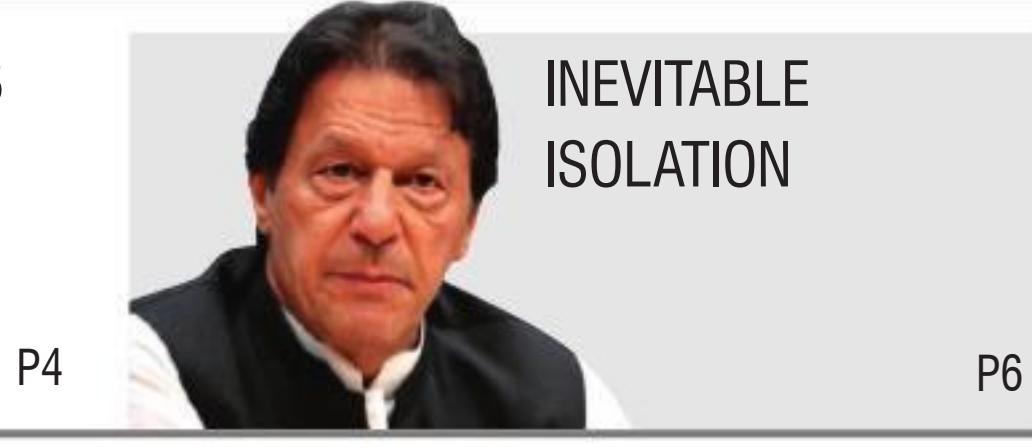


MANY CLAIMANTS
OF MGR LEGACY



INEVITABLE
ISOLATION



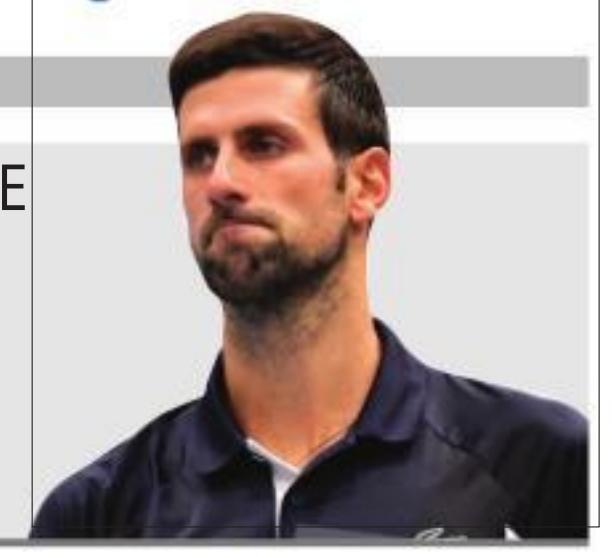
PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

P6

MACRON LATEST
WORLD LEADER TO
CATCH COVID-19

QUARANTINE
PRECEDES
OZ OPEN

P10



P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Cold day at most places with severe cold day conditions at a few places. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 16 and 04 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 52%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 15.2°C (-7) Min: 4.6°C (-3)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

07:09 hrs 17:28 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

11:09 hrs 21:16 hrs

THUMBNAILS



A woman makes Santa Claus toys ahead of Christmas celebrations in Kolkata on Thursday. IANS

Defence acquisition proposals cleared: The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), at its meeting on Thursday chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh, approved capital acquisition proposals of various weapons and platforms worth Rs 28,000 crores required by the Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force. The proposals approved include the DRDO-designed and developed Airborne Early Warning & Control Systems for the IAF, Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels for the Navy and Modular Bridges for the Army.

TRP scam arrest: Mumbai Police on Thursday arrested former Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Broadcast Audience Research Council in connection with the alleged TRP (Television Rating Points) rigging scam, an official said. Romil Ramgarhia, who was BARC's COO between 2014 and 2020, was apprehended from his residence in Mumbai's Antop Hill in the early hours of Thursday. He was formally placed under arrest in the afternoon by the Mumbai crime branch, which is probing the TRP case.

SC declines to interfere with HC order quashing Kafeel Khan detention

NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict which had quashed the detention of Dr Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act (NSA) and ordered his immediate release.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde, which was hearing the Uttar Pradesh government's plea challenging the high court's September 1 verdict, said it is a good judgement.

We will not interfere in the judgment. However, the observation will not impact any other proceedings, said the bench, also comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V.R. Ramasubramanian.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, told the bench that observation made by the high court exonerates Khan in the criminal proceedings.

Criminal cases will be decided on their own merits, the bench observed.

Khan had hit the headlines after the 2017 tragedy at Gorakhpur's Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College, in which several children died due to a lack of oxygen cylinders. Initially, he was hailed as a saviour for arranging emergency oxygen cylinders but later faced action along with nine other doctors and staff members of the hospital, all of whom were released on bail later.

In its September 1 verdict, the high court had quashed Khan's detention under the NSA and ordered his immediate release, saying his speech at the AMU didn't promote hatred or violence and gave a call for national integrity. PTI

The Statesman



P4

P6

P10

P12

Put farm laws on hold, suggests SC

Allow peaceful protests to continue without impediment, courts says

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER



Farmers during their protest against the new farm laws, at Delhi's Singhu border on Thursday. DEEPAK

The ongoing farmers' agitation should be allowed to continue without impedance, the Supreme Court said on Thursday, asserting that the court will not interfere with it as the right to protest is a fundamental right,

The court, which put the sole caveat that there should not be any breach of peace either by farmers or police, also mooted the idea of putting on hold the implementation of the laws to enable negotiations with the agitating farmers, which the Centre opposed, saying the farmers would then not come forward for talks.

The court was told by Attorney General KK Venugopal that he would get back after taking instructions on the suggestions.

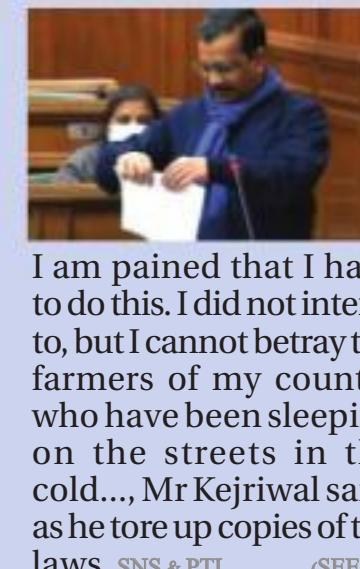
While acknowledging the farmers' right to non-violent protest, the court was of the view that the right to protest should not infringe the fundamental rights of others to move freely and in getting essential food and other supplies as right to protest cannot mean blockade of the entire city.

The bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde was told by both the Centre and one of the farmers' unions that the negotiations are not happening at the moment.

The bench said in its bid to resolve the impasse over the three contentious laws, it wanted to set up an "impartial and independent" panel of agriculture experts and farmer unions.

Kejriwal tears up copies of farm laws

NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER



The Delhi Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution against the Centre's three new agriculture laws with chief minister Arvind Kejriwal tearing up their copies, saying he cannot betray the farmers of the country who have been sleeping on the streets in the cold... Mr Kejriwal said, as he tore up copies of the laws. SNS & PTI (SEE P2)

However, it held it back as farmers' unions, impeded as parties by it on Wednesday, could not appear to give their views.

Senior lawyer Harish Salve, appearing for one of the parties, raised the issue of two million people of Delhi-NCR facing serious difficulties due to the ongoing stir as it is seriously inhibiting the supply of essential goods to the city because of restrictions on the free

movement of goods vehicles. It was also alleged that the protest will result in a sharp increase in the prices of goods which would be difficult for people to bear in these times of pandemic.

Taking note of the submission, the bench said in its order: "We clarify that this court will not interfere with the protest in question. Indeed the right to protest is part of a fundamental right and can as

You cannot sit in protest for years and years and don't talk to the government. We have already said that we recognise your right to protest but the protest has to have some motive. You need to talk to the government

SUPREME COURT

a matter of fact, be exercised subject to public order. There can certainly be no impediment in the exercise of such rights as long as it is non-violent and does not result in damage to the life and properties of other citizens and is in accordance with law.

"We are of the view at this stage that the farmers' protest should be allowed to continue without impediment and without any breach of peace either by the protesters or the police."

During the hearing, the court made clear that the issue of farmers' protest and the right to move freely of others would be dealt with on priority, and not the law's validity at the moment.

On being told that the negotiations are not happening at the moment, it said farmers cannot keep on protesting without talking to the government. "You continue the protest. You have the right. But you have a purpose also and that purpose is served only if you talk, discuss and reach a conclusion," it said.

Suvendu quits TMC; may be start of exodus

SUBHENDU MAITI
KOLKATA, 17 DECEMBER



An exodus from the ruling Trinamul Congress is set to happen on 19 December, when Mr Suvendu Adhikari and as many as 22 disgruntled MLAs and MPs of the party are likely to join BJP during Union home minister Amit Shah's rally at Midnapore College ground.

A day after resigning from the state legislative Assembly as an MLA on Wednesday, Mr Adhikari, former minister in the Mamata Banerjee cabinet, today also quit Trinamul Congress as a member.

A close associate of Mr Adhikari told The Statesman today, "There will be an exodus from the Trinamul following resignation of an army of MLAs, MPs and other leaders from the party in different phases."

"Dada (Mr Adhikari) along with around 20 to 22 MLAs and MPs would join BJP during the party's rally scheduled on Saturday at Midnapore College Ground where Mr Amit Shah will speak. I will also join the BJP during the programme," the associate, who requested anonymity, said.

The associate was one of six to seven Trinamul Congress leaders who were present in the meeting between Mr Adhikari and party MP Sunil Mondal.

are in regular touch with Dada expressing their desire to stay with him wherever he goes. He is not going to Delhi this week and will kick off his political programme after Mr Shah's rally in Midnapore on Saturday." Mr Hasan told The Statesman. "I was the founder president of the Trinamul Chhatra Parishad in the undivided Burdwan district and a four-time member of the ZP. But it's frustrating that the party leadership is appointing dishonest leaders in different important portfolios. I have also decided to leave Trinamul," Mr Hasan said.

MHA-state row escalates

KOLKATA, 17 DECEMBER

Intensifying the Centre-state feud, the Union home ministry today posted the three West Bengal cadre IPS officers, responsible for BJP president JP Nadda's security when he was attacked, on central deputation. Chief minister Mamata Banerjee hit back, tweeting that it is "unconstitutional", "encroaching upon the state's jurisdictions" and was going to "demoralise the serving officers". SNS

Communication Satellite CMS-01 launched by ISRO

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched India's 42nd communication satellite CMS-01 on board the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-C50 on Dec 17, 2020

Launch vehicle: PSLV-C50

52nd flight of PSLV

22nd flight of PSLV-XL variant

Four stages (solid and liquid propulsion alternatively)

6 strap-on motors

Height: 44.4 m

Satellite: CMS-01

CMS-01 is a communication satellite envisaged for providing services in Extended-C Band of the frequency spectrum

The Extended-C Band coverage will include Indian mainland, A&N Islands and Lakshadweep Islands

▪ Power generation: 1,500 W

▪ Mission life: > 7years

KBK Infographics

Covid-19 caseload climbs to 99.56 lakh

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER



70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, and surpassed 90 lakh on November 20.

According to the ICMR, 15,78,05,240 samples have been tested up to December 16 with 11,58,960 samples being tested on Wednesday.

A total of 1,44,451 deaths have been reported so far in the country.

Delhi's positivity rate dips to 1.51 pc: The national capital today recorded 1,363 new coronavirus infections (Covid-19), which took its Covid caseload to 6,13,357, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

These infections were detected out of more than 90,000 tests - the highest in the city/town date - even as the positivity rate plunged to 1.51 per cent, lowest in months, the health bulletin said.

Delhi recorded 35 fresh

FACT FILE
TOTAL CASES
99,56,557
ACTIVE CASES
3,22,366
NEW CASES
24,010
NEW RECOVERIES
33,291
TOTAL DEATHS
1,44,451
UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8:00 A.M. THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER 2020

Covid fatalities, which pushed its toll to 10,182, the bulletin said.

(SEE P2)

tenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Mr Modi thanked Bangladesh for issuing a stamp in honour of Mahatma Gandhi.

Mr Modi also accepted Sheikh Hasina's invitation to visit Bangladesh in person in March 2021 to join the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence and 50 years of bilateral diplomatic relations.

In the context of Covid-19, Mr Modi assured Sheikh Hasina that vaccines would be made available to Bangladesh as soon as they were produced in India.

The two leaders jointly unveiled a commemorative postal stamp issued by India on the occasion of birth cen-

beginning from the Tripura-Bangladesh sector. They agreed that the loss of civilian lives at the border was a matter of concern and directed the border forces concerned to enhance coordinate measures to work towards bringing such border incidents to zero.

Recognising that terrorism remained a threat to global peace and security, they reiterated their strong commitment to eliminating the menace in all its forms and manifestations.

Both sides emphasised simplifying people-to-people movement between the two countries. Sheikh Hasina requested for early implementation of India's commitment to remove remaining restrictions on entry/exit from land ports in India for Bangladeshi travellers on valid documents in a phased manner, beginning with checkpoints at Akhaura (Tripura) and Ghatgaon (West Bengal).

The two Prime Ministers directed officials to expediently conclude the ongoing joint study on the prospects of entering into a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

To facilitate better connectivity and simplify movement of passengers and goods between both the countries, both leaders agreed to an early operationalisation of the BBN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) Motor Vehicles Agreement.

India committed to Teesta interim accord, Modi tells Sheikh Hasina

ASHOK TUTEJA
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

At a virtual summit with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today reiterated India's sincere commitment and continued efforts to complete the interim water sharing arrangement for the Teesta river as the two leaders announced a series of steps to further strengthen trade, connectivity, border management and cultural cooperation between the neighbouring countries.

Mr Modi's assurance on the Teesta issue came after Sheikh Hasina highlighted the need for early signing of an interim agreement as agreed upon

by the two governments in 2011 when then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh could not ink it during his visit to Dhaka due to opposition from West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

Mr Modi said Bangladesh was a 'significant pillar' of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and accepted Sheikh Hasina's invitation to visit Bangladesh in March to join celebrations marking 50 years of Bangladesh's independence.

The two countries signed seven accords in diverse fields as Mr Modi and Sheikh Hasina announced a series of steps to strengthen trade, connectivity

Sisodia inspects water project, inaugurates power facility

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister and sitting MLA from Patparganj, Manish Sisodia inaugurated an electrical substation near Patparganj post-office today. He also inspected an upcoming underground water reservoir at Patparganj.

Sisodia said in view of an increasing demand for power and water facilities by local residents, these projects were being expedited.

This underground reservoir, with its capacity to store 11 mega litres (1.1 crore litres) of water, is expected to provide relief to the locals and nearby residents.

During the inspection, Sisodia said that providing better infrastructure in the

form of electricity, water facilities and quality schools and hospitals to the common man is the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP government's priority.

In Patparganj, the BSES Yamuna Power Ltd (BYPL) has constructed an 11KV capacity substation. With this substation, thousands of consumers of Shashi Garden and adjoining areas will now have access to reliable power supply. It will also eliminate low voltage issues.

The Deputy Chief Minister also inspected the under-construction underground water reservoir, and reviewed its progress. Eighty per cent of this reservoir has been completed.

The construction of the reservoir project began in February 2019 and was expected to be completed by



February 2021. However, due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and the national lockdown, work on this project was halted. Sisodia has expressed his desire for this project to be completed by March 2021 to make the summer season comfortable for the locals.

Currently, the work of

laying the pipeline is underway. This underground reservoir, being built near Aster Public School, will also double the existing water availability in the area.

Once completed, this underground reservoir will supply water to the residents of Patparganj village, Shashi Garden, Pratap Nagar, Pocket Four, Pandav Nagar E, F and P Block, Acharya Niketan, Mayur Vihar-Phase 1 and Extension, Chilla village, Shastri Mohalla and other nearby areas. The reservoir will make accessibility of water easier in this belt on a daily basis.

At both the functions, many local residents were also present. They reportedly "expressed happiness over the ongoing development work in Patparganj led by Sisodia and his team".

for the locals.

Currently, the work of

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF SHRI ANURAG DASS
Administrative Civil Judge-cum-Additional Rent Controller (West), Court Room No. 112, 1st Floor

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi Petition No.: SC-92/2020 To,

Manav Kakar, r/o Late Shri Sanjeev Kakar, r/o B-412, Meera Bhagat, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110063.

— Petitioner/s Versus

State FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To all concerned.

Whereas in the abovenoted petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 in respect of the debt and securities of Shares of Different Companies Worth Rs. 14,70,178/- to be standing in the name of Late Smt. Sunanda Kakar, deceased.

Whereas the at 10 (Ten) O'clock in the forenoon has been fixed for 29-01-2021 hearing on the application notice is hereby given to all concerned.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court this 15th day of December, 2020.

Administrative Civil Judge-cum-Additional Rent Controller (West), Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi Seal of the Court

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-I

4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001 OA No. 1081/2019 Oriental Bank of Commerce — Applicant

Versus

Shri Jai Karan Singh and Anr.

— Respondent

To,

1. Shri Jai Karan Singh, s/o Shri Jagdamba Pal Singh, S-704/20A, Virindavan Heights, Virindavan Garden, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad-201010 (U.P.) (Borrower)

Also at: E-21, Janata Garden, Pandav Nagar, New Delhi-110092.

2. Shri Raj Kumar Verma, s/o Shri Dina Nath Verma, H. No. 682, GTB Enclave, Delhi-110009 (Guarantor)

Whereas the abovenamed applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 24,44,31/- (Rupees Twenty Lakh Forty Four Thousand and Four Hundred Thirty One only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before the Registrar on 10-03-2021 at 10:30 a.m. (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.tribunal.gov.in Phone number: 011-23748473).

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the abovenamed day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Owing to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:

(i) All the Advocate/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/Software.

(ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer/I and Recovery Officer-II shall be available one day prior to the next date of DRT Official Portal i.e., "Drt.gov.in" under the Public Notice Head.

(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned Official at Ph. No. 011-2348473.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Tribunal on this 05th November of 2020.

By Order of this Tribunal For Registrar

COURT NOTICE IN THE COURT OF M.S. KAVITA Civil Judge (Junior Division), Nawanshahr (Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar)

CNR No. PB5B02-000841-2019

Next Date: 05-03-2021 at 10 a.m.

Date of Order: 07-08-2019

Tajinder Singh, s/o Mohinder Singh, r/o Village Nawawala, Tehsil and District Ludhiana, Plaintiff

Versus

Lakhwinder Singh, s/o S. Harbhajan Singh, s/o S. Dilbag Singh, r/o Village Mahal Khurd,

Tehsil Nawanshahr, District Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar.

Notice to: Defendant Lakhwinder Singh, s/o S. Dilbag Singh, r/o Village Mahal Khurd, Tehsil Nawanshahr, District Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar.

In above titled petition, the defendant could not be served. It is ordered that defendant should appear in person or through counsel for dated 05-03-2021 at 10:00 a.m.

For details logon to https://highcourtindia.gov.in/?rs=district_notice&district=sbsnagar.

Dated, this day of 10-12-2020.

Civil Judge (Junior Division), Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar

Seal of the Court

IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI

Notice Under Order V Rule 20 Code of Civil Procedure

Case No. MACA No. 784/2018 CM Appl. 35792-93/2018

Appeal Against order dated 08-03-2016

Passed by Sh. Raj Paul

Sh. Raj Paul, C.J.T.O., West-01, Delhi

In MACT No. 561/2008

M/s. Cognizant Pvt. Ltd. — Petitioner/Appellant(s)

Versus

Iffco Tokio Gen. Ins. Co. Ltd. and Ors.

— Respondent(s)

Notice to :

Respondent No. 2,

Karan Singh, s/o Phool Singh, r/o A-61, Raj Nagar, Part-II, Palam Colony, New Delhi (Owner)

Whereas the abovenamed appellant has presented an appeal Under Section 173 of MV Act which were listed before Court on 04-09-2018 and the Court ordered issuance of notice to him to appear before the court to satisfy satisfaction of the Court that he cannot be served in the ordinary manner. Notice by way of publication to you is hereby issued that if you wish to defend the abovementioned appeal you may cause an appearance to be entered on your behalf either in person or through an advocate duly appointed by you for the purpose before the Court of Joint Registrar (Judicial) on 05-01-2021 at 11:00 a.m.

If no appearance is made on your behalf, by yourself, your pleader or someone by law

Whereas an Petition under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 for grant of Succession Certificate in respect of Assets of Late Sh. MAHENDRA SRIVASTAVA @ ALIAS MAHENDRA KUMAR SRIVASTAVA, S/o Late BABU LAL, WHO EXPIRED ON 23-11-2018.

Whereas an Petition under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 for grant of Succession Certificate has been filed by the petitioner.

Whereas in the abovenoted petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate in respect of the One Saving Bank Account in Oriental Bank of Commerce, 45, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, M.B. Road, New Delhi-110062. Vide No. 06292010078990.

Whereas an Petition under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 for grant of Succession Certificate has been filed by the petitioner.

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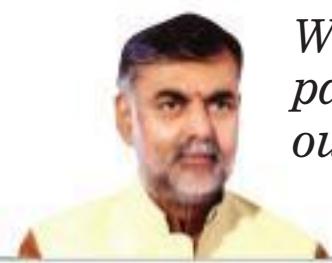
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We need to look at what our role will be after the COVID pandemic is over and it is our responsibility that we meet our pre-COVID level position

PRAHLAD PATEL

CULTURE AND TOURISM MINISTER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER 2020

03

BJP pitting Hindus against Sikhs in Punjab: SAD

SAD charges BJP with abandoning Atal Bihari Vajpayee's principles and violating 'coalition dharma' by indulging in 'hate politics', which, it says, would only vitiate peace and communal harmony

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 17 DECEMBER

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Thursday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has abandoned the core principles of former Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee and violated "coalition dharma" by indulging in "hate politics", which would only vitiate peace and communal harmony in Punjab.

The SAD's senior leader Prof Prem Singh Chandumajra said the Punjab unit of the BJP appears to have taken up the Congress policy of "divide and rule", which might only cause "devastating repercussions" in the



state. He said the Punjab BJP leaders were seeking to make one brother (Sikh) fight against another (Hindu) solely to get a foothold in the state

after being overwhelmingly rejected by the people following the enactment of the three "hated central government's agricultural marketing Acts".

Chandumajra said the BJP's Punjab unit needs to ask the saffron party's leadership why it has abandoned the moderate policies of Vajpayee and forgotten to take everyone along.

"Instead of spewing venom against the SAD you (Punjab BJP) should ask the Centre why it has taken an anti-farmer and anti-peasant line. Why is the new BJP toeing the line of the corporate sector? Why did it frame legislation without even consulting the stakeholders and

why is it bent on giving a 'gift' which farmers don't want?", he asked.

Speaking about the role of the SAD, BJP's former ally, Chandumajra said the SAD had formed an alliance with the BJP for people's welfare.

"We are committed to the welfare of farmers as well as poor and downtrodden sections of society besides each and every community irrespective of caste and creed. This is the reason SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal demanded that the CAA ambit should be widened to include Muslims in it. This is why the SAD asked the BJP high command to listen to the concerns of farmers before taking up the farm ordi-

nances for legislation. It is the BJP which assured that all grievances would be addressed but instead of doing so it bulldozed the farm Bills through Parliament," he said.

The SAD subsequently walked out of the ruling BJP-led NDA alliance.

Chandumajra asked the BJP leaders to tell Punjabis whether the BJP had systematically targeted its opponents as "separatists" and even invented epithets like "tukde tukde" gang for them? "You have pitted Hindus against Muslims. You have labeled peacefully protesting farmers as Khalistanis. Now you are pitting Hindus against Sikhs in Punjab," he said.

Previous Himachal Cong govt merely announced devp projects: Jai Ram

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 17 DECEMBER



gas connections under Grihi-ni Suvidha Yojna to make Himachal Pradesh a smoke free state.

Thakur said that the state is fortunate to have benevolence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and National BJP President JP Nadda, who from the state. He said that double engine of the Central and state government is bound to make Himachal Pradesh forge ahead on the path of progress and prosperity.

He also urged the people to be honest and hardworking candidates for the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the ensuing Panchayat elections.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Rajiv Satyal thanked the chief minister on behalf of the people of Kasauli Assembly represented by him.

He said that last year the chief minister during his visit to the area had dedicated developmental projects worth Rs 102 crore.

He said that Parwanoo is the first industrial town of the state, where people from different parts of the state work to earn their livelihood.

of the people of the State during last three years.

He said that each and every day of the state government is committed towards the welfare and upliftment of the common man. He said that the opposition is making much hue and cry over the pandemic, but the people of the State were aware of their nefarious designs.

Thakur said that several schemes such as Jan Manch and Mukhya Mantri Sewa Sankalp Helpline 1100 has been proving boon to the people of the state for redressal of their grievances at their doorsteps. He said that HP Gramin Suvidha Yojna, Sahara Yojna and HIM-CARE had helped the weaker sections of the society.

He said that as many as 2.86 lakh families were provided free

TENDER

INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

Indian Red Cross Society, National Headquarters invites applications for the following posts:-

1. Medical Officer (Blood Centre): No of Post - One (1) - Contractual
2. Laboratory Technician (Blood Bank): No. of Post - One (1) - Contractual
3. Staff Nurse (Blood Bank): No. of Post - Two (2) - Contractual

These posts are temporary and on contractual basis on consolidated salaries for a period of one year. The tenure can be extended based on performance and need for the position. The services shall be liable to termination at any time by either side, on one-month notice.

For essential qualifications, desirable qualifications, salary and experience required for the above posts, please visit our website www.indianredcross.org.

Application (with NOC from the present employer) supported with the attested testimonials & a passport size photograph should reach in sealed & superscribed envelop to the undersigned within three weeks of publication.

The Secretary General,
INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY
National Headquarters
1-Red Cross Road, New Delhi - 110001

davp 17185/11/0003/2021

Justifying Rahul's walkout, Capt seeks review on working of defence panel

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 17 DECEMBER

riety issues and the urgent requirements of our forces and not the polish they need to shine their shoes and buttons," said Amarinder, himself an ex-Army man with extensive knowledge and experience of security issues as well as the workings of such panels.

"People who know nothing of the defence forces are made to sit on these committees now and we expect them to protect the nation," said Amarinder, expressing shock that political affiliations were guiding the functioning of the panel, whose chairman probably had not even ever been part of the NCC.

"With both China and Pakistan breathing down India, the committee should have been discussing strategic secu-

raise the level of debate in these meetings, the CM said this is not the forum to discuss what Brasso is needed to polish uniform buttons and shoes, and make issues out of non-issues.

He stressed that senior army officers attend the committee meetings not to talk about petty matters but to discuss more vital subjects of national security and the concerns of our forces, who are fighting out there every day, and losing their lives.

The way Rahul and other Congress members were treated was atrocious, said Amarinder, citing reports that the party Member of Parliament was not allowed to speak.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures.

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Hi-Fashion winter Collection 2020 Best Brands Sweaters, Jackets sweat shirts, Lower, Cardigan & winter wears

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

शिरकर की ओर हिमाचल



शिरकर की ओर



• बिना किसी आय सीमा के पेंशन पाने की आयु सीमा 70 वर्ष की, 2.90 लाख से अधिक वृद्धजन लाभान्वित • 5,77,604 लाभार्थियों को मिल रही सामाजिक सुरक्षा पेंशन, 642.50 करोड़ रुपये खर्च

हिमकेर
योजना

• 128.95 करोड़ रुपये खर्च 1.24 लाख से अधिक लोगों का किया उपचार योजना के तहत प्रदेश में 4.61 लाख परिवार पंजीकृत

मुख्यमंत्री स्वावलंबन योजना

• 936 इकाइयां स्थापित 47.78 करोड़ रुपये की सब्सिडी प्रदान

• सभी विधानसभा क्षेत्रों में 200 जनमंच आयोजित, 48694 शिकायतों व मांगों के आवेदन प्राप्त 91 प्रतिशत शिकायतों का किया समाधान

जनमंच

• गौसेवा आयोग का किया गठन, हर ज़िले में खुल रहे गौ अभ्यारण्य व गौ सदन

गौसेवा

• वर्ष 2022 तक किसानों की आय दोगुना करने व 9.61 लाख परिवारों को वर्ष 2022 तक प्राकृतिक खेती के तहत लाने का लक्ष्य

कृषि

मुख्यमंत्री सेवा संकल्प हेल्पलाइन 1100

• 120755 शिकायतों तथा 18953 मांगों में से अधिकांश शिकायतों का किया निपटारा

हिमाचल गृहिणी सुविधा योजना

• 2.85 लाख महिलाओं को दिए निःशुल्क एलपीजी कनेक्शन, यह उपलब्धि प्राप्त करने वाला हिमाचल बना, देश का प्रथम राज्य

अटल टनल रोहतांग

• 10 हज़ार फुट की ऊँचाई पर बनी दुनिया की सबसे लम्बी राजमार्ग सुरंग राष्ट्र को समर्पित, वर्ष भर मिलेगी आवागमन की सुविधा

BJP leaders are gearing up to make one brother (Sikh) fight against another (Hindu) solely to get a foothold in Punjab



SAD'S SENIOR LEADER PROF PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA

ACCUSING PUNJAB UNIT OF BJP OF HAVING TAKEN UP CONGRESS POLICY OF DIVIDE AND RULE

THUMBNAILS



Mos external affairs V. Muralidharan participates in the 20th Council of Ministers meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association via video-conferencing, in New Delhi on Thursday.

IANS

JLF 2021 speakers' list: The Jaipur Literature Festival on Wednesday announced the first list of speakers for its 14th edition which will be held virtually over two extended weekends from 19-21 February and 26-28 February.

Robber arrested: One of the main accused involved in the robbery at Bengal cricket captain Abhimanyu Easwaran's home in Uttarakhad, was arrested from Meerut on Thursday. Suresh Jataw alias 'Mishra' was hiding in an underground cell at his in-law's house. Jewellries and other valuables were recovered from the accused.

SNS

WITH GAY ABANDON



Kids enjoying skating at the ice-skating rink at Lakkar Bazaar in Shimla on Thursday.

LALIT KUMAR

TENDER

BHKRA BEAS MANAGEMENT BOARD (Power Wing)

Notice Inviting E-Tender

Corrigendum-I
NIT No.: BP-2615
Name of office: Dy. Chief Engineer, Bhakra Power Houses Circle, BBMB (PW), Nangal.
Name of work: Providing Services for installation of 17 Nos. new VCB panels after dismantling of existing old 17 Nos. panels at Project Supply Centre near Bhakra Right Bank Power House and 11 KV Switchyard near 200 Switchyard of Bhakra Left Bank Power House of Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB).
Last date for download tender documents 29.12.2020 upto 16:00 Hrs.
Last date for submission of online bid 29.12.2020 upto 17:00 Hrs.
Due date for opening technical bid 30.12.2020 at 11:00 Hrs.
For detailed NIT & Earnest Money to be deposited please visit BBMB website <https://bbmbproc.abprocure.com & www.bbmb.gov.in>

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NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering)

Name of work with its location	Provision for shifting of S&T utilities in c/w crossing of RR&S elevated corridor above the Northern Railway track at Km. 17.276 (Km 17/10a & 17/11) on SBB-GZB section of DLJ Division.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	₹ 24,17,337/- only
Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	₹ 48,400/- only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3 rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender / closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time - 13.01.2021 up to 15:00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3 rd Floor, DRM Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.
No. 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-1348 Dated: 16.12.2020.	2807/20

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

HIMACHAL PRADESH JAL SHAKTI VIBHAG NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Off line tenders form PWD-6 & 8 are hereby invited for the following works and contractors/Firms of appropriate class enlisted with H.P. I&H department will be eligible for participating in the tender on behalf of Government of Himachal Pradesh, so as to reach in this office on or before 23.12.2020 up to 3:00 PM and same will be opened on the same day at 3:30 PM in presence of intending Contractor/firm or their authorized representative who may wish to be present at the time of opening of the tender. The tender documents can be had from this office on or before 23.12.2020 up to 11:30 AM. Conditional /telegraphically tender will not be entertained. The earnest money will be received at the time of application in the shape of NSC/Time Deposit (FDR) duly pledged in the name of Executive Engineer, Phina Singh medium irrigation Project Division, Sadwan in Tehsil Nurpur Distt, Kangra H.P. The cost of tender form shall also be deposited at the time of application in shape of cash or demand draft in favour of Executive Engineer, Phina Singh medium irrigation Project Division, Sadwan. If the tender cost or earnest money is not deposited at the time of application, failing which the tender shall not be opened & liable to be rejected. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject the tender without assigning any reasons, if, happens to be holiday on the date of opening of tender, then the tender shall be opened on the next working day. The notice inviting tender is issued with ref. to CPWD manual under Section 17.5 being emergent works.

Sr. No.	Description	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Cost of Form	Time allowed
1.	C/O PSMP in Tehsil Nurpur Distt, Kangra (H.P) SH- C/o Wire Crate for retaining the disposal of soil and erosion the private land due to C/o RCC Cut & cover near RD 4942 of main canal at RD 0 to 12 mtrs. Length & earth filling behind the existing Retaining wall and existing crate work at RD 4913 of main canal both side of RCC Acqueduct.	4,87,99/-	9,760/-	250/-	Two months
2.	C/O PSMP in Tehsil Nurpur Distt, Kangra (H.P) SH- C/o Retaining wall to protect the temporary interconnecting arrangement HRT and main canal RD 4317/0 to 12 mtrs.= 12 mtrs. Length.	4,35,098/-	8,702/-	250/-	Three months
3.	C/O PSMP in Tehsil Nurpur Distt, Kangra (H.P) SH- Repair & Maintenance of Sub-Division Ladori Providing and fixing Blue Star AC for Sub-Division Office at Ladori	4,88,270/-	9,765/-	250/-	Two months

TERMS & CONDITIONS

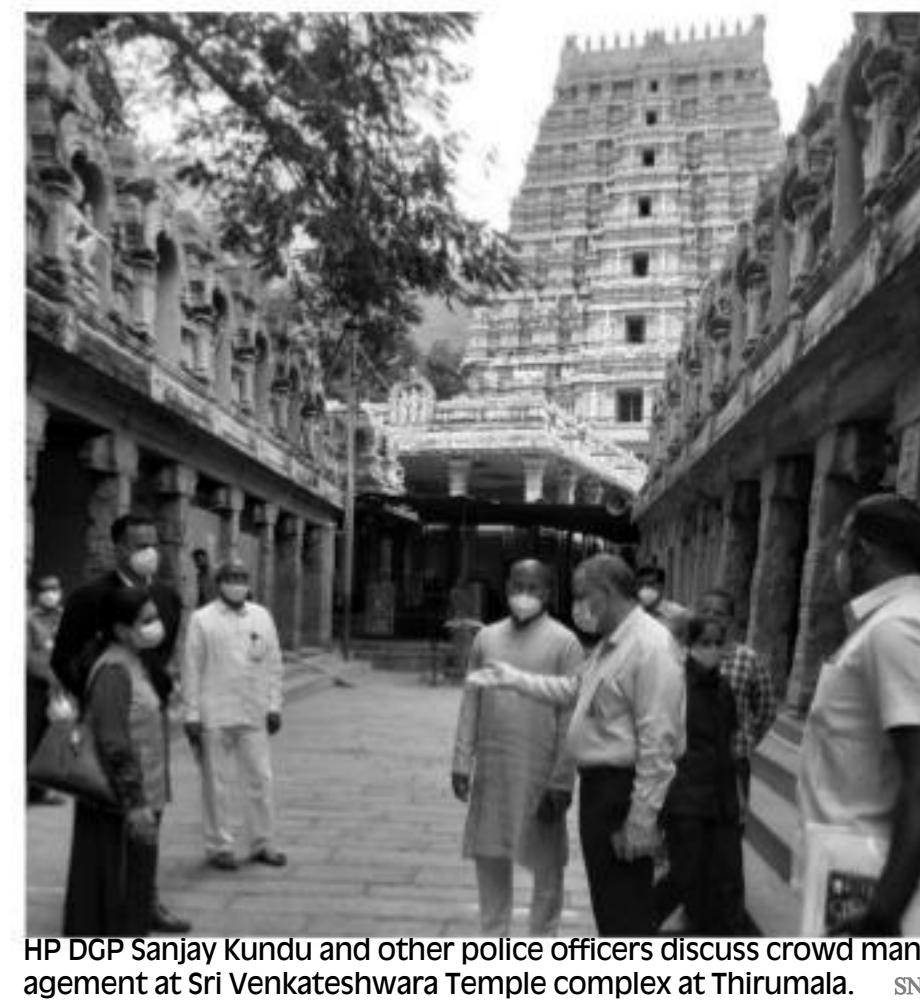
- The work shall be executed as per CPWD Specifications as per direction of secretary (IPH) to Govt. of HP vide letter No IPH-B-(A)9-1/2010-11 Shimla Dated 03.10.2019.
- The quantity can be increase/decreased as per site conditions & Prior approval of Engineer-in-Charge be taken before execution.
- Nothing shall be paid for the rejected work and material.
- Income Tax, GST, Labour cess and security shall be deducted from each R/Bill of the contractor as per rules.
- Crushed stone Aggregate of River borne material free from silt/ foreign be uses as per IS 3838.
- The work shall be executed as per drawings/design by JSV(PSMI) Engineer-in-charge/competent.
- The Tender received without earnest money/copy of enlistment/Income tax & GST clearance will be rejected.
- The cement will be issued @ 344 P/Bag & steel @ 56.50 P/Kg. from Divisional Store at Madanpur.

Executive Engineer, (JSV)PSMI Division, Sadwan

5101/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

HP police top brass visit Tirupati for lessons on crowd management at religious places

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 17 DECEMBER



HP DGP Sanjay Kundu and other police officers discuss crowd management at Sri Venkateshwara Temple complex at Thirumala. SNS

As 'Dev Bhoomi' Himachal Pradesh has many famous religious shrines and Shaktipeeth temples, a team led by HP Director General of Police Sanjay Kundu visited Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh for first-hand lessons on security and crowd management arrangements.

Kundu along with North-east Range DIG Sumedha Dwivedi and other police officials visited Sri Venkateshwara Temple, Tirumala, on Wednesday and took stock of security arrangements there.

HPDGP Sanjay Kundu said Himachal is the abode of many temples including Mata Chintpurni, Jwala Ji, Naina Devi, Charnunda Devi amongst others and the security practices at Tirupati will help the cops in ensuring better security and pilgrim management at these shrines.

"Himachal is home to several well-known temples which are frequented by several pilgrims from India and abroad every year. The team of police officers visiting Tirupati will positively gain from this experience and they will learn best practices and implement the same in the state," he said, adding that a report on new security arrangements at religious places will also be submitted to Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur. Kundu said Sri Venkateshwara Temple com-

plex at Thirumala is one of the largest and best-managed temples in the country with an estimated 2.5 crore people visiting it annually.

A first hand exposure to the arrangements for security, crowd management, use of technology at this temple, will enable Himachal Police to devise similar arrangements for the temples located in Himachal Pradesh, especially in the backdrop of COVID 19 pandemic.

The team also visited the Padmavati Amarnath Temple complex to study the securi-

ty arrangements and procedures adopted for crowd management, he added.

Kundu along with the HP police team visited the Police sub control room on Thursday and observed the crowd access and control mechanisms within the temple complex.

The team also visited the integrated police control room where Chief Vigilance and Security officer Gopinath Jetti

detailed about elaborate security arrangements (both physical and through CCTVs) at the Sri Venkateshwara Temple Complex.

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Apart from the traditional and professional Modi bashers, among the minorities, he is the most acceptable leader

MINORITY AFFAIRS MINISTER MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI

DISMISSING A REPORT CLAIMING INDIA HAS BECOME INTOLERANT OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER 2020

05

THUMBNAILS



Actor Karishma Tanna at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai. IANS

Govt approves purchase for armed forces: The Defence Acquisition Council on Thursday under the chairmanship of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, approved capital acquisition proposals of various weapons and platforms worth Rs 28,000 crore required by the Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force.

SNS

Hunar Haat for master artisans begins on 18 Dec: Union Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Thursday announced the beginning of 23rd 'Hunar Haat', a platform for indigenous master artisans from across the country to showcase and sell their products, on 18 December in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh.

SNS

Pranav Gupta elected as IRRO secy general: Pranav Gupta, the newly elected member of the executive committee of International Publishers Association and the managing director of Prints Publications Pvt Ltd has been elected as the secretary general of Indian Reprographic Rights Organization (IRRO). Ashok Gupta holds the position of the chairman for a tenure of next two years.

SNS

Criminals attack judge in Nitish's home district

PATNA, 17 DECEMBER

Judges are the new target of attack in Bihar. In a fresh incident, a judge had a narrow escape today when few miscreants threw stones at his car and also fired gunshots. The incident took place in Hilsa block of Nalanda, the home district of chief minister Nitish Kumar.

Reports said the additional district judge Jai Kishore Dubey posted with the Hilsa court was returning home from the court when unidentified criminals threw stones at his car right in the middle of the market area, smashing its window panes. The miscreants also fired three rounds in the air and fled the scene.

This is the second incident of attack on a judge in the past two months.

Earlier in October, another additional district judge posted in Aurangabad court was allegedly abused, threatened and chased by a police sub-inspector. The matter is being heard in the Supreme Court. Reports said the judge had gone for an evening walk in the Aurangabad town when the said cop accompanied by paramilitary personnel for a flag march, hurled abuses at the judge, chased him in public and threatened to shoot him as he took shelter in his residence.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has sought a response from the state government and its officials on a PIL seeking registration of an FIR and initiation of criminal contempt proceedings against the police officer for allegedly assaulting the judge.

The bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar took note of the PIL and also issued notices to the Centre, Bihar's DGP, SP of the district concerned as well as the accused police inspector.

Criminal incidents have registered an alarming surge shortly after Nitish Kumar took oath for the fourth consecutive term in the state last month after bitterly-fought Assembly elections.

A harried chief minister who is also in-charge of home department had held meetings with top officials at least thrice in the past one fortnight to curb criminal activities. SNS

Another BKU faction reaches Noida

Attempts to move to Delhi to join the bigger stir against the new agri laws but was prohibited by police deployed near the Chilla border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NOIDA (UP), 17 DECEMBER

Another group of farmers reached Noida on Thursday and attempted to move to Delhi to join the bigger stir against the new agri laws but was prohibited by police deployed in a large number near the Chilla border.

Scores of members of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ambavat) faction were stopped near Mahamaya flyover on the Noida-Delhi Link Road, with the development obstructing traffic movement on the key route, according to police officials.

"The Noida-Delhi Link Road via Chilla is partially closed. Movement from Delhi to Noida is allowed but not otherwise, due to the farmers' stir," a Noida Traffic Police official told PTI.

"Commuters have been advised to opt the DND or the Kalindi Kunj route for travelling to and from Delhi," the official said, adding that the route has been diverted from Dalit Prema Sthal to the DND flyway.

While the bigger group of BKU (Ambavat) protestors was stopped from going to Delhi, the faction's 22 members were taken to the police line where they submitted a memorandum of their demands to the sub-divisional magistrate of Dadri, according to an official statement.

These protestors were stopped in view of the law-and-order situation amid ongoing protests by other farmers unions at Noida-Delhi border, the statement issued by the district police read.

Meanwhile, protestors from various districts of western Uttar Pradesh and chiefly belonging to the BKU (Bhanu) and the BKU (Lok Shakti) stayed put at the Chilla bor-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 17 DECEMBER

Convene special Parl session to resolve farm issues: NCP



NCP chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase calls for bringing the PM CARES Fund under the ambit of public accountability, contending there is no explicit clarity about the entity

concerns and apprehensions are addressed, Tapase said. He said some farmers have laid down their lives for the cause and the BJP government at the Centre "does not seem to be sympathising with the protesters".

Hence, the issue has to be resolved at the Parliament-level, the NCP leader said.

On the issue of the PM CARES Fund, set up in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, Tapase said it appears that it is not a government-run trust.

So, the PM CARES Fund should not have been eligible

for corporate donations.

It means for the last two months, the PM CARES Fund, a private entity, has been receiving donations, he alleged.

Tapase said as of December 2019, the Prime Minister National Relief Fund had an unspent balance of Rs 3,800 crore. Hence, there was no need for a separate fund, he said.

There is no explicit clarity regarding the PM CARES Fund and hence, it has to be brought under the ambit of public accountability, Tapase said.

Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

They have expressed apprehension that these laws would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations.

However, the government has maintained that the new laws will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture.

Government officials said efforts are being made for next round of talks between representatives of the Centre and the farmers so that the logjam over the new laws could end.

What democratic practice is this? The country will remain alive only if voices from the opposition benches are strong in a democracy. The democratic traditions in Parliament inspire the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi must follow these traditions," it said.

The US held polls and changed the guard in a democratic manner. This is the democracy of the super power; (while) we locked the supreme temple of democracy," the editorial said.

Referring to the Maharashtra BJP unit's criticism of the state government over holding a curtailed, two-day, winter session of the Legislature due to Covid-19, it said the BJP's views on democracy change "as per its convenience".



Farmers shout slogans during their protest against the new farm laws, at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Thursday. DEEPAK

Parl session cancelled to evade discussion: Sena

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 17 DECEMBER

Criticising the Centre's decision not to hold the winter session of Parliament, the Shiv Sena on Thursday claimed the Union government wants to evade discussion on issues like the ongoing farmers' protest, country's economic situation and border stand-off with China.

An editorial in Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' said the session has been cancelled so that the Opposition does not get an opportunity to ask questions on these issues.

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Yogi: Opposition misleading farmers over agriculture laws

BAREILLY (UP), 17 DECEMBER

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath here on Thursday alleged that the Opposition parties are "misleading" farmers on the Centre's agriculture laws and the budget session will be convened in January 2021.

"The COVID-19 did not stop election of a big democratic country in the world. But we are not allowing (even) four-day winter session of Parliament.

The chief minister alleged that the demoralised opposition is misleading farmers by telling lies and conspiring against farmers' interests.

They are creating confusion among farmers. The 'mandis' (markets) will not be shut. No one will be allowed to grab land of farmers," the CM said addressing a "Kisan Sammelan" here.

The CM said when the opposition starts working on the basis of caste, creed and religion, then it is the duty of the government to make people aware about the truth. PTT

India expects further talks with China on LAC stand-off: MEA

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

India today said it expected further discussions with China on the military stand-off in eastern Ladakh in the interest of peace and tranquility along the LAC.

"It is our expectation that further discussions will help both sides to achieve an agreement on a mutually acceptable solution for ensuring complete disengagement in all friction points along the LAC in the Western sector and full restoration of peace and tranquility as early as possible," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said today.

He said the two sides were maintaining communication through diplomatic and military channels. These discussions have helped both sides to enhance understanding of each other's positions.

In response to another question, the spokesperson said India's bulk cargo vessel MV Jag Anand has been on anchor near Jingtan port

India continued to be in regular touch with the Chinese authorities to seek a resolution of these issues at the earliest and also to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the crew were taken care of, the spokesperson added.

The owners of these shipping companies as well as the receivers of the cargo have been made aware of the reasons for delay in unloading of the cargo.

India continued to be in regular touch with the Chinese authorities to seek a resolution of these issues at the earliest and also to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the crew were taken care of, the spokesperson added.

The Indian Embassy in Beijing was in touch with the Chinese authorities in this regard.

The Chinese authorities, he said, have conveyed that on account of various Covid-19 related restrictions imposed by the local authorities, crew change was not being permitted from these ports.

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Measure for measure

With a score of 44.4, India ranked 75th in the world and was significantly ahead of other South Asian countries in the Global Knowledge Index 2020 released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation earlier this week. Of the 138 nations surveyed, Switzerland expectedly topped the Index (the fourth time in a row) with a score of 73.6, the USA came in second (71.1) and Finland was third (70.8). Within South Asia, Sri Lanka (42.1), Bhutan (40.9), Nepal (36.2) were ahead of Pakistan and Bangladesh, both these countries scoring 35.9. The importance of the GKI, based on 133 variables, is that it provides a summary measure for tracking the knowledge performance of countries in seven broad areas - pre-university education, technical-vocational education and training, higher education, research, development and innovation, information and communications technology, economy, and the general enabling environment. The abiding truth, however, is that knowledge is more than just a sum of its parts. Nonetheless, an objective measuring mechanism is vital in times of political demagoguery and exaggerated claims.

The concept of knowledge is in itself an extremely fluid one, often linked to related concepts such as the knowledge economy/society. It is also sometimes limited by a narrow understanding which restricts the focus of knowledge to education and/or technology. To that extent, the GKI enables a more scientific and evidence-based linkage between development and knowledge. How the data thrown up by the Index is understood by policy establishments the world over and put to use in the formulation and implementation of policies is the key. For example, in India, successive governments have used the country's improving human development and sustainable development indicators as defined by UN agencies as milestones to make the argument that the quality of life for citizens is improving. This, in turn, has resulted in successive Opposition parties comparing India's performance to that of, say, China's, to the latter's advantage. So, without lending weight to a purely reductionist understanding of the economy, it is important to underline that economic growth and sustainability/human development are often at odds with each other, especially when it comes to democracies in the developing world. Are these efforts at improving the human condition, then, merely an intellectual exercise in the search for utopia by those who don't have to worry about where the next meal is coming from? Of course not. But the empirical evidence obtained by the GKI, sustainable development index, human development index and their ilk needs to be used to compliment, not replace, the core task of governments which is to ensure optimum conditions for the generation of wealth; equitably where feasible but ensuring growth at all costs. For that to come to fruition, competence, efficiency, and merit must always command a premium. To paraphrase a former US President, it's always the economy, stupid.

The Ethiopian tragedy

The comity of nations is unlikely to be impressed by, far less notice, a degree of forward movement in the fact that the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, has visited Mekelle, the capital of embattled Tigray, for the first time since he ordered a military offensive against the restive region. A change in the ground situation is still a long way away. Ostensibly, he attended the first meeting of a new regional council. This appears to be a continuation of his earlier meeting with Sudan's Prime Minister, the country to which 50,000 Tigrayan refugees are reported to have fled ever since the place has been in ferment. There is speculation in Khartoum that Sudan's Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdok, was prepared to mediate in the conflict. Notably, a statement by Mr Abiy made no mention of any such offer, though it said the Sudanese delegation had backed his actions in Tigray. Perhaps to underline the importance of his visit to Tigray, Mr Abiy has tweeted photographs of his visit to Mekelle. Aside from such photo opportunities, there are no reports of any significant progress towards resolving the conflict. On the contrary, the Ethiopian government has rejected calls for an independent investigation into the deadly conflict, which, in the reckoning of the UN human rights chief, has "spiralled out of control with an appalling impact on civilians and urgently needs outside monitoring". Though the Ethiopian government contends that it "doesn't need a baby-sitter", there are resonant appeals for "more transparency" into the month-long fighting between Ethiopian forces and those of the fugitive Tigray regional government that is reported to have killed thousands, including children. While the pandemic has been frantically endemic across the world, the massacres in Ethiopia showcase a case-study of man's inhumanity to man in a swathe of Africa. It has become complicated to verify the claims of the warring sides given the lack of transparency as most communication and transport links remain severed. Indeed, the cover-up and absence of transparency has impeded efforts to assess the extent of atrocities ever since Mr Abiy had on 4 November announced that fighting had begun. Each government now regards the other as illegal. There is considerable resentment over the postponement of elections until next year because of the Covid-19 pandemic and Mr Abiy's mandate is viewed by the conflicting group as having expired. The situation in Ethiopia is extremely "worrying and volatile", to quote the UN human rights chief, who reached this conclusion in spite of government claims to the contrary. At, there has been no concerted effort to restore a scintilla of normalcy. Tigray makes do without food and medicines. Ethiopia stands in unsplendid isolation.

Inevitable Isolation

Only a change of landscape with the incoming Biden administration or change of government in Islamabad itself, can reset the free-fall towards becoming a vassal state of China, as everyone else has left the building



Pakistan is stuck in time, as far as international diplomacy goes. The essential narrative, expectations and language that define its sovereign aspirations have not changed, despite the tectonic changes globally. Its famed and institutionalised duplicitousness often tests the dexterity of its leadership, that necessitates hopping from the aspired Pakistan of Qaid-e-Azam to the militaristic bluster of its Generals, to the religious piety of its ubiquitous Mullahs.

This schizophrenia is tantamount to the infamous Pakistani track of running with the hare and hunting with the hound. The irony is writ all over as Prime Minister Imran Khan cries himself hoarse complaining 'Pakistan is the biggest victim of terrorism' just when he seeks to navigate Pakistan from getting 'blacklisted' for sponsoring terrorism, as per the global watchdog, FATF (Financial Action Task Force). From 'allies' like the United States, 'fraternal relations' with Saudi Arabia, 'brotherly relations' with Iran, to 'inseparable brothers' in Afghanistan - all are increasingly queasy for the gaps between what Pakistan says, implies and finally does? This leaves the increasingly isolated and cash-strapped Pakistan with the only option that asks for no corrective measures from the shady Pakistani ways, that is China.

Flowery descriptions like 'Saudi Arabia's closest Muslim ally', 'special relationship' notwithstanding, nothing signifies the near-pariah regression for Pakistan like the spurning of Islamabad by Saudi Arabia, which bears a symbolically venerated relevance in the Ummah (Muslim world). This rebuff is especially significant for a constitutional 'Islamic Republic' that vests its popular identity and existential purpose in religiosity. But this fracture is a recent development, as Saudi Arabia more than any other nation has sup-

ported Pakistan since its independence. Riyadh openly sided with Islamabad in 1965 and 1971 and in the 1980s funded Afghan mujahideen operations.

Pakistani troops were sent to safeguard Saudi Arabia in the Gulf War. Saudi Arabia was the only country to be taken into confidence before Pakistan conducted its nuclear test. Both routinely positioned Kashmir on the global centerstage - basically the Islamic world's most affluent nation and arguably the most militarily powerful (and only nuclear) nation converged on reciprocal sensitivities, theatres and urgencies. However, the long-lasting honeymoon is seemingly over.

Part of this is attributable to the change of track under Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman who seeks to go beyond exporting the 'religio-oil' admixture towards a more sustainable-diversified economy, wherein larger markets like India make more socio-economic sense. Part also has to do with Pakistan trying to outsmart the Saudis and their leadership within the Ummah, by cozying up to the rival camp of the Turkey-Iran-Malaysia triad. In the evolving world, sovereign positions and rallying cries are getting recalibrated with new realities which require that countries renege on the past and appropriate the 'new ask'. The Pakistani machinations that go into 'terror support', religio-fundamentalism and nuancing Israel, are amongst some of the changing tracks that have completely missed the Islamabad establishment - only to get a rude wake-up call of the inevitable by getting disowned even by the likes of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

In an unprecedented cold

and unforgiving move, the Saudis who had earlier extended a bailout package of \$6.2 billion for the desperately cash-strapped Pakistan suddenly 'stopped' the said aid mid-course and sought earlier repayment. Unlike the relatively light rebuke following Islamabad's earlier refusal to be drawn into Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, owing to combustive sectarian undercurrents in Pakistan itself, this time the retaliation from Riyadh built up to become relentless and unmistakable. A series of bilateral barbs had preceded the final move of aid-stoppage, including the Saudis pressuring Pakistan from pulling out of an international summit in Malaysia (showcased as an Turkey-Iran show).

Saudis showing disinterest in raking up Kashmir on cue from Pakistan, as also tightening work imperatives for the 2.5 million Pakistani workers whose remittances make for over 25 per cent of Pakistan's foreign reserves.

The warning-like belligerence expressed by Pakistan's foreign minister against Saudi Arabia was to be the literal last nail in the coffin, and all subsequent reassurances like 'Pakistan stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the Kingdom' notwithstanding the Saudis have maintained the early repayment displeasure. It is believed that Egypt will increasingly replace Pakistan in providing the military wherewithal for the Saudi kingdom.

Now, China has agreed to 're-bailout' Pakistan with \$1.5 billion immediately to repay the \$2 billion of Saudi Arabian debt, that has/will, become due by next month. Coming as it does on the heels of Pakistan's inability to get the \$6 billion IMF program restored, Islamabad is now solely banking on Beijing to avoid going belly-up. In this deteriorated and

isolated status for Pakistan, the Turkey-Iran-Malaysia 'alternative' cannot compensate for the economic aid, trade, energy-needs or the sheer scale of remittances, as generated by Pakistan, from Saudi Arabia.

The socio-economic-diplomatic vulnerability is getting temporarily addressed by China, and the long-term consequences of sovereign surrender and stranglehold, are guaranteed. The nature of Chinese support has also worryingly morphed from promoting bilateral trade in local currencies to usage for paying other foreign debt - a classic 'debt-trap' in the making that will make Pakistan completely beholden to China.

Pakistan has boxed itself into a corner with its bullheadedness to remain mired in the past, when even those who instigated, supported and defined the definitive narrative of the 'past', have moved on.

Getting exposed and left to fend for itself by earlier 'allies' like the United States (by calling out the Pakistani role in terror and thereafter stopping aid) could be lazily contextualised to the latent street sentiment of the 'Evil West', but explaining the break-up with the Arab sheikhdoms and Saudi Arabia in particular will be a tall ask for the Pakistani establishment.

For now, the Pakistanis are dutifully repaying the Saudi debt and unleashing a series of rapprochement visits to Riyadh, but the reality of the only other person in the form of a menacing Dragon in the room, remains. The fact that the principal opposition in Pakistani politics currently is an old and trusted Saudi hand i.e. Nawaz Sharif, makes it difficult for Imran Khan to cast any aspersions.

Only a change of landscape with the incoming Biden administration or change of government in Islamabad itself, can reset the free-fall towards becoming a vassal state of China, as everyone else has left the building.

BHOPINDER SINGH
The writer is Lt Gen PVSM, AVSM (Retd) and Former Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Gandhi and the Coalition proposal

SIR, Apropos Jaydev Jana's letter, "Gandhi and the Bengalis," (1 December), despite dark clouds gathering over Bengal with the sudden demise of Chittaranjan Das in June 1925, his Bengal Pact 1923 - a far sighted decision on power-sharing with the Muslim population for an enduring political unity among the Bengali Hindus, though rejected by Gandhi, was followed in the province.

After his death, according

to Nehru, Gandhi had become the "Permanent Super President of the Congress", and the Bengal Pact was given a burial in June 1926 by the former loyalists of Das - BC Roy and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar.

Gandhi was never well disposed towards Subhas Chandra Bose and his brother, Sarat. Nor for that matter were Nehru, Patel and Rajendra Prasad. The rejection of the Bengal Pact was followed by Gandhi's rejection

of the Coalition proposal between the Bengal Congress and Fazlul Haq's Krishak Praja Party (1937). It was a proposal that was strongly advocated by Sarat and Subhas to save Bengal from communal disaffection.

Yours, etc., Arun Kumar Bhaduri, Kolkata, 4 December.

DEPUTATION

SIR, This refers to the editorial, "Unresolved conflict" (16

December). According to the Indian Police Service (Cadre) Rules, the central government has the final word in a dispute with a state over the deputation of a police officer to the Centre.

However, the nature of India's federal system, and the way the All-India Services work, makes it difficult for the Centre to force its will on a state that refuses to back down.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Sat-

ASSETS OR LIABILITIES

SIR, Apropos 'Resolving NPAs' neither the debt recovery tribunals (DRTs) nor the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interests (SARFAESI) Act, 2002 but insolvency and bankruptcy code ensured 42.5 per cent of recovery of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). DRT managed only a meagre 3.5 per cent and SARFAESI registers 14.5 per cent and also Lok Adalat 5.3 per cent of recoveries made in Indian books.

Approximately Rs 20 lakh crore worth of are NPAs lying outstanding as on date. This correspondent as a Convenor of Debtors' Redressal Forum from the 1990s to 2020 had examined hundreds of bad loan cases in various courts and DRTs for outright settlements through a one-time payment scheme.

Yours, etc., Baniprasanna Dutta, Kolkata.



urday unilaterally sum-

ticular officer to come to the

Centre. What if the officer

does not come?

The rules say that the

Centre has the final say,

but it doesn't specify what hap-

pens if the state still refuses

to relieve certain officer.

This case is different be-

cause politics are involved,

but even routine postings

are denied to the Centre by

the West Bengal govern-

ment. Given the federal

structure, the Centre doesn't

usually insist.

The government could

potentially explore the legal

route. This matter could well

end up in court.

Yours, etc., S S Paul,

Nadia, 16 December.

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

ASIAN VOICES

End of tunnel receding

President Moon Jae-in told the people on Dec. 9 to "have faith in the ability of the government to stamp out the pandemic." He said that "the end of a long tunnel can be seen at last." It was wishful thinking that vaccines and medicines could eradicate the coronavirus soon.

The following day, Health and Welfare Minister Park Neung-hoo said the opposite - that the nation faces a precarious situation where the government's ability to control the disease will reach the limit in the near future."

On Dec. 11, a senior ministry official asked people to "refrain from social activities as much as possible."

On Dec. 12, South Korea reported a record 950 coronavirus cases, its largest daily increase since the nation's first case was confirmed Jan. 20.

Then Moon said in an urgent message that the nation was in a state of emergency and vowed to take extraordinary measures. He said he was sorry for failing to stabilize the coronavirus situation early. The daily count of new COVID-19 cases had risen to 1,030 as of midnight Sunday.

Cheong Wa Dae saw no further than its nose. It is questionable if it is really communicating with the health authorities.

Moon said the government will increase testing sharply from next week.

With the resurgence of infections, sickbeds for critically ill patients in Seoul and Gyeonggi Province, which surrounds the capital, might run out any minute. According to the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasure Headquarters on Saturday, just 58

H The Korea Herald

sickbeds were immediately available nationwide for serious COVID-19 patients as of Friday. They included 11 beds in the Greater Seoul area - seven in Seoul, three in Gyeonggi Province and one in Incheon.

A yearlong struggle with the pandemic has stretched medical resources. Doctors, nurses and other personnel are weary. The military and police will be mobilized to help with contact-tracing efforts.

Health authorities on Thursday scrambled to build temporary sickbeds in shipping containers outside the Seoul Medical Center in Seoul. The makeshift beds are below the level of regular hospital beds.

Given the rapid spread of the virus, some patients may be assigned to beds in the containers. It is pitiful that Korea had to install container beds, though nearly a year has passed since the nation reported its first COVID-19 patient.

IN MEMORIAM

ROY RATHINDRA NATH — In memory of my husband, who left us this day at Durgapur, in 1962. — Krishna.

SENGUPTA SHANTIRANJAN — Of Barishal and Paikpara, Prof. and Advocate. Fondly remembered by Jyotirmoyee Devi and son, daughter-in-law, daughters, sons-in-laws, grandchildren, relatives, friends.

ROBINSON KALYANAM —

SHRI VENKATESWARA RAO —

SHRI KALYANAM —

SHRI VENKATESWARA RAO —

SHRI KALYANAM —

SHRI VENKATESWARA RAO —

SHRI KALYANAM —

SHRI VENKATESWARA RAO —

Tata Motors to buy Marcopolo's stakes in bus & coach JV for ₹99.96 cr



CHENNAI, 17 DECEMBER

Indian automobile major Tata Motors Ltd on Thursday said it would buy the 49 per cent stakes of Marcopolo S.A. in the bus and coach making joint venture Tata Marcopolo Motors Ltd for Rs 99.96 crore.

In a regulatory Tata Motors said as a consequence of its refreshed business strategy, Marcopolo S.A. has decided to exit from the joint venture and offered to sell its 49 per cent shareholding in Rs 170 crore capital Tata Marcopolo to it.

According to Tata Motors, the two companies have entered into a share purchase agreement whereby the former will purchase the balance 49 per cent shareholding in the Rs 650.55 crore Tata Marcopolo for a cash consideration of Rs 99.96 crore.

Tata Motors will pay a price of Rs 12 per share to Marcopolo S.A. for the Rs 10 per share of Tata Marcopolo.

Last fiscal Tata Marcopolo had made an after tax profit of Rs 20.63 crore.

Post the purchase, Tata Marcopolo with manufacturing facilities in Dharwad and Lucknow will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Motors.

All technologies about existing bus body products manufactured will continue to vest with Tata Marcopolo, said Tata Motors.

Besides, as part of the transition, Marcopolo S.A. will continue to license the "Marcopolo" trademarks to Tata Marcopolo for a minimum of three years with a non-compete provision in India for a corresponding period.

The acquisition is expected to be completed by February 28, 2021. IANS

India plans \$60-bn investment in gas infrastructure: Pradhan

Gas' share in the energy mix is expected to rise to 15 percent by 2030

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday said the government has planned a \$60-billion investment for creating gas infrastructure in the country till 2024, and gas' share in the energy mix is expected to rise to 15 per cent by 2030.

Currently, gas accounts for 6 per cent in the country's total energy mix. Speaking at Assocham Foundation Day Week 2020, the minister said, "On the investments front, we have envisaged a spend of \$60 billion in creating gas infrastructure till 2024, including for pipelines, LNG terminals and CGD (city gas distribution) networks."

He further told, "We are ushering a gas-based economy by increasing the share of natural gas in India's primary energy mix from 6.2 percent to 15 percent by 2030."

India's first automated national-level gas trading platform was launched in June this year to promote

and sustain an efficient and robust gas market and foster gas trading in the country.

Coverage of CGD projects are being expanded to 232 geographical areas spread over 400 districts, with potential to cover about 53 per cent of the country's geography and 70 per cent of population, he added.

He also said, "We are adopting clean mobility solutions with greater use of LNG (liquefied natural gas) as a transportation fuel, including long haul trucking. We plan to have 1,000 LNG fuel stations across the country. Last month, foundation stone was laid for the nation's first 50 LNG fuel stations."

This year, India has achieved the milestone of completely filling all the strategic petroleum reserves with a total capacity of 5.33 MT (million tonnes) constructed at Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru and Padur.

"We have initiated the process of establishing another 6.5 MT commercial-cum-strategic petroleum storage facility at two locations, Chandikol and Padur, under



the public-private partnership model," he added.

About the pandemic, he noted that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to inhibit the conduct of normal activity. He said, "We also have clear indications of improvements and a gradual increase in activity across all

states and sectors of our economy. You are already reworking the traditional strategies, not just to mitigate the effects of the pandemic but to build back better."

Pradhan added that there is a reflection of these efforts in how India's energy sector has bounced back with

remarkable resilience. "Our energy demand has almost recovered back to pre-COVID-19 levels, particularly for petroleum products. We are confident that this recovery path in energy demand growth in India will sustain in the coming months."

Vedanta Group Chief Executive Officer Sunil Duggal said that during the session, "We contribute 15 per cent to domestic crude oil production which would be raised to 50 per cent by 2030... It can add Rs 1 lakh crore to the central government (revenue) kitty."

He suggested that the industry should be given more freedom with additional reforms in the sector which would ultimately help realise the goal of \$5-trillion economy and an Aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) India.

Suman Sinha, vice-president of Assocham and chairman & managing director of ReNew Power, stressed the need for more research and development in the energy sector to make the economy more sustainable, and called for more investment in the area.

Earnings to recover sharply in FY22 on economic revival: Report



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, 17 DECEMBER

Corporate earnings are likely to witness a sharp revival in the next financial year backed by economic recovery, said a report by Kotak Institutional Equities.

"We expect 28 per cent and 19 per cent growth in net profits of the Nifty-50 Index in FY2022 and FY2023 following 11 per cent growth in FY2021," it said.

The report noted that the growth in FY2021 reflects low base in a few sectors in FY2020 such as oil, gas and consumable fuels reflecting large adventitious or inventory losses in 4QFY20 and telecom reflecting low ARPU and profits.

There is a possibility of moderate earnings upgrade over the next few months and the extent of earnings upgrades would be one of the key drivers of the market, it added.

No change in petrol, diesel prices 10 days in running

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

Oil marketing companies continued to hold back any change in the retail price of petrol and diesel continuing with their wait and watch stance that has kept the prices of two auto fuels static for the past 10 days.

Accordingly, there was no change in the retail price of auto fuels on Thursday with the price of petrol remaining at Rs 83.71 a litre and diesel Rs 73.87 a litre in Delhi. Across the country as well the price of the two petroleum products remained unchanged.

OMCs have gone on a pause mode at a time when news of successful coronavirus and expectations of big pick up in demand had kept crude on the boil with prices breaching \$50 a barrel mark. Crude, however, has remained static for the last few days reducing any pressure on

the upward revision in fuel prices.

Petrol price was very close to breaching all-time high level of Rs 84 a litre (reached on October 4, 2018) when it touched Rs 83.71 a litre on Monday last week. But the march has been halted ever since then with no price revision by the OMCs.

Global crude prices have risen almost \$ 10 a barrel in the last month to reach over

\$ 50 a barrel now. But even at this level, it is far less than the average crude price of \$ 80.08 a barrel in October 2018 when petrol prices reached highs of Rs 84 a litre in the Capital.

With Thursday's pause, fuel prices have now increased on 15 of the past 28 days with petrol prices rising by Rs 2.65 per litre and diesel by 3.41 a litre.

Petrol prices had been

static since September 22 and diesel rates hadn't changed since October 2.

Though retail pricing of petrol and diesel has been deregulated and oil marketing companies were following a daily price revision formula, the same was suspended for almost two months to prevent volatility in international oil markets from impacting fuel prices regularly during the pandemic.

LIC rolls out customer-centric initiatives

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 17 DECEMBER

LIC of India, the country's largest life insurer is devising better methods to provide services to its policyholders in pandemic times. LIC policyholders can now avail of its improved customer-centric initiatives.

Online facility for switching of funds under ULIP policies has been introduced through LIC's Customer Portal for policyholders registered for Premier Services, on policies on their own life and the lives of their minor child/children w.e.f. 07.12.2020.

This facility is available for LIC's New Endowment Plus (Plan 935), LIC's Nivesh Plus (Plan 849) and LIC's SHIP (Plan 852), the three plans currently being sold.

This facility of Online switching of funds is free of cost and no charges are required to be paid for availing this facil-



ity. One switch is allowed per day per policy through an OTP based Authentication system.

All rules applicable to offline requests are applicable on the Online system also.

LIC has also extended the bi-lingual Customer care through call centre support to Regional content and the services are now additionally available in Marathi, Tamil and Bengali.

The call centre services of

LIC of India had commenced as a bi-lingual operation in English and Hindi with effect from September 28, 2018, with Integrated

Voice Response Systems and enquiry support from Call Centre Executives by dialling c58276827.

LIC proposes to expand this multilingual connection to its growing customer base through voice and Call Centre Executive support by adding more regional languages to

the application in near future.

LIC also has a Conversational Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning enabled bi-lingual Chatbot, LIC MITRA on LIC website www.licindia.in which is a one-stop platform for providing information regarding premium due date, various products of LIC including newly launched plans and customer queries related to policy servicing and claims.

Covid-19 vaccine pricing to help govts to ensure little to no out-of-pocket costs for people: Pfizer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

Global pharma major Pfizer has said its COVID-19 vaccine is being priced in a way that will help governments to ensure that there is little to no out-of-pocket costs for their people, as it seeks to ensure access to the vaccine across the world.

For this pandemic period, the company's pricing approach is based on the principle of ensuring broad access and supplies to the governments, a Pfizer spokesperson said in a statement. The company's decision-making is not being driven by traditional cost it added.

"Our pricing strategy is an outcome of volume, advanced commitment, equity and affordability principles. We are pricing in a way that can help governments to ensure that there is little to

no out-of-pocket costs for their populations.

"We remain committed to engaging with the Government of India and explore opportunities to make this vaccine available for use in the country," the statement said. Earlier this month, Pfizer Inc Chairman and CEO Albert Bourla said at a virtual press conference organised by International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations that "the fundamental shift that went into the pricing was that we make sure we make it very quickly available to everyone".

"We are having tier pricing. It is one price for the developed world based on their GDP, another price, lower for the middle-income countries and in the low-income countries, like countries in Africa etc, we are giving it on a not-on-profit base," he added.

Accordingly, the market had a 'gap up' opening at their respective high levels.

In terms of sectors, most of the indices traded in the green. Among them, Pharma, Realty and Financial Services indices were the major gainers.

At 2.30 p.m., Sensex was trading at 46,868.59, higher by 202.13 points or 0.43 per cent from the previous close.

The Nifty50 was trading at 13,738.65, higher by 55.95 points or 0.41 per cent from the previous close.

Considering current chart structure and derivatives data, we are expecting continuation in the ongoing up move of Nifty towards 13,900 levels in the coming week.

Thus, traders are advised to remain positive and use intraday dips as a buying opportunity" said Jay Purohit, Technical & Derivatives Analyst, MOFSL.

"On the stocks front, one can look for buying opportunities in stocks like HDFC Bank, Lupin, Bharti, Apollo Tyre and Godrej prop." IANS

Edtech startups attracted over \$2.22bn funding in 2020: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER



report by Indian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (IVCA) and PGA Labs, said.

Indian edtech startups received a total investment of \$2.22 billion in 2020 alone, compared to \$ 553 million in 2019, reflecting the confidence of investors in the segment that has seen a huge surge amid the pandemic, a report by IVCA-PIGA

Labs said on Thursday.

The report, titled 'The Great 'Un-Lockdown': Indian EdTech', noted that Indian online education companies have raised \$ 4 billion in the last five years (2016-2020) with companies like Byju's, Unacademy and Vedantu accounting for the highest share.

In 2020, 92 players received funding, out of which 61 players received seed funding, the

school education and \$ 42 billion on supplementary education (private coaching and test preparation).

The education market is expected to grow 2x to \$ 225 billion by FY25 at 14 per cent CAGR over FY20-25, it added.

"EdTech is one sector which goes in sync with the Moore's Law, with the advancing tech, Education Technologies in India have become a game changer.

EdTech in India has emerged as a clear winner, this report also projects how new unicorns are being presented globally, putting India yet again on the globe in regards to tech, innovation and digital consumption," IVCA President Rajat Tandon said.

Madhur Singh, Practice Leader, Education, Employ-

ment and Entrepreneurship at Praxis Global Alliance, said large shifts in learner requirements is reshaping the education and EdTech landscape globally. "With an increase in focus on self-paced learning, an informed selection of tools/aids on top of better awareness and accessibility, and the idea of continuous learning beyond schools and colleges via professional education courses is driving innovations in the way learning content is being consumed and delivered in India," he added.

Vaibhav Tamrakar, Vice President at PGA Labs, said digitisation of educational institutions and learning ecosystem, continuous learning for employability and professional career growth, and student lifecycle services such as

student housing and Fintech in education are some of the white spaces where the next EdTech unicorn can emerge from India in the next decade.

The report noted that the education sector has received growing attention from the government with budgetary allocation increasing from \$11.3 billion in 2018-19 to \$13.2 billion in 2020-21.

Lockdown imposed due to the spread of COVID-19 has increased the demand for EdTech products in India manifold, it added.

In response to the growing demand, EdTech players have scaled up their offerings and new players with innovative business models catering to unserved segments have emerged post-COVID-19, it said.

'Introduce uniform taxation on smokeless tobacco products'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 17 DECEMBER

Shram, a self-help group with large number of doctors and professionals, working in the field of health and education to build awareness campaigns against tobacco and alcohol has appealed to Harsh Vardhan, Health Minister and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to introduce uniform taxation on smokeless and other non-virginia tobacco products.

Shram also demands for bringing in proper regulation on sale of these smokeless other non-virginia tobacco products as this is manufactured by industry which is highly unorganized, evade taxes and forms more than 90 per cent

of total tobacco consumption in India. The measures will not only help bring in revenue to the government in excess of Rs 40,000 crore but also help in reducing health burden of tobacco on youth and vulnerable citizens of our country.

According to a study published in BMC Medicine, India accounts for 70 per cent of the deaths globally caused due to chewing of smokeless tobacco which is widely available in the form of chewing tobacco, gutka, pan masala variants and zarda.

These products are consumed by the poorer section in India due to their affordability and accessibility in the absence of any regulations and taxation.

NITIN KANSAL
DIRECTOR, CRISIL RATINGS

business

Google steers internet adoption in India, provides language variety</



Turkey won't step back from its decision to deploy Russian air defence systems despite US sanctions

TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER MEVLUT CAVUSOGLU
ON PROCUREMENT OF RUSSIA'S ADVANCED S-400 SYSTEM

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER 2020

09

Peace talks: Top US general meets Taliban

American officials in Kabul warned that stepped-up Taliban attacks endanger the militant group's peace negotiations with Afghan govt

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL, 17 DECEMBER

The top US general held unannounced talks with Taliban peace negotiators in the Persian Gulf to urge a reduction in violence across Afghanistan, even as senior American officials in Kabul warned that stepped-up Taliban attacks endanger the militant group's nascent peace negotiations with the Afghan government.

Army Gen. Mark A Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met for about two hours with Taliban negotiators in Doha, Qatar, on Tuesday and flew Wednesday to Kabul to discuss the peace process with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

At least 120 migrants intercepted off Libya's coast

CAIRO, 17 DECEMBER

More than 120 Europe-bound migrants, including eight women and 28 children, were intercepted in the Mediterranean Sea by Libya's coast guard, the U.N. migration agency said Thursday.

The International Organization for Migration tweeted that a vessel carrying the migrants was stopped late Wednesday off the coast of the North African country and the passengers were returned to Libyan territories. We reiterate that Libya is not a port of safety, the IOM said.

Safa Msehli, an IOM spokesperson in Libya, tweeted that 126 migrants from the vessel were taken to detention centers inside Libya.

In the years since the 2011 uprising that ousted and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi, war-torn Libya has emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants hoping to get to Europe from Africa and the Middle East. Smugglers often pack desperate families into ill-equipped rubber boats that stall and founder along the perilous Central Mediterranean route. At least 20,000 people have died in those waters since 2014, according to the IOM.

In recent years, the EU has partnered with Libya's coast guard and other local groups to try and halt the dangerous sea crossings. Rights groups, however, say those policies leave migrants at the mercy of armed groups or confined in detention centers. AP

Milley's meetings came amid a new drawdown of US troops, although under current US policy a complete pullout hinges on the Taliban reducing attacks nationwide.

The most important part of the discussions that I had with both the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan was the need for an immediate reduction in violence, Milley told three reporters, including one from The Associated Press, who accompanied him to Qatar and Afghanistan. "Everything else hinges on that."

Under ground rules set by Milley for security reasons, the journalists travelling with him agreed not to report on either set of talks until he had departed the region. It was Milley's second unannounced meet-



ing with the Taliban's negotiating team; the first, in June, also in Doha, had not been reported until now.

Although Milley reported no breakthrough, his Taliban meetings represent a remarkable milestone — America's top general coming face-to-face with representatives of the group that ruled Afghanistan

until it was ousted 19 years ago this month in the early stages of what became America's longest war. Milley served three tours of duty in Afghanistan, the first in 2003 and the last in 2013-14.

Army Gen. Scott Miller, the top commander of US and coalition forces in Afghanistan, said in an inter-

view at his military headquarters in Kabul on Wednesday that the Taliban have stepped up attacks on Afghan forces, particularly in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, and against roadways and other infrastructure.

My assessment is, it puts the peace process at risk — the higher the violence, the higher the risk, Miller said. Miller meets at least once a month with Taliban negotiators as part of Washington's effort to advance a peace process.

Speaking in the same interview, Ross Wilson, the ranking American diplomat in Kabul, said he also sees growing risk from Taliban violence. He said it has created an unbearable burden on the Afghan armed forces and the

society as a whole.

In the so-called Doha agreement signed last February by the United States and the Taliban, the administration of President Donald Trump agreed to a phased withdrawal of US troops, going down to zero troops by May 2021 if the agreement's conditions are upheld.

One condition is a reduction in violence by the Taliban, leading to a nationwide ceasefire. The Taliban also agreed to begin peace negotiations with the Afghan government, which are in an early stage.

The Taliban have demanded a halt to US airstrikes, which have been conducted since February only in support of Afghan forces under Taliban attack.

Miller said he was sad-

dened by what he called the Taliban's deliberate campaign to damage roadways, bridges and other infrastructure as part of the militants' effort to limit the Afghan government's ability to reinforce its troops.

Military commanders on the ground are now starting to do things that are not conducive to peace talks and reconstruction and stability, Miller said, adding, Clearly, the Taliban use violence as leverage against the Afghan government.

Miller said he is executing Trump's order to reduce US forces from 4,500 to 2,500 by January 15, just days before Joe Biden is sworn in as Trump's successor. Miller said troop levels are now at about 4,000 and will reach the 2,500 target on time.

Putin denies involvement in Navalny's poisoning

MOSCOW, 17 DECEMBER

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday rejected allegations that the Kremlin was behind the poisoning of his top political foe, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and accused US intelligence agencies of fomenting the claims.

Speaking via video call during an annual marathon news conference, the Russian leader countered the accusations by saying that if the Kremlin wanted to poison Navalny it would have pressed the attack home.

"If there was such a desire, it would have been done," Putin said with a chuckle.

Navalny fell sick on Aug 20 during a domestic flight in Russia, and was flown while he was in a coma to Germany for treatment two days later. Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, established that he was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

Russian authorities have vehemently rejected the accusations of involvement in the poisoning.

On Monday, the investigative group Bellingcat and Russian outlet The Insider released a report alleging that operatives from the FSB, Russia's domestic security agency, which is a top KGB successor, followed Navalny during his trips since 2017, had specialised training in chemical weapons, chemistry and medicine and were in the vicinity of the opposition activist in the days and hours of the time range during which he was poisoned.

Hungary flouted EU law by detaining migrants: Top court

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, 17 DECEMBER

The European Union's top court ruled Thursday that Hungary has failed to respect EU law by denying people entering the country without authorisation the right to apply for asylum and unlawfully detaining them in transit zones on its border with Serbia.

The European Court of Justice ruled that Hungary has failed to fulfil its obligation to ensure effective access to the procedure for granting international protection to people entering from Serbia by leaving them with the virtual impossibility of making their application for asylum.

The EU's executive arm, the European Commission, took Hungary to court over a law it introduced in 2015, when well over 1 million migrants entered Europe, most of them refugees from Syria or Iraq arriving in Greece with the intention of seeking asylum in Germany or Scandinavia.

Tens of thousands of migrants moved through the Balkans. Hungary's anti-migrant government erected razor wire fences to keep them out and expanded the use of crisis situation caused by mass migration legal exceptions to set up two transit zones where people were held.

The commission argued that people entering Hungary were forcibly deported to these areas, systematically



detained there and were denied their right to apply for international protection.

In its ruling, the Luxembourg-based ECJ said that the right of people to apply for asylum is an essential step in granting protection to those seeking refuge due to threats against their lives or safety, and that EU member countries cannot delay it unjustifiably.

Member States must ensure that the persons concerned are able to make an application, including at the borders, as soon as they declare their wish of doing so, the court said.

The court said also that Hungary's decision to hold some people in the transit zones, which have since been dismantled, while their asylum applications were considered constitutes detention. Hungary has taken a very strict view on immigration and under Prime Minister Viktor Orban has argued that nation states should have control over their own borders. He has often argued that it is necessary to keep out migrants from the Middle East and Africa to preserve the Christian character of Hungarian culture.

He lost them in the few seconds it took to disfigure his life forever, when, angry and distraught about the abuse and injustice he'd suffered at the

Israel set to deploy vaccine next week

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RAMALLAH, 17 DECEMBER

Israel will begin rolling out a major coronavirus vaccination campaign next week after the prime minister reached out personally to the head of a major drug company. Millions of Palestinians living under Israeli control will have to wait much longer.

Worldwide, rich nations are snatching up scarce supplies of new vaccines as poor countries largely rely on a World Health Organization program that has yet to get off the ground. There are few places where the competition is playing out in closer proximity than in Israel and the territories it has occupied for more than half a century.

Next year could bring a

Russia's Covid vaccine rollout draws wary, mixed response

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, 17 DECEMBER

While excitement and enthusiasm greeted the Western-developed coronavirus vaccine when it was rolled out, the Russian-made version has received a mixed response, with reports of empty Moscow clinics that offered the shot to health care workers and

sharp divergence in the trajectory of the pandemic, which until now has blithely ignored the national boundaries and political enemies of the Middle East. Israelis could

soon return to normal life and an economic revival, even as the virus continues to menace Palestinian towns and villages just a few miles (kilometers) away.

Israel reached an agreement with the Pfizer pharmaceutical company to supply 8 million doses of its newly approved vaccine, enough to cover nearly half of Israel's population of 9 million since each person requires two doses.

That came after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu personally reached out multiple times to Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla, boasting that at one point he was able to reach the CEO at 2 a.m.

Israel has mobile vaccination units with refrigerators that can keep the Pfizer shots at the required minus 70 degrees Celsius. It plans to begin vaccinations as soon as next week, with a capacity of more than 60,000 shots a day.

Self-immolation persists as grim form of protest in Tunisia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KASSERINE, 17 DECEMBER

In his old life, Hosni Kalaia remembers strolling the streets of his hometown of Kasserine in central Tunisia with confidence. He flashed his heavy gold bracelets and rings, and puffed out his chest, broad and sculptured from regular workouts.

Today, Kalaia hides his face from the world behind dark sunglasses and beneath a woolen hat. On his left hand, three blackened, gnarled fingers protrude from one glove; on his right, he has none at all.

He lost them in the few seconds it took to disfigure his life forever, when, angry and distraught about the abuse and injustice he'd suffered at the

hands of a local police chief, Kalaia doused himself in gasoline and set himself on fire.

He's among hundreds of Tunisians who have turned to the desperate act of self-immolation in the past 10 years, following the example of Mohammed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old fruit seller in the town of Sidi Bouzid who set himself ablaze on Dec. 17, 2010, to protest police harassment.

Bouazizi's gruesome death unwittingly unleashed mass demonstrations against poverty and repression, leading to

the downfall of Tunisia's dictator of 23 years. That in turn sparked the Arab Spring uprisings and a decade of crackdowns and civil wars across the region.

"I would never describe the act of self-immolation as an act of courage because even the bravest person in the world couldn't do it," Kalaia, 49, told The Associated Press in his family home. "When I poured the petrol over my head, I didn't think very much, because I wasn't really conscious about what I was doing.

Then I saw a flash, I felt my skin start to burn and I fell down. I woke up eight months later in hospital."

He says it hasn't gotten any easier seeing the shock on people's faces when he removes his hat and sunglasses. Rivulets

of scars fray and splinter across his face and misshapen ears, and there are livid, deep welts on his arms and stomach. His younger brother set himself ablaze too, killing himself, and his mother tried to do the same, their family a graphic reminder of the chaos and economic turmoil in this North African nation.

Most everywhere in the Arab world, the demonstrators' dreams have been shattered. Tunisia is often considered a success story and a Tunisian democracy group won the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize, but while it has more civil liberties, free expression and political plurality, the country is plagued by an ever-worsening economic crisis.

Lack of socio-economic reforms, the devaluation of the

Tunisian dinar and weak, inefficient governance have failed to alleviate poverty or fully revive investment. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment has risen to 18%. Attempts to migrate to Europe by sea have soared.

"There is a huge gap between people's aspirations and their means. It is this gap that pushes people further into misery," said Abdessattar Sahabi, a sociologist at the University of Tunis. "You can have a good job and be well-educated, but it doesn't give you anything substantial."

The number of self-immolations has tripled since 2011, and "the rise has persisted right into 2020," said Dr. Mehdi Ben Khelil of Tunis' Charles Nicolle Hospital, who studies the phenomenon.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Smell (5)
- 4 Crouch in prayer (5)
- 7 Journey (4)
- 8 Card game for one (8)
- 9 People watching (10)
- 12 Four score (6)
- 15 Satisfaction (10)
- 18 Pasta tubes (8)
- 20 Froth (4)
- 21 Go in (5)
- 22 Strong winds (5)
- DOWN
- 1 Man-eating monster (4)
- 2 Not in favour (7)
- 3 As a proxy for (9)
- 4 Specialised clothing (3)
- 5 Wield (5)
- 6 Tear jaggedly (8)
- 10 Shaking with fear (9)
- 11 Buy (8)
- 14 Exuberantly joyful (7)
- 16 Precise (5)
- 17 Planet (4)
- 19 Rowing blade (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

- ACROSS
- 1 Why? (3)
- 3 Static, 10 Workout, 12 Element, 14 Two-time, 15 Perth, 17 Range, 18 Rain.
- 4 Dried (Wide-eyed), 10 Particular, 12 Scrabble, 14 Exchange, 18 Foot, 19 Apne.
- 5 Scramble, 6 Attic, 8 Along, 9 Immense,
- 11 Butler, 13 Rioja, 15 Perte, 17 Fang, 18 Rain.
- 16 Extreme, 18 Young, 19 Lettering, 20 Foot, 21 Age.
- 20 Foot, 21 Age, 22 Exchange.

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

• AIIMS 26588500, 26588900

• Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447

• Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304

• Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747

• Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403

• Guru Tegh Bahadur 2371473, 2325320

22586262, 22585007

23860626

Rajasthan Roadways</p



As we enter the coldest months, we must be vigilant

UK HEALTH SECRETARY MATT HANCOCK
ANNOUNCING THE THREE-TIER LOCKDOWN REGIME IN UK

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	24 R
HONG KONG	17	11 H
TOKYO	11	1 CL
LONDON	11	6 H
DUBAI	26	18 H
SAN FRANCISCO	13	10 S
NEW YORK	0	-5 H
MOSCOW	1	-2 H

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

THUMBNAILS



A little girl in a Santa Claus costume takes in the view of the Christmas light decorations in the drizzling rain along the shopping belt of Orchard Road in Singapore on Thursday.

IAN S

S Korea marks deadliest day: South Korea has added more than 1,000 infections to its coronavirus caseload for the second straight day amid growing fears that the virus is spreading out of control in the greater capital area. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Thursday said the Covid-19 death toll was now at 634 after 22 patients died in the past 24 hours.

AP

Fiji imposes curfew: Fiji imposed a nationwide curfew Thursday after urging people near the coast to move to higher ground as the island nation prepared for a major cyclone to hit. Cyclone Yasa was expected to hit the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu later Thursday or early Friday.

AP

Lanka riot probe: At least four of the 11 inmates who were killed in last month's prison riot in Sri Lanka died of gun-shot injuries, a local court has said, as it took note of the findings of the interim report.

PTI

Ro Khanna named Democratic vice chair of India Caucus

WASHINGTON, 17 DECEMBER

Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who represents the Silicon Valley in the US House of Representatives, has been named as the Democratic Vice Chair of the Congressional India Caucus.

The seat has been created for the first time since its formation in 1994.

Khanna, 44, who was recently elected for a third consecutive term from the congressional district representing Silicon Valley, is being considered as a potential contender to fill the US Senate seat from California that will fall vacant in January after Kamala Harris is sworn in as the country's vice president.

"I believe Ro Khanna would be an outstanding Democratic Vice Chair," Congressman Brad Sherman, Democratic Co-Chair of the Caucus, said in an email to his congressional colleagues on Wednesday.

Born in Philadelphia in 1976, Khanna is the youngest of the four Indian-American lawmakers in the US House of Representatives. The other three being Dr Ami Bera, 55, who is the senior-most member of the so-called 'Samosa Caucus', Raja Krishnamoorthi, 47, and Pramila Jayapal, 55.

Khanna's father is a chemical engineer who graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and the University of Michigan, and his mother is a former substitute school teacher.

Considered to be "dynamic" by his congressional colleagues, Khanna is a strong supporter of India-US relationship.

PTI

EU sets Sunday deadline for Brexit deal

The new red line means Britain is expected to face a no-deal exit from the single market if nothing has been agreed by weekend

THE INDEPENDENT
LONDON, 17 DECEMBER

The European Parliament will not meet to ratify a Brexit trade deal this year unless one is signed before Sunday, the leaders of its main political groups have said.

The new red line means Britain is expected to face a no-deal exit from the single market if nothing has been agreed by the close of the weekend – causing significant economic disruption.

In a joint statement, the parliament's conference of presidents said they stood "ready to organise an extraordinary plenary session towards the end of December" but only if

"an agreement is reached by midnight on Sunday 21st".

They made the comments after a meeting with EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier in Brussels on Thursday morning, in which he is said to have told them a deal was possible by Friday.

Dacian Ciolos, leader of the parliament's liberal Renew group and an ally of Emmanuel Macron, said the deadline was necessary because "uncertainty hanging over citizens and businesses as a result of UK choices" was becoming "intolerable".

Manfred Weber, chair of the parliament's largest group, the centre-right European People's Party, said: "After [Sunday] we cannot reasonably

scrutinise the deal before the end of the year. The agreement is too important to rush through Parliament.

"We owe it to the people and businesses in our con-

stituencies who will be heavily affected by Brexit, to scrutinise the deal appropriately. After Sunday we don't believe this would still be possible."

Iratxe Garcia Perez, leader of the centre-left socialist group, said: "We will not be rushed into a consent vote of the Brexit deal before the end of the year if we don't have access to the text by Sunday."

The warning by the Parliament raises the possibility that the UK could be hit by a limited period of trading on no-deal terms from the beginning of January, even if an agreement is signed before the end of the year.

While the European Union and UK both have some powers for "provisional" applica-

tion of deals without the consent of their parliaments, it is not clear whether these would help prevent a no-deal in this case.

Mr Barnier struck an upbeat tone on the possibility of a free trade agreement on Thursday, saying there had been "good progress" but that "stumbling blocks remain".

He said talks were in their "final stretch", adding: "We will only sign a deal protecting EU interests and principles."

The chief negotiator told that a deal was possible by Friday. But UK sources were significantly less upbeat, stressing that the two sides were still very far apart in key areas. EU member state diplomats believe a deal is possible but warn that the path to one is narrow.



More areas of England moved to highest coronavirus alert level

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 17 DECEMBER

More areas of England were moved into the highest coronavirus alert level of Tier 3 on Thursday, a day after London and surrounding areas were brought under similar toughest lockdown restrictions due to the rising cases of Covid-19.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock updated the House of Commons on the fortnightly review of the three-tier lockdown regime and included Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire and parts of Cambridgeshire, Surrey, East Sussex and Hampshire in Tier 3 which imposes a ban on inter-household mixing indoors with only takeaways and deliveries allowed at hospitality venues.

No one wants tougher restrictions any longer than necessary, but where they are necessary we must put them in place to prevent the NHS [National Health Service] being overwhelmed and to protect life. This is a moment where we must act with caution," the minister told MPs.

"As we enter the coldest months, we must be vigilant. This isn't just a matter for government or for this House, it's a matter for every single person. We must be cautious as we accelerate the vaccine deployment. We've come so far, we mustn't blow it now," he said, pointing to rising infection rates around the world, including across Europe and beyond in the US and Japan.

The new restrictions will come into effect from Saturday, when some areas such as Bristol and North Somerset will move down a tier, to Tier 2, while Herefordshire is to move out of Tier 2 into Tier 1 in light of a low case rate of 45 per 100,000.

Hancock stressed that the good news is that lockdowns are not the only tool available

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"The best thing we can all do is act with responsibility to get this virus under control," he said, as he urged people to exercise caution over the Christmas bubble period when the laws are being relaxed between December 23 and 27 to allow families to meet over the festive period.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson had addressed a 10 Downing Street briefing on Wednesday evening to urge people to keep celebrations short and small in order to protect those more vulnerable to the deadly virus, such as grandparents.

"A smaller Christmas is going to be a safer Christmas and a shorter Christmas is a safer Christmas," he said.

UK Home Secretary Priti Patel has also reiterated that message by saying that she has chosen not to meet many of her family members over the holiday period to minimise the risk.

"Don't travel if you don't need to, don't stay overnight somewhere else where you don't need to, stay at home effectively with your small support bubble," the senior Cabinet minister said.

"We want everyone to have a wonderful Christmas, we really do. But in a smaller, safer way, a localised way. I think the public understand that," she said.

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MACRON TESTS COVID POSITIVE

French President Emmanuel Macron is the latest world leader to test positive for Covid-19, joining a growing list of others just as inoculation drives against the illness are beginning in a number of countries. Macron, 42, has repeatedly said he is sticking to strict sanitary protocols during the pandemic, including not shaking hands, wearing a mask and keeping distance from other people. The Elysee Palace announced on Thursday that Macron would be isolating for seven days.

OTHER LEADERS WHO HAVE TESTED POSITIVE TILL DATE

DONALD TRUMP President Donald Trump announced in October that he and his wife, first lady Melania Trump, tested positive for the coronavirus. For months, Trump was accused of downplaying the virus that has killed more than 300,000 Americans. At 74, the US president was the oldest head of state to become infected with the virus to

BORIS JOHNSON The British prime minister was the first major world leader confirmed to have Covid-19, after facing criticism for downplaying the pandemic. He was moved to intensive care in April after his symptoms dramatically worsened. He later expressed his gratitude to National Health Service staff for saving his life when his condition could have gone either way.

JAIRO BOLSONARO The Brazilian president announced his illness in July and used it to publicly extol hydroxychloroquine, the unproven malaria drug that he'd been promoting as a treatment for Covid-19 and was taking himself. For months he had flirted with the virus, calling it a little flu, as he flouted social distancing at lively demonstrations and encouraged crowds during outings from the presidential residence, often without a mask.

JUAN ORLANDO HERNANDEZ The Honduras president announced in June that he had tested positive, along with two other people who worked closely with him. Hernandez said he had started what he called the MAIZ treatment, an experimental and unproven combination of microdiazepam, azithromycin, ivermectin and zinc. He was briefly hospitalised and released.

ALEXANDER LUKASHENKO The president of Belarus, who dismissed concerns about the virus as psychosis and recommended drinking vodka to stay healthy, said in July he had contracted it himself but was asymptomatic. Belarus is one of the few countries that took no comprehensive measures against the virus.

M VENKAIAH NAIDU, AMIT SHAH India's Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, 71, recently tested positive but his office said he had no symptoms and was quarantined at home. Home Minister Amit Shah, the No. 2 man in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, was hospitalised for Covid-19 in September and has recovered. Junior Railways Minister Suresh Angadi was the first Union minister to die from the virus.

ESHAQ JAHANGIRI Iran, the epicentre of the Middle East's initial coronavirus outbreak, has seen several top officials test positive. Among them are senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri and Vice President Massoumeh Ebtekar. Cabinet members have tested positive, too.

PRINCE ALBERT II OF MONACO The palace of Monaco in March said the ruler of the tiny Mediterranean principality tested positive but his health was not worrying. He was the first head of state to publicly say he was infected.

RICK MACHAR South Sudan's Vice President Riek Machar was among several Cabinet ministers infected.

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"Our goal is to create an inauguration that keeps people safe, honours the grand traditions of the Presidency, and showcases the Biden-Harris Administration's renewed American vision for an inclusive, equitable, and unified citizenry," said PIC CEO Tony Allen.

Traditionally, the JCCIC would distribute 200,000 tickets for the official ceremonies at the Capitol and provide ticket bundles to members of Congress to distribute to constituents.

On January 20, President-elect Biden, 78, and Vice-President-elect Harris, 56, will take their oaths of office at the US Capitol during a historic ceremony that includes vigorous health and safety protocols. President-elect Biden will also deliver an inaugural address that lays out his vision to beat the virus, build back better, and bring the country together.

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Banking industry is unique, as employees can reach the top with hard work and perseverance, irrespective of their entry-level designation

TARANNUM N RAZA

Ever since the nationalisation of banks (in 1969 and 1981), the public sector banks are significant sources of employment in the public sector arena in India.

Despite various upheavals, bank personnel recruitment is one of the smoothest and free from any malpractices. The credit for timely and effective recruitment and handling of aspirants' mammoth numbers for bank jobs goes to the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection. With its headquarters in Mumbai and manned by professionals, the IBPS conducts recruitment tests and interviews for various clerical and officers' vacancies in all the public sector banks including Regional Rural Banks (except SBI, as they run their separate process also under the aegis of IBPS).

The Indian banks are not only diversifying and getting into new products but some are also going global. The expansion of banking sector has created a number of job opportunities for the youth.

A bank officer shoulders a gamut of responsibilities, from monitoring

daily operations to developing and enforcing sound policies for the organisation. From consumer finance to wealth management; from life and general insurance to investment banking; from credit cards to custodian services; from pension fund regulation to private equity, the bank officer oversees and manages all these in his/her career span. The role requires the bank officer to be a team player and problem solver in dealing with the other bank personnel as well as the customers.

Banking industry is unique, as people can reach the top, irrespective of their entry-level designation. The promotion depends on qualifications, the various certifications and performance. Most of the promotion process entails written test and interview for all cadres.

Two cadres of employees, clerical staff, and the officers, run the Indian banking scene. Recruitments are based on two stages of written tests viz. preliminary and final, conducted online at various Online Testing Centres all over the country.

For officers, the written test is followed by an interview conducted by

retired bank personnel. The interview panels are such that a woman, SC/ST, minority, and one OBC interviewer must represent each panel. The chairman of the panel has to be a retired general manager of a bank. Such strict regulations give credence to the whole recruitment process and eliminate any form of malpractice.

The officers' cadre in banks may be roughly divided into two categories viz. general officers and specialised officers. General officers are the directly recruited probationary officers or the promotee officers (who become officers after proper tests and interview from clerical cadre).

Specialised officers have a separate cadre in most of the banks and separate promotion system. There is a separate recruitment process for them and the normal specialised officers are technical officers (engineers), chartered accountants, economists, official language officers (hindi officers), security officers (normally ex servicemen), it officers, law officers, personnel officers, agriculture field officer.

Probationary officers are recruited as junior management grade, Scale

I. The starting salary is better in the State Bank of India than in other banks as SBI gives four extra increments to POs.

In many banks, the specialised officers are recruited in a higher scale than the initial one. But it varies from bank to bank. The promotion process of specialised officers is separate for their cadre.

The hierarchical ladder for officers in a bank is IMGS I (Asst. Managers); MMGSII (Dy. Managers), MMGS III (Managers), SMGS IV (Chief Managers), SMGS V (Asst. General Managers), TMGS VI (Dy. General Managers) and TMGS VII (General Managers). Now a new scale has been added in most banks i.e., TMGS VIII (chief general managers).

Any officer, whether joining as PO or as specialised officer or even as clerks, can aspire to go to the top in the banking industry.

The probationary officers after the basic training are mostly posted in branches of the bank. After a few years, they are given the responsibility of branch manager too, who is the overall in-charge of the branch. The performance of the branch is judged

by growth in business, the quality of loans, hassle free operations and good customer service.

A number of branches are put under one region where the regional officer monitors the performance of the branch and annual appraisal of the branch manager is given by the regional manager.

After reaching the highest-level TMGS VII, the Govt. of India selects people amongst those having ample time for retirement for the post of Executive Directors in the Banks, and thereafter from the EDs the MD-cum-CEOs are selected, on the basis of performance and interview conducted by Banks Board Bureau (BBB), the headhunter for top management of state-run banks and financial institutions.

It is clear to see that the career path of a bank officer lucrative as well as satisfying. The job responsibilities increase as you rise up the hierarchy and the learning curve goes on increasing. No wonder, the position of a bank officer is much sought after.

The writer is senior knowledge expert, T.I.M.E.

VIVEK S LARIA

The mortgage housing financial crises in the US was known to have disrupted the whole world. Internationally popular firms were being shut down. Several banks were on the edge of bankruptcy.

Several employees working in multinational companies were waiting for the pink slip. Companies were beginning to be merged with larger entities. People were soon out of work and there were rampant layoffs.

However, there are many among those unemployed, who did not give up and fought back all odds to reach an even better position than the one they held earlier. As a coach, I have had the experience of working with many such optimistic people who have sought my help in their difficult times. These are the five lessons learnt during the course of the last 12+ years of working with people through economic swings, mergers and redundancies. These lessons have the potential to serve any person who wants to continue advancing career even during difficult economic times.

Wellbeing is important

Difficult economic times always bring in a lot of conversations of layoffs and salary cuts. A loud media strengthened by a string of experts and TRPs add to noise. Emotional, mental and physical well-being are impacted and take a back seat. Make sure health and well-being are prioritised. Strengthen the health regimen to include emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. This may include exercising, meditation or learning a new skill.

Don't bring people down

Avoid organisations focussed in negative talks. There may be reasons to complain – privileges withdrawn, layoffs, less sensitivity towards people. Gossip may happen around water coolers or lunch breaks. Avoid all such negative talk. It does not help. If there is feedback, share it directly with people who matter. One does

TIME TO SHINE

Changes in perspectives have the potential to serve anyone who wants to continue advancing their ambitions during difficult economic times

not want to be in the spotlight for wrong reasons.

Visibility sells

The world does not know you exist. It is your responsibility to drive that visibility. There are other rising sectors. There may be new avenues of growth. Be visible so that you can be picked for those opportunities. Call old colleagues; share your expertise on professional media. Now is the time to shine, don't hide behind.

How to make a difference?

As the economy goes through a down turn, regular work is disrupted. The activities that a person does may no longer be relevant. This does not mean that work overall has stopped. It has just changed the course. In such a situation, the question "How may I contribute, what difference may I make?" counts.

Know the leadership objectives, align yourself to them. Volunteer towards these activities. This will help

stay relevant to the changing organisation. It might just become a trigger for you to lead the next level of growth for yourself.

This too shall pass

Global economies will go through their cycles of growth and traction. Keep this perspective in mind. This is not the first; it will not be the last. The question is "Will you last?" Will you choose to let this storm drown you or will you strengthen

yourself to rise above? Leaders choose to rise above by strengthening themselves. Down turns offer great advantage to strengthen selves emotionally and mentally. Use them effectively.

Help is available. In apps like TWChallenge, there are several life skill challenges one can take for free. One can also seek the help of a coach to get guidance through difficult times.

The writer is CEO, Greenlattey People

PLUS POINTS

Significant symposium



The Finance Association of XLRI (FINAX) recently hosted "GNOSIS 20" – the 11th Edition of XLRI's Annual Finance Symposium, a confluence of industry stalwarts and students to discuss the most pertinent issues and reforms in the finance sector. The theme of GNOIS 20 was "Ripples of Covid-19 in the Financial Services Industry." The event focused on various issues that have come to the forefront during the pandemic and would influence the future of the financial services industry. There was a series of discussions on the economic scenario of India against the new normal, evolution of investment decision-making strategies in a post Covid world, changes in lending practices of banks and government bodies. The conference started with a special guest session with Dr Aruna Sharma, former secretary of Government of India.

Noble initiative



The Helping Hands of Kolkata (HHoK) Store of Happiness setup in Sonajhuri, Sunderbans is an overwhelming occasion for everyone who is associated with it. From the response HHoK got from its well-wishers who came forward to donate over 5000 rarely used and unused items- clothing, footwear, stationary, books and others- to reaching the remote village in Sunderbans, from setting up colourful store to finally opening the doors of HHoK Store of Happiness, the sheer experience of all the HHoK volunteers present at the venue was just short of life-changing. There was an estimated footfall of around 500 locals who came to HHoK Store of Happiness, picked what they wanted and left with smile on their faces.

The store was inaugurated by three elderly women from the village, who have seen their village get battered by several storms and rebuild itself every time. HHoK is now focusing on structuring its projects and increasing the magnitude of impact that they create.

Water impact summit



Tourism is very closely related with rivers. The focus of day three of 5th India Water Impact Summit was "River Conservation Synchronised Energy and Tourism". The theme of 5th India Water Impact Summit was "Arth Ganga - River Synchronised Development" and was organised by National Mission for Clean Ganga in association with their knowledge arm, Center for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga). Highlighting the culture, tourism potential and energy management of rivers Prahlad Singh Patel, MoS, Ministry of Culture & Tourism said, "Rivers not only have physical energy but are powerful source of spiritual energy. Spending time on the banks of rivers brings calmness and peace."

Orientation programme



Satyam Group of Institutions, Sector 62 organised an orientation programme for their BA (mass media) 2020-23 and BEd 20-22 batch recently. The objective of it was to give students information about their chosen discipline and familiarise them with the various resources that will enhance their academic experience at Satyam Group of Institutions.

The event was attended by various dignitaries and industry professionals. Students were advised to be motivated by the seniors and stressed upon the strict following of rules and regulations. Cultural programmes were presented by the students.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

POLL PAWN

Barcelona presidential candidate Jordi Farre says he will work to make sure Lionel Messi (in photo, left) stays at the Catalan giants should he be elected next month, and hinted at an improbable bid for Neymar by the cash-strapped club. He has been trying to attract support for his candidacy by offering free tattoos and pizzas with the Barca crest to fans.

THUMBNAILS

Goals galore: Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski has become the third player in Bundesliga - after Gerd Muller and Klaus Fischer - to score 250 goals. He achieved the feat on Wednesday when Bayern Munich ended Wolfsburg's unbeaten start to the season.

Barca win: Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman praised his side's relentless pressing after their 2-1 win over Real Sociedad on Wednesday, when the Catalans finally came alive after an awful start to the season. Real Sociedad began the night by pulling ahead.

Juve stopped: Champions Juventus sit three points behind Inter after Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty in a 1-1 home draw with Atalanta in a Serie A game on Wednesday. Inter Milan battered past title rivals Napoli 1-0 to move one point behind leaders AC Milan.

Liverpool triumph: Roberto Firmino's 90th-minute header sent Liverpool back to the top of the Premier League with a 2-1 victory over Tottenham Hotspur, whose 11-match unbeaten run came to an end on Wednesday. Liverpool dominated the possession and pass count.

Gunners held: Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta was appointed with his team's 1-1 home draw against Southampton on Wednesday, although he acknowledged it was a decent result after they had had central defender Gabriel sent off on the hour.

4 medals assured for India at boxing WC: Amit Panghal (52kg) stormed into the final after three other Indian boxers were assured of medals at the World Cup in Cologne, Germany on Thursday even as a positive COVID-19 case among the support staff caused some anxiety in the contingent. Asian Games champion Panghal defeated Frenchman Billal Bennama, a bronze-medallist from the world championship where the Indian won a silver, in his semifinal bout. The diminutive Haryana lad prevailed 5-0 in the clash.

India pledges USD 1 million to WADA: India has pledged USD one million to the World Anti-Doping Agency's scientific research budget, the "highest among contributions made by other world governments." India's donation comes at a time when the country's anti-doping program has been adversely affected by suspension of its suspended National Dope Testing Laboratory, which is to be inspected by WADA early next year.

Gaurav Gill wins Round 1 of INRC: Ace Indian rally driver Gaurav Gill began the Champions Yacht Club-FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship 2020 in style, winning the Rally of Arunachal in Itanagar on Thursday. Gill, driving for JK Tyre, took a total of 56:55.200 minutes to complete eight special stages and record a victory by a margin of an impressive 4:25.700 minutes over Karna Kadur. Dean Mascalen has finished third overall with a time of 1:02:30.500 hour.

HCA in Sood Cricket semi: Fine round display by skipper Hitesh Gemini (20 off 18 and 4/15) and useful half-century by HPCA Ranji player Sumeet Verma 55 runs (2x6s, 2x4s, 56 balls) enabled last year winner Haryana Cricket Academy to beat Telefunkens CC by 94 runs to enter the semifinals of the 30th All India Om Nath Sood Memorial Cricket Tournament, being played at RSKP ground in Delhi today. For Telefunkens CC India U19 Shiva Singh (2/48 and 72 runs) and medium pacer Abhishek Khandelwal (8-1-26-4) were stand out performers.

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