones, Trump does have alternative options of much smaller reach. The far right-friendly Parler may be the leading candidate, though Google and Apple have both removed it from their app stores and Amazon decided to boot it off its web hosting service. That could knock it offline for a week, Parler's CEO said.

Trump may launch his own platform. But that won't happen overnight, and free speech experts anticipate a growing pressure on all social media platforms to curb incendiary speech as Americans take stock of Wednesday's violent takeover of the U.S. Capitol by a Trump-incited mob.

Experts had predicted Trump might pop up on Parler, a 2-year-old magnet for the far right that claims more than 12 million users and where his sons Eric and Don Jr. are already active. Parler hit headwinds, though, on Friday as Google yanked its smartphone app from its app store for allowing postings that seek "to incite ongoing violence in the U.S." Apple followed suit on Saturday evening after giving Parler 24 hours to address complaints it was being used to "plan and facilitate yet further illegal and dangerous activities." Public safety issues will need to be resolved before it is restored, Apple said.

Amazon struck another blow Saturday, informing Parler it would need to look for a new web-hosting service effective midnight Sunday. It reminded Parler in a letter, first reported by Buzzfeed, that it had informed it in the past few weeks of 98 examples of posts "that clearly encourage and incite violence" and said the platform "poses a very real risk to public safety."

In a statement Friday, Parler CEO John Matze decried the punishments as



Trump supporters try to break through a police barrier last Wednesday, at the Capitol in Washington. AP

"a coordinated attack by the tech giants to kill competition in the marketplace. We were too successful too fast," he said in a Saturday night post, saying it was possible Parler would be unavailable for up to a week "as we rebuild from scratch."

Earlier, Matze complained of being scapegoated. "Standards not applied to Twitter, Facebook or even Apple themselves, apply to Parler." He said he "won't cave to politically motivated companies and those authoritarian who hate free speech."

Losing access to the app stores of Google and Apple — whose operating systems power hundreds of millions of smartphones — severely limits Parler's reach, though it will continue to be accessible via web browser. Losing Amazon Web Services will mean Parler needs to scramble to find another web host — in addition to the re-engineering. Gab is another potential landing spot for Trump. But it, too, has had troubles with internet hosting. Google and Apple both booted it from their app stores in 2017 and it was left internet-homeless for a time the following year due to anti-Semitic posts attributed to the man accused of killing 11 people at a Pittsburgh synagogue. Microsoft also terminated a web-hosting contract.

Boris under fire as UK faces Covid onslaught

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 10 JANUARY

The crisis facing Britain this winter is depressingly familiar: Stay-at-home orders and empty streets. Hospitals overflowing. A daily toll of many hundreds of deaths.

The U.K. is the epicenter of Europe's outbreak once more, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government is facing questions, and anger, as people demand to know how the country has ended up here again. More than 3 million people in the U.K. have tested positive and 81,000 have died — 30,000 in just the last 30 days. The economy has shrunk by 8 per cent, more than 800,000 jobs have been lost and hundreds of thousands more furloughed workers are in limbo.

Even with the new lockdown, London Mayor Sadiq Khan said Friday that the situation in the capital was "critical," with one in every 30 people infected. The stark reality is that we will run out of beds for patients in the next couple of weeks unless the spread of the virus slows down drastically, he said.

Medical staff are also at breaking point. "Whereas before, everyone went into a mode of, 'We just need to get through this,' (now) everybody is like, 'Here we go again — can I get through this?'" said Lindsey Izard, a senior intensive care nurse at St. George's Hospital in London.

Much of the blame for Britain's poor performance has been laid at the door of Johnson, who came down with the virus in the spring and ended up in intensive care. Critics say his government's slow response as the new respiratory virus emerged from China was the first in a string of lethal mistakes.

Anthony Costello, professor of global health at University College London, said "dilly-dallying" in March

UK expands asymptomatic Covid testing as new vaccine centres open

LONDON, 10 JANUARY

The UK on Sunday announced a major expansion of Covid tests being made available more widely to asymptomatic people as part of efforts to control the rapid spread of a new coronavirus variant, which has led to Britain hitting the grim milestone of 80,000 deaths from the virus.

The community testing regime, until now available to those displaying symptoms, has been expanded to cover anyone unable to work from home to access the rapid lateral flow tests that give results in 30 minutes. The move comes as hundreds of thousands of people aged 80 and over were sent letters to book a coronavirus vaccination at new National Health Service (NHS) vaccination centres that will be up and running from Monday.

England invites over 80s to get vaccine: Thousands of people 80 and older have started receiving invitations to get the coronavirus vaccine in England, officials said Sunday, as Britain ramps up its national vaccination program in a bid to meet its target of inoculating about 15 million people by the middle of February. More than 600,000 invitations are due to arrive at doorsteps across England this week, asking the elderly to sign up for jabs at new mass vaccination centers near them.

AGENCIES

about whether to lock down the U.K. cost thousands of lives.

Man shoots 7 in series of Chicago-area attacks: Police

CHICAGO, 10 JANUARY

A man killed three people and wounded four others in a series of shootings over roughly four hours that started on Chicago's South Side and ended with his death in a shootout with police in a parking lot just north of the city.

The shooter, 32-year-old Jason Nightengale, then just randomly walked into an apartment building a block away, where he shot a 46-year-old security guard and a 77-year-old woman, Brown said. The guard was pronounced dead at a hospital and the older woman, who was shot in the head, was hospitalized in critical condition, the Chicago Tribune reported.

Nightengale went to another nearby building and stole a car from a man he knew. He then went to a convenience store and fired shots, killing a 20-year-old man and wounding an 81-year-old woman in the head and neck, Brown said.

After leaving the store, Nightengale shot a 15-year-old girl, leaving the girl in critical condition, police said. He then went back to the convenience store and fired on officers who were investigating the earlier shooting. None of them were injured, Brown said. Nightengale then drove to Evanston, where police responded to a report of shots that had been fired inside a CVS. Nightengale had apparently walked into the pharmacy, announced that he was robbing it and fired off shots that didn't hit anyone, authorities said. He then went across the street to an IHOP restaurant, where he shot a woman in the neck. She was in critical condition, Evanston police Chief Demitrius Cook said. Nightengale left the restaurant and was confronted by officers in a parking lot, leading to a shootout in which he was shot and killed, Cook said. AP



Pedestrians wearing face masks are seen on a road in Tokyo, Japan.



Members of the military walk past the City Hall building after a heavy snowfall in Madrid on Sunday. FILE PICTURE

days. "The commitment is to guarantee the supply of health, vaccines and food. Corridors have been opened to deliver the goods," transport minister Jose Luis Abalos said on Sunday. About 100 workers and shoppers have spent two nights sleeping at a shopping centre in Majadahonda, a town north of Madrid, after they were trapped by the blizzard on Friday.

"There are people sleeping on the ground on cardboard," Ivan Alcala, a restaur-

rant worker, told TVE television. Dr Alvaro Sanchez walked 17 km through the snow on Saturday to work at a hospital in Majadahonda, prompting

North-East Altered contours of mobilisation

PRASENJIT BISWAS

As it stands now, various groups and parties are vying to radically change Assam's political landscape. The re-emergence of the *jatiyatabadi* bloc in contrast to the Bharatiya Janata Party's brand of Hindu nationalism is the major ideological contest that is going to determine the outcome of the next election. As it is, any election in Assam is marked by polarisation between blocs of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups. This year's impending Assembly polls have already put forth a different and more complex politics of polarisation that threatens to alter the very nature of mobilisation of disparate groups and identities.

To understand the nature of Assam's emerging politics, one needs to take three questions seriously. First, is the Congress Party-style of social engineering, by way of distributing income and doles by Assam's health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, a way for stalling the fast-eroding electoral base of the ruling BJP within the Axomiya mainstream? Second, how could concentrated blocs of various communities be immune from possible shifts of affiliation by internal groups? Third, to what extent would differences between various electoral combinations tilt the scales in favour of the BJP?

The recent announcement of a grant of Rs 100 every day to all school- and college-going students by the Government of Assam can be looked at as a means for keeping the younger generation happy, who are otherwise not affected much by ethnic and community interests and sentiments. In the same way, a dole-like grant of two-wheelers to girl students for going to school and college is another heart-warming gesture that establishes a sense of security. Such innovative measures initiated in all the districts of Assam can keep a floating, young electorate happy with the government. This young electorate would be under pressure, however, from their respective communities if a substantive scope of employment is not seen to be guaranteed after education. In that way, intermediate measures, like the aforementioned ones, cannot ultimately keep the youth enchanted.

Recent data released by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy shows spiralling unemployment in Assam as the number of job seekers among the youth is on the rise in early 2021, along with great under-employment of the labour force in rural sectors. The scenario cannot be wished away despite the government providing rice and other essential food items and facilitating direct ben-



efit transfers to the rural masses. It will all depend on how much this kind of social suffering is capitalised on by the state's main Opposition, the Congress Party, in its electoral campaign.

Given the BJP's micro-management of specific segments and their grievances, and the efficiency level of the party and government in dousing any unrest and dormant dissatisfaction among the deprived, the Opposition's attempts at cashing in on public resentment might well be neutralised. But the major limitation of such a micro-managerial approach is that it cannot alter the direction of socio-economic policies. For example, in giving out government jobs, an area like Barak Valley or a community such as Bengali-speaking Hindus and Muslims perceive a relative deprivation. Added to that is the government's stated policy of not recognising Bengali as an associate official language, while the same status is accorded to Bodo.

Socio-economic deprivation gets replicated in the domains of culture, education and language in relation to the linguistic and religious minorities of Assam. It is here that two distinctive phenomena emerge. The first is a stark division between those who are labelled "indigenous" and those who are "non-indigenous" in Assam. Not accommodating Bengali as an associate official language alienates nine million Bengali speakers straight-

away. The BJP is banking on the idea that this segment shall not vote *en bloc* for the Opposition but the weight of swing votes among Bengali speakers, which tilted results in favour of the BJP both in the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys in 2016, might not work the same way this time.

The impact of alienation, *prima facie*, would lie in a shift of allegiance to non-BJP parties. It is here that a strong politics of polarisation vis-à-vis Bengali Hindus which the BJP could play in 2016 by bringing in the Citizenship Amendment Bill will not work anymore.

The complex politics of the CAB, 2016 and the subsequent Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 need to be probed. After the CAA, there had been a rapid chronology of dissent among Assam's mainstream ethnic and tribal communities who were demanding "protection" from an increased number of Bangladeshi Hindus becoming Indian citizens. The BJP might have thought that the strong current of the anti-CAA movement could be quelled by adopting a strategy of deferment in the name of the pandemic. By not framing the rules of the CAA and not implementing it on the ground, the BJP has partly doused the flames of resentment against its perceived anti-indigenous position among the Axomiya community's educated middle class.

The question now is, should the BJP be considered favourites again on the ground that the Opposition cannot give a credible alternative to the present government? The answer is not a clear yes.

To divert attention from the CAA, the BJP and its mastermind, Sarma, created other issues that could stoke ethnic sentiments in its favour. Not allowing Bengali to be an associate official language plays on the complex insecurity of the Axomiya nationalist discourse and secures the dominant place for Axomiya language and culture. Ironically, this silent majority remains indecisive in electoral terms given the BJP's stance on the CAA before.

In a sense, the BJP is drowning in its internal contradictions of keeping two major electoral blocs – Bengali and Axomiya – happy at the same time. It is in this context that the BJP is seeking to cancel out a rift by micro-managing the school- and college-going generation, cutting across the binary of communities.

In a similar vein, the shelving of the Clause Six committee's report recommending 1951 as the base year and reserving political representation, jobs, and land only for "sons of the soil" is being looked upon as the BJP's inability to protect Axomiya culture and identity, or implement the spirit of the Assam Accord. Similarly, the contentious National Register of Citizens to identify illegal Bangladeshi in Assam has created much disaffection among the state's minorities and

got the majority Axomiya community confused. Again, some micro-managing by asking for re-verification of those names which were wrongly entered in the NRC has opened a can of worms that haunts the BJP.

All such issues can strengthen oppositional politics in Assam. The newly formed Asom Jatiyo Parishad, Rajo Dol and other smaller parties like the Barak Democratic Front have their hold on select segments of the electorate, who largely voted for the BJP in 2016. Even if they do not come together as a united opposition, they have the potential to cut into the BJP's votes. Even if a small percentage of votes are cut by parties born from the BJP's failure to keep its promises, the latter's return to power remains uncertain. Small uncertainties of this kind prove to be a major electoral challenge in the last mile, as an incumbent party, despite retaining its overall numbers, cannot manage to exhaustively garner fragments of diverted votes.

To top it all, a question that is looming large is whether the BJP's chief ministerial face is good enough to keep the party united. Speculations on not having Sarma as the next chief ministerial face of the BJP are latent but ripe, both within the party and among the public. It may emerge as a significant issue during the polls this year.

The writer is a philosopher and political analyst based in Shillong

Falling short in execution

The 'One Family One Job' scheme in Sikkim has put forth numerous problems



implementing new ideas, making citizens trust the administration and government with everything proposed in election manifestos or even post-election promises. However, another report from the CMIE showed an increase in Sikkim's unemployment rate by 22.2 percentage points in April-May 2020. In December 2020, that figure fell to only 0.7 per cent. The figures might look promising but there's a lot more to them than meets the eye.

In 2019, Pawan Kumar Chamling, former chief minister of Sikkim, rolled out the "One Family One Job" scheme, which promised to give one member from every economically backward family a government job. The scheme was created to safeguard families from

economic hardship. A "rojgar mela" (employment drive) was conducted in Gangtok to distribute letters of appointment to people who were eligible for the Ofoj scheme. It was promised that after five years of working in an *ad hoc* position, their service would be regularised. Thus, Sikkim became the first state in India to actively try and solve the unemployment problem.

But in 2019, Chamling's party, the Sikkim Democratic Front, lost to Prem Singh Tamang (Golay)'s party, the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha. With an entirely new government after 25 years, Sikkim was in a tumultuous state.

After the SKM came to power,

there were reports of people from well-off families getting a government job. The loophole was – if a family has a long-standing, private business (for example, a hotel or travel agency) and its younger generation has just graduated from a college in a big city, technically, they don't have anyone who is employed as a government servant. A member of the family is eligible for the Ofoj scheme. Those who really needed jobs had to watch one seat disappear because of this loophole.

Moreover, some reported that multiple people from the same family were beneficiaries. It had now become an issue of corruption. Who was to blame? The old government who

rolled it out first and distributed appointment letters or the new government who could not realise the problems in time?

In June 2020, just as Covid-19 made its entry into Sikkim, people gathered in front of the Secretariat building demanding immediate attention to the circular that had suspended the second list of Ofoj beneficiaries and for salaries to be released.

The blame was shifted from the SKM to SDE.

In December 2020, three individuals – Henna Subba, Sangeeta Sharma and Pavitra Sharma – filed a petition with the High Court of Sikkim declaring Ofoj employment as unconstitutional as it purportedly resulted in the exploitation of young people. Added to that, Navin Kiran Pradhan, an advocate and social activist who has been vociferous in his appeal to regularise the 18,000 Ofoj beneficiaries, among other issues, organised a day-long *dharna* before the district court in Gangtok. The biggest take-away from the *dharna* was not the appeal for regularisation but that 1,600 "successful" employments were illegal, backdoor applicants.

One feels the Ofoj scheme is necessary for a state like Sikkim, where the rural-urban divide is still wide. In this context, it is none other than the younger generation who bears the brunt of carelessness. Educated youngsters, who are set back by economic and social constraints, need a secure job more than ever now. Covid-19 has shown us that we live life in precarity.

Will only the government take account of unemployment in the state? Why would the private sector not provide the same opportunities? Given the number of pharmaceutical companies mushrooming in Sikkim and their lack of commitment to fulfilling corporate social responsibilities, the question that really needs to be asked is – are people in positions of power willing to take time to invest in youngsters?

The writers are journalists at *The Sikkim Chronicle*, Gangtok

Ahead of the Assembly polls in Assam this year, the incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party seems to be drowning in a sea of internal contradictions

PLUS POINTS



Sonowal on Majuli

Assam government is committed to safeguard the dignity and interests of all sections of people including indigenous communities, said chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal recently while adding that in the history of Assam no government had undertaken as many initiatives as the incumbent BJP-led state government in Dispur.

Sonowal was speaking on the occasion of the Dr Banikanta Kakati merit award ceremony under the Pragyan Bharati scheme. It was given to 121 meritorious girl students of Majuli island district. The CM also laid the foundation stone for a government model college at Borduwar. At the same programme, he inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for 16 different schemes to be started in the Brahmaputra river island.

Earlier, Sonowal handed over the keys of two-wheelers to the girl students for securing first division marks in the higher secondary examinations. He also assured that male students would be awarded in similar ways. "Majuli is known as an epicentre of Vaishnavite culture. Therefore, every step will be taken to bring about development of the district in sync with its pristine nature and culture," said Sonowal.

Sonowal claimed that Dispur had undertaken a land survey of Assam for the first time. As a result of the government's efforts, more than 100,000 indigenous families were able to get land *pattas* after seven decades of the country's Independence. He also stated that the government would provide land *pattas* to another 100,000 landless indigenous families soon.

-NAVA THAKURIA

Cancer survivor honoured

Noted Assamese educationist Minoti Borthakur, who defeated cancer, was recently conferred the Veerangana Sati Sadhani Award 2020 in a programme held at Dhakuakhana of eastern Assam. CM Sarbananda Sonowal presented the award honouring the brave lady who won a 27-year-long battle against the deadly disease.

Highlighting the state government's decision to constitute the Sati Sadhani Award and also set up a university at Golaghat in memory of the valour of Sati Sadhani, Sonowal stressed on the need for the younger generation to build their personalities through academics and educational pursuits. He also announced an amount of Rs 10 lakh for erecting a statue of Sati Sadhani at Dhakuakhana.

It warrants mention that the last queen of the Chutia dynasty, Sati Sadhani played a prominent role in the fight against invaders in 1524 and finally sacrificed her life by jumping from the Chandragiri hills near Sadiya in eastern Assam. Soon after her marriage to a relatively weak king Nitapal, Sati Sadhani had to face hardships in different spheres but she did not surrender.

-NT

Nagaland wildfire



The Naga People's Front has expressed its anguish over the raging wildfire at Dzükou Valley, which has been spreading since 29 December 2020, says a report in the Dimapur-based *Morung Express*.

The NPF in a press release issued through its Press Bureau alleged that "the Dzükou Valley inferno cannot be considered a natural disaster but is a man-made fire that is causing great harm not only to the beauty of the Valley but also to our environment." It stated that the Dzükou Valley is not only a tourist hotspot but also a national asset, being home to various species of flora and fauna and burning of such a forest would deeply dampen the ecological balance.

Therefore, it stated, "the lackadaisical attitude of the state government cannot be tolerated and the state chief minister or his ministerial cabinet is requested to take a personal survey and do the needful in containing the fire as well as protect the Valley."

Meanwhile, the NPF lauded Governor RN Ravi for showing personal concern and visiting the blazing Dzükou Valley to take first-hand information. It also appreciated the Indian Air Force, National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force, DC and SP Kohima, forest department, Southern Angami Youth Organization volunteers and all persons concerned for giving their best effort to douse the fire.

SHRADHA R CHHETRI & SHERAB P BHUTIA

Unemployment is still one of India's major problems. The issue is raised every election season with political parties trying to win favours from voters by promising jobs as soon as they come to power.

Despite the nation resuming economic activity several months ago after the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the overall unemployment rate rose to 9.1 per cent in December 2020, according to statistics from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, a think tank based in Mumbai.

Sikkim has a track record of

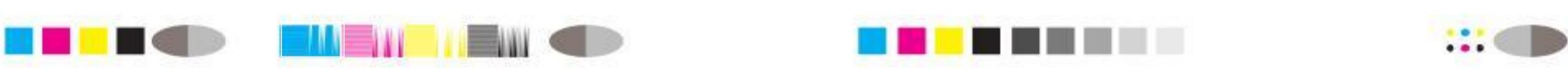
implementing new ideas, making citizens trust the administration and government with everything proposed in election manifestos or even post-election promises. However, another report from the CMIE showed an increase in Sikkim's unemployment rate by 22.2 percentage points in April-May 2020. In December 2020, that figure fell to only 0.7 per cent. The figures might look promising but there's a lot more to them than meets the eye.

In 2019, Pawan Kumar Chamling, former chief minister of Sikkim, rolled out the "One Family One Job" scheme, which promised to give one member from every economically backward family a government job. The scheme was created to safeguard families from

economic hardship. A "rojgar mela" (employment drive) was conducted in Gangtok to distribute letters of appointment to people who were eligible for the Ofoj scheme. It was promised that after five years of working in an *ad hoc* position, their service would be regularised. Thus, Sikkim became the first state in India to actively try and solve the unemployment problem.

But in 2019, Chamling's party, the Sikkim Democratic Front, lost to Prem Singh Tamang (Golay)'s party, the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha. With an entirely new government after 25 years, Sikkim was in a tumultuous state.

After the SKM came to power,





'MORE EXCITING THAN T20'

West Indies spinner Sunil Narine has expressed that the T10 cricket format is more exciting than the T20 format. "The T10 format is more exciting than the T20 format. In T20s, the batters take a few overs before starting their attacking skills, however, in T10 the batters probably look for only one or two balls," said Narine who is all set to turn up for the Deccan Gladiators in the upcoming season of the Abu Dhabi T10.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Regular affair: Former captain Mohammad Azharuddin on Sunday said that hurling racial abuses on Indian players while playing in Australia has become "a regular affair" and urged the ICC to find a way to end this menace "forever".

Milan beat Torino: AC Milan bounced back from its first Serie A loss by beating relegation-threatened Torino 2-0 and extending its lead in the standings. Milan, which is bidding for a first league title in a decade, was firmly in control at halftime following a Rafael Leo strike and a Franck Kessi penalty on Saturday.

Depay shines: Memphis Depay scored and created the equalizer as Lyon drew at Rennes 2-2 to stay ahead of Paris Saint-Germain, which got a scrappy 3-0 home win against Brest in the French league.

Rennes was coasting at 2-0 when the Netherlands forward Depay chested down a pass and volleyed home superbly in the 78th on Saturday. Three minutes later, he teed up central defender Jason Denayer with a pinpoint cross.

Match draw: Indian Football Association shield championship winner Team Real Kashmir started their journey with a 1-1 draw against TRAU FC at Mohun Bagan ground today. TRAU FC took the lead by an early strike from Komron Turusov in the 8th second of the match but Robertson from Real Kashmir stroked back in the 70th minute.

Man of the Match: Helder Ribeiro of TRAU FC.

Bengal win: A brilliant bowling attack from Bengal registered a nine-wicket victory over Odisha in their first Group B match of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy at the JU Salt Lake campus today. Bengal won the toss and elected to bowl. Ishan Porel took four wickets while Mukesh Kumar and Akashdeep took two wickets each and restricted Odisha at 113 in 20 overs. Chasing 114 to win, Bengal reached the target in 12.2 overs losing one wicket. Vivek Singh and debutant Suvankar Bal remained unbeaten on 54 and 34 respectively. The only wicket that Bengal lost was of Shreevats Goswami.

UP lose: Surendra Raina's half-century and a three-wicket effort from Bhuvneshwar Kumar went in vain as Punjab defended a modest 134 against Uttar Pradesh in their opening match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy in Alur (Karnataka) on Sunday. In another match Krunal Pandya's all-round show helped Baroda beat Uttarakhand by five runs in their opening game of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy on Sunday.

Ramkumar, Ankita advance to 2nd round: Indian tennis players Ramkumar Ramanathan and Ankita Raina advanced to the second round of the Australian Open Qualifiers after recording wins in their respective singles draws.

Ramkumar, who is yet to make a Grand Slam main draw appearance, ousted 10th seed Argentine Facundo Bagnis with a hard-fought 7-6(6) 7-5 victory in one hour and 53 minutes in men's singles first round. In the women's singles, Ankita outplayed Hungary's Reka-Luca Jani 6-2 6-2 in 67 minutes.

Shah to attend ICC meeting: BCCI secretary Jay Shah will be attending the ICC Board meeting later this month in place of president Sourav Ganguly, who is recovering from a minor heart attack. The convention at ICC meetings is that board presidents of member nations attend the Board of Directors meeting while secretary attends Chief Executives Meeting (CEC).

India face uphill task in pursuit of 407

AGENCIES

SYDNEY, 10 JANUARY

Chetheshwar Pujara was left to summon his trademark doggedness with skipper Ajinkya Rahane after India lost their openers in pursuit of an improbable 407, setting the stage for an intriguing final day of the third Test against Australia in which the visitors will primarily try to bat out three sessions here.

Having drawn flak for his 50 off 176 balls in the first innings, none would mind such an effort from India's Test specialist after the visitors finished the fourth day on 98 for 2 largely due to a 71-run opening stand between Rohit Sharma (52) and Shubman Gill (31).

Rohit's untimely dismissal at the fagend, trying to pull Pat Cummins, did hurt India but it's two best defensive players Pujara (9 batting off 29 balls) and skipper Ajinkya Rahane (4 off 14 balls) were at the crease when stumps were drawn.

The pitch, with variable bounce and the dark patches acting like snake pits for Nathan Lyon, would pose its own set of challenges for a team with two injured batsmen in their line-up. Both Rohit (52 off 98 balls) and Gill (31 off 64 balls) showed admirable application under pressure but most importantly didn't let the bad deliveries go unpunished.

The three cover drives off Rohit's blade and a cross-batted straight drive of Gill were out of top drawer. Rohit, for good measure, pulled Cameron Green over mid-wicket for a six and they both looked comfortable while negotiating the Australian attack. It was after 53 years that an Indian opening pair had struck two 50 plus partner-



ships in the same Test Down Under. Last time also it was in Sydney where Farokh Engineer and Syed Abid Ali had a decent outing albeit in a lost cause. It took a peach of a delivery from Josh Hazlewood (1/11 in 8 overs), coming for his second spell, which straightened after pitching and the resultant nick, ended an impressive 71-run stand. Pujara, just after coming in, successfully asked for a DRS review after being adjudged leg before. A delectable chip shot coming down the track off Lyon helped Rohit bring up his half-century but his dismissal in the next over left fans yearning for more.

As far as Australia are concerned, they hardly put a foot wrong during the two sessions

that they batted. Steve Smith (*in photo*) (81 off 167 balls) missed out on a second hundred but rookie Cameron Green played a hapless Indian attack with a well-made 84 off 132 balls that had four sixes. They declared

SCOREBOARD

Australia 1st innings: 338	Mohammed Siraj 25-5-90-1, Navdeep Saini 16-2-54-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 25-1-95-2,
India 1st innings: 244	
Australia 2nd innings: (overnight 166/2):	
David Warner lbw b Ashwin 13	
Will Pucovski Saha b Siraj 10	
Marnus Labuschagne W Saha b Navdeep Saini 73	
Steven Smith lbw b Ashwin 81	
Matthew Wade c Saha b Navdeep Saini 4	
Cameron Green c Saha b Umran 84	
Tim Paine not out 39	
Extras: (b-1, lb-4, nb-3) 8	
Total: 312/6 decl in 87 overs	
Fall of wickets: 16-1, 35-2, 138-3, 148-4, 208-5, 312-6	
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 6-0-27-0, Josh Hazlewood 8-3-11-1, Pat Cummins 9-1-25-1, Nathan Lyon 9-3-22-0, Cameron Green 2-0-12-0.	

at the stroke of tea, having scored 312 for 6.

Marnus Labuschagne (73 off 118 balls) once again batted positively during his second century partnership of the match (103 runs) with mentor Smith, who employed a more cautious approach. The butter-fingered Indian fielders also didn't help the bowlers' cause as Hanuma Vihari, vice-captain Rohit and Rahane missed regulation catches at square leg, slip and gully respectively. While Ravichandran Ashwin (2/95 in 25 overs) can take solace in the fact that he denied Smith a hundred with a successful review, he would be the first to admit that he was well below his best during the match.

Green, the 6 feet 7 inch gentle giant, was cautious but didn't let the loose deliveries get away and the six off Siraj (1/90 in 25 overs) over mid-wicket mid-on gave a glimpse of his quality. As if to show that he can do it repeatedly, he muscled another one off the same bowler in the same region and then again into the Cow Corner for fun.

The final session was marginally better for India but it's still a long way to go before Rahane will be able to heave a sigh of relief.

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 10 JANUARY

Regular captain Virat Kohli (*in photo*) on Sunday strongly condemned reported incidents of racial abuse during the third Test between Australia and India, saying it was sad to see what happened with his teammates at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

The Statesman Sport

Postal Reg. No. DL (ND)-II/6088/2018-19-20

Kohli condemns SCG racial abuse



mentaries a couple of times in the last few months. It's saddening, we are educating ourselves and it makes you feel very sad that people are subjected to racism," Langer said referring to the Australia's troubled history with regards the indigenous aborigines.

Paine joins India huddle

The iconic Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday witnessed the good, bad and ugly in varying degrees for us if not equal measure. Australian coach Justin Langer called Paine a "class act". "It was nice to have Tim out there when that incident happened today. He's a class act as we know. The game of Test cricket is always going to be played tough but there's been a really good feeling amongst both teams and let's hope that continues," Langer said.

Paine was batting at the time. The former Australia Test opener was disappointed that incidents like these are threatening to tarnish a hard-fought series played in the right spirit between the two teams.

"We saw it throughout the white-ball series, both series. And we've seen it through this Test series. "I was interviewed before the summer started (and was asked) what would be the perfect outcome and I mentioned that this series, with everything that's happening around the world, would be played with great sportsmanship and with that great spirit that I'm talking about."

"I personally have heard many things on the field while playing in Australia about me, my religion, my colour and much more. This isn't the first

"I think we've seen that, haven't we? It's been great to watch," Langer said.

Jadeja out of first two Tests against England, might bat with injections if required

AGENCIES
SYDNEY, 10 JANUARY



Senior India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja (*in photo*), who dislocated his left thumb on day three of the third Test against Australia on Saturday, has been ruled out of the first two games in the upcoming series against England.

Jadeja was not able to bowl in Australia's second innings after a short ball from Mitchell Starc hit him on the gloves, requiring immediate medical attention.

Rishabh Pant, who suffered an elbow bruise will bat, confirmed senior player Ravichandran Ashwin.

India have been hit by a slew of injuries in the ongoing series with senior pacers Umesh Yadav and Mohammad Shami already flown back home. Batsman K L Rahul too was ruled out after injuring his left wrist while batting in the nets in Melbourne.

Wridhiman Saha kept for Rishabh Pant in Australia's second innings after the latter was hit on the elbow by Pat Cummins while bat-

ting on day three. Both Jadeja and Pant were taken for scans but fortunately for India, the wicketkeeper's injury is not as serious Jadeja's.

Paine fined for showing dissent to umpire

Australia captain Tim Paine was on Sunday fined 15 per cent of his match fee for showing dissent at an umpire's decision on day three of the third Test against India in Sydney.

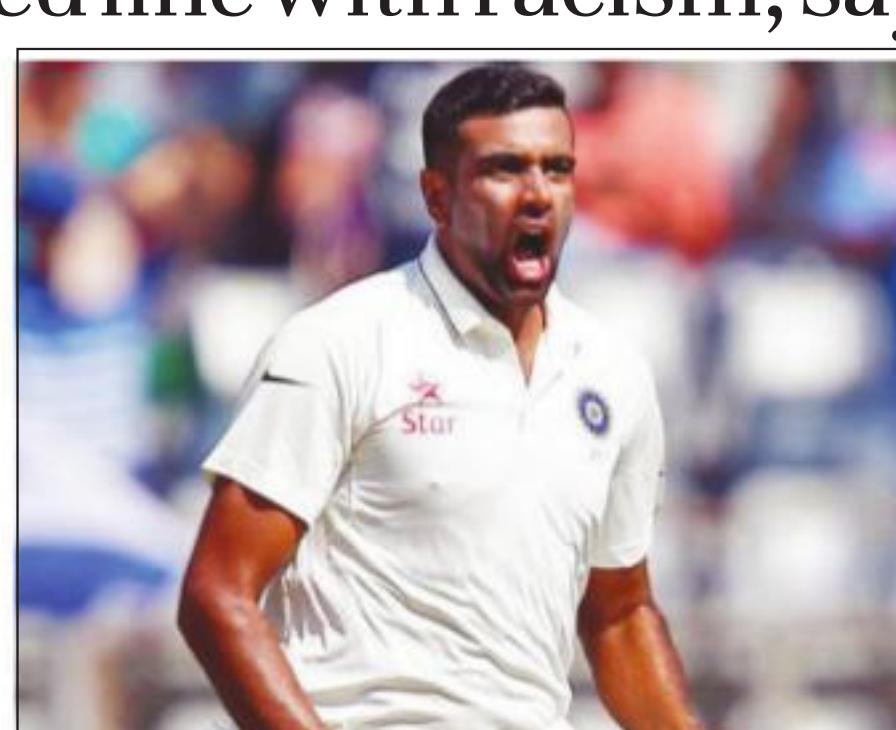
Paine was found to have breached Article 2.8 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel.

"In addition to this, one demerit point has been added to the disciplinary record of Paine, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period," the ICC said in a statement. The incident occurred in the 56th over of India's first innings on Saturday when Paine criticized the umpire's decision following an unsuccessful DRS review against Cheteshwar Pujara.

In fact, without naming skipper Virat Kohli, Ashwin

Faced abuses in Sydney earlier too, now they have crossed line with racism, says Ashwin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY, 10 JANUARY



Seasoned off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (*in photo*) on Sunday said racist abuse from the crowd at the Sydney Cricket Ground is not new and needs to be dealt with an iron fist after some spectators were asked to leave for targeting Indian players during the ongoing third Test against Australia here.

Speaking at the end of the fourth day's play, Ashwin said the Indian players have faced racism in Sydney earlier too and "disappointment" will be a "mild word" to describe how they are feeling after young pacer Mohammed Siraj was subjected to racial slurs on two consecutive days.

"Look, I would like to point out something. This is my fourth tour to Australia. Sydney, especially here, we have had a few experiences even in the past," Ashwin said at the virtual press conference to a query from PTI as to how the team is looking at the unsavoury incident.

In fact, without naming skipper Virat Kohli, Ashwin

also referred to an incident where he was photographed showing his middle finger to the crowd during the nearly 10-minute halt in the on-ground proceedings during the fourth day of the ongoing Test. On Saturday, the BCCI lodged a complaint with the ICC after Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah were abused.

"They have been quite nasty and have been hurling abuses as well. But this is the time when they have gone one step ahead and used racial abuses," the

Messi, Griezmann net 4 for Barcelona; Real Madrid held by Osasuna 0-0

AGENCIES
BARCELONA, 10 JANUARY



First it was Pedro "Pedri" Gonzlez shining with his assists. Then the injury-prone Dembele Ousmane earned a spot in the attack. Now the oft-maligned Antoine Griezmann (*in photo*) is back to scoring goals. All in all, Barcelona is slowly showing signs this season might not be a wash after all. Griezmann scored a brace and set up Lionel Messi for one of the Argentine's two goals on Saturday to lead Barcelona to a 4-0 win at Granada.

Griezmann got Barcelona started with his first goal in nearly a month in the 12th minute when a pass by Sergio Busquets was deflected to him by a Granada defender.

Griezmann set up Messi to double the lead with a left-footed shot from the edge of the area in the 36th. Messi got his league-leading

does not help," Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos said. "With the talent we have, we have to create more scoring opportunities." Osasuna used heat lamps to melt snow and ice off the turf and deployed a platoon of workers to shovel the field before the match, leaving only a dusting of snow. Kroos said the wintry conditions "are not an excuse since both teams played on the same pitch."

But Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said the match should have been postponed given the travel difficulties. Madrid's plane was delayed for several hours at the capital's airport on Friday before taking off. The airport closed down shortly after and will remain shut until Sunday at least.

"We were waiting yesterday (in the plane), and again today we had to wait, but at the end they decided to play," Zidane said. "We didn't see a soccer match today."

Kerala ride on Murray's late brace to stun Jamshedpur

AGENCIES
GOA, 10 JANUARY

ed off the post. Seven minutes later, Kerala fashioned a gilt-edged opportunity which was the best chance of the opening half. Gary Hooper put Murray through on goal with a decisive pass that split open the Jamshedpur backline. But with only the keeper to beat the Australian striker netted once again in the second half (84') but it only came after Jordan Murray's brace (79', 82') which propelled Kerala to seal the game.

Both sides went into the breaklocked in a stalemate after testing each other and creating a flurry of chances in the first half. Jamshedpur started strong and should have bagged the lead as early as the 4th minute after some delightful build-up play. Valsikis did well to hold the ball and found Mobashir Rahman, whose cross found Jadhav. But the youngster's effort deflect-

ed off the post. Seven minutes later, Kerala fashioned a gilt-edged opportunity which was the best chance of the opening half. Gary Hooper put Murray through on goal with a decisive pass that split open the Jamshedpur backline. But with only the keeper to beat the Australian striker netted once again in the second half (84') but it only came after Jordan Murray's brace (79', 82') which propelled Kerala to seal the game.

Goalless draw

Odisha and Chennaiyi were unable to convert their chances and played out a goalless draw at the GMC Stadium on Sunday. The match was a cagey affair but both teams had clear chances on the goal which were undone by wayward shooting. That Odisha had only three shots on target while Chennaiyi managed just two (of the twelve shots they took) exemplified how much both sides cancelled out each other. Chennaiyi, the better side in terms of possession, had a couple of chances to get a winner but their forwards were unable to net them. It was Chennaiyi who dominated the opening exchanges, creating multiple chances in the opening quarter.

Valsikis got the lead early