

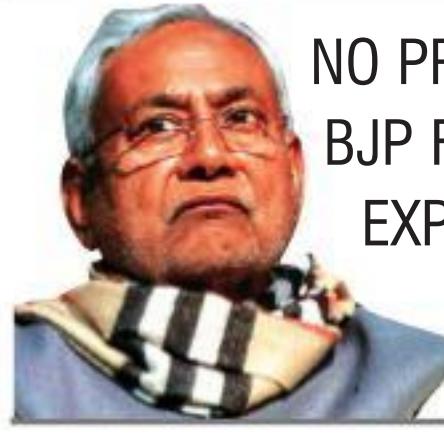


Pages 12 | ₹5 | LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



NO PROPOSAL FROM
BJP FOR CABINET
EXPANSION



FOGBOUND
HILLS



TIME TO TURN THE PAGE,
SAYS BIDEN AFTER EC
CONFIRMS HIS WIN



THE REASON WHY
PANT CAN'T
BE LEFT OUT

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Cold day and cold wave conditions at a few places. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 19 and 03 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 57%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 18.5°C (-5) Min: 4.1°C (-5)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

07:08 hrs 17:27 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

09:39 hrs 19:10hrs

THUMBNAILS



Farmers during a protest against newly passed farm laws at Singhu Border, in the Capital on Tuesday.

Bengal undertrial dies: An undertrial was thrashed to death inside the central correctional Home in Burdwan late this afternoon when two under trials clashed over food, the police said this evening. Babu Sheikh (30), an undertrial accused of trafficking narcotics substances from Ketagram in Burdwan (E) succumbed to his wounds after he was shifted to the Burdwan Medical College and Hospital.

SNS

Ex-Bengal CM Buddhadeb discharged: Former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was discharged from hospital on Tuesday, nearly a week after being admitted for breathing troubles. Bhattacharjee, however, will have to remain on non-invasive ventilation (NIV) support, undergo physiotherapy and follow restrictions on movement at home, besides sticking to a prescribed diet, doctors said.

P5

The winter session of Parliament will not be held this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Budget session will be convened in January 2021, the government has conveyed to the opposition, a move slammed by the Congress as the 'decimation of parliamentary democracy'. In a letter to leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said, "Winter months are very crucial for managing the pandemic because of recent spurt in cases during this period, particularly in Delhi. At present, we are in the middle of December and a covid vaccine is

expected very soon."

The minister said he had informally contacted floor leaders of various political parties and "they have expressed their concerns about the ongoing pandemic and opined of doing away with winter session".

"Government is willing to have the next session of Parliament at the earliest; it would be appropriate to have the Budget Session, 2021 in January, 2021 keeping in mind the unprecedented circumstances created by Covid-19 pandemic," Joshi wrote.

Talking about the monsoon session which was delayed due to the pandemic, he appreciated cooperation from all political parties for a productive session held under

extraordinary circumstances by making special logistical arrangements.

Senior Congress leader and the Party's chief whip in Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh said the Leader of the Opposition in the Upper House, Ghulam Nabi Azad, was not consulted on the cancelling the winter session.

Hitting out at the government, Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the "Decimation of Parliamentary Democracy

is complete" with this decision. "Competitive exams can be held during COVID. Schools can be opened, universities can hold exams. Rallies can be held in Bihar-Bengal. But Winter Session of Parliament can't be held," Surjewala said.

"Any semblance of democracy left?" he asked.

The winter session of Parliament normally starts in the last week of November or in the first week of December.

The Constitution broadly stipulates one major rule that there should not be a gap of more than six months between two sessions of Parliament.

However, it has been a convention to hold three sessions of Parliament - budget, monsoon and winter - in a year.

Delhi adds 1,617 cases; positivity rate 1.9 per cent

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

The national capital today recorded 1,617 Covid-19 positive cases, which took its coronavirus caseload to 6,10,447.

These fresh Covid cases were detected out of 85,105 tests, including 42,056 RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests and 43,049 rapid antigen tests, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The city's Covid positivity rate came down to 1.90 per cent from yesterday's 2.15 per cent.

Delhi recorded 41 fresh coronavirus-linked deaths, which pushed its toll to 10,115, the health bulletin said. The death rate based on the last 10 days' data was 2.59 per cent.

(SEE P2)



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Pranab's son and daughter spar over publication of memoir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

The late Pranab Mukherjee's son and daughter are at loggerheads with each other over his memoir *The Presidential Years*, one saying it should not be published without his consent and the other "requesting" her brother to not create unnecessary hurdles in the publication of his last book.

The book, which was in the news recently for Pranab Mukherjee's critical comments on the Congress, including his observation that the party lost political focus after his elevation as president, is set to be launched next month by *Rupa*, which published the two earlier volumes of his memoirs.

The late president's son Abhijit Mukherjee, a former Congress MP, said on Twitter that



ing in certain media platforms without my written consent," Abhijit Mukherjee said on Twitter.

"Since my father is no more, I being his son want to go through the contents of the final copy of the book before its publication as I believe, had my father been alive today, he too would have done the same."

Being the son, he said he requested the publishers to immediately stop the publication.

I have already sent you a detailed letter in this regard which will reach you soon. Regards - Abhijit Mukherjee," the tweet read.

His sister responded, also on Twitter.

"I, the son of the author of the Memoir *The Presidential Memoirs* request you to kindly stop the publication of the memoir as well as motivated excerpts which is already float-

unnecessary hurdles in publication of the last book written by our father. He completed the manuscript before he fell sick."

The final draft, she said, contains her father's handwritten notes and comments that have been strictly adhered to.

Stating that views expressed by him are his own and no one should try to stop it from being published for any cheap publicity, she said, That would be the greatest disservice to our departed father.

"Btw bro, the title of the book is 'The Presidential Years', not 'The Presidential Memoirs,'" she said.

Abhijit Mukherjee corrected the title of the book in another tweet after his sister pointed out the mistake.

The former president and long-time Congress leader died on August 31 at the age of 84,

following COVID-19 complications. His comments on the Congress come at a time of intense internal turmoil in the party.

The Congress' chief troubleshooter through the decades wrote that the party lost political focus after his elevation as the president and some party members believed the 2014 Lok Sabha poll debacle could have been averted had he become prime minister in 2004.

Though I don't subscribe to this view, I do believe that the party's leadership lost political focus after my elevation as president. While Sonia Gandhi was unable to handle the affairs of the party, Dr (Manmohan) Singh's prolonged absence from the House put an end to any personal contact with other MPs." Pranab Mukherjee is quoted as saying in his book.

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Though I don't subscribe to this view, I do believe that the party's leadership lost political focus after my elevation as president. While Sonia Gandhi was unable to handle the affairs of the party, Dr (Manmohan) Singh's prolonged absence from the House put an end to any personal contact with other MPs." Pranab Mukherjee is quoted as saying in his book.

UK-hosted G7 summit next year. The UK PM has also accepted the very generous invitation to attend India's Republic Day celebrations (as chief guest) in January which is a great honour," Raab said.

On his part, Jaishankar said Johnson accepting the invitation for the Republic Day was in a way, symbolic of a new era in Indo-UK ties.

In the wake of Brexit, the UK has been looking at ramping up trade with leading economies like India. There have been apprehensions that its separation from the EU without a trade deal could severely cripple its financial markets and may have long-term implications for its economy.

Jaishankar said challenges posed by terrorism and radicalism which are shared concerns were also discussed during the talks.

"Prime Minister Boris Johnson has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to join the

Vice-Admiral Srikant dies of Covid-related complication

NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER



Vice Admiral Srikant died on Tuesday morning at the base hospital here due to COVID-19 related complications, officials said.

The vice admiral, the Navy's senior-most submariner, was due to retire on December 31.

Expressing his condolences, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted, "Deeply pained at the untimely and sudden demise of Director General Seabird, Vice Admiral Srikant."

The Ministry of Defence and the Indian Navy will always remember his stellar contributions and remarkable service to the nation, Singh said. "My deepest condolences to his bereaved family and friends. Om Shanti!" the minister stated.

Srikant was admitted at the base hospital in Delhi after he contracted COVID-19, said a junior Navy officer who had worked under him.

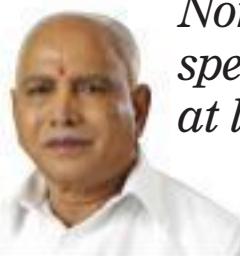
Subsequently, the vice-admiral tested negative for COVID-19 on Sunday morning, but developed breathing difficulties by evening, the officer said.

"He was shifted to ICU and was subsequently put on a ventilator," the officer mentioned.

Officials said the vice-admiral, who was the Navy's senior-most submariner, died on Tuesday morning.

Previously, he had held charge as Inspector General of Nuclear Safety and Commandant of the National Defence College, officials said.

(PTI)



None had dared to drag or push or shove those occupied in the chair. This speaks volumes about the Congress Culture. The Chairman (Shetty) should at least resign now from his post, as he lacks confidence of majority.

B S YEDIYURAPPA
KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

AAP'll contest UP Assembly polls in 2022, declares Kejri

Delhi CM says development and progress have been held back in Uttar Pradesh by its 'dirty politics & corrupt leaders' and that the UP people want an honest govt which 'only the AAP can provide' there

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

Delhi chief minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal today declared that the AAP will contest the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections on demand from people of UP, India's most populous state, even as he accused UP political parties of "doing nothing but stabbing people in the back".

Addressing a virtual press conference, Kejriwal said the development and progress in UP have been held back by its "dirty politics" and "corrupt leaders". People in the state want an honest government which only the AAP can provide, he claimed.

Citing Delhi's Mohalla clinics, free water and electricity, healthcare and education facilities, the CM said people of UP were being deprived of these basic amenities by the parties that have formed governments there over the years.

"Why do the people of UP travel to Delhi for every major and minor facility? If a family living in Kanpur has to send their child to a good college, they have to send her to Delhi."



If a person living in Gorakhpur has to get good medical treatment for his parents, they have to come to Delhi. Why," Kejriwal questioned.

The UP people put their trust and faith in every party and gave them a chance, but these parties "stabbed the people in their backs", he charged.

"There is only one thing lacking in the politics of Uttar Pradesh, which is honesty and intent. This is what AAP has. It is with this honesty that AAP has transformed Delhi. We proved that the governments do not lack resources but honest intent," Kejriwal asserted while announcing that the AAP will contest the

UP Assembly elections in 2022.

"I appeal to you to give one chance to AAP and you will forget about other political parties, as has happened in Delhi, where the party has formed the government thrice in a row," Kejriwal urged the UP people.

He said many people from UP living in Delhi have told him that the AAP should fight elections there. "They want all the services that are offered in Delhi to be offered in UP as well. They said people of Uttar Pradesh are fed up with these old parties and will come forward to support AAP and defeat these big leaders who consider UP as their property."

The CM charged that parties that have formed governments in Uttar Pradesh have done nothing other than benefiting themselves.

Kejriwal said the people of UP were suffering "because of dirty politics and corrupt leaders" who fill their own pockets after they come to power.

They were least bothered about the welfare of those who elect them and make them capture power, he charged.

"Can the biggest state in the country not turn into the most developed state in the country? If Sangam Vihar area in Delhi can have a Mohalla clinic, why not Gomti Nagar area in Uttar Pradesh? If Delhi

can have the best government hospitals in the country, why is it that the conditions of the government hospitals in Uttar Pradesh are so bad? If the people of Delhi can receive 24-hour power supply, why should people of UP suffer from long hours of power cuts? If the people of Delhi can receive free electricity, why are people of UP receiving huge electricity bills? If children in Delhi can receive quality education in government schools at par with private schools, why is the condition of government schools in UP so bad," Kejriwal asked.

People of Delhi wanted their lives to improve, their children to get a good education, their families to get good healthcare services, and an honest government, which is why they chose the AAP thrice, he pointed out.

It happened because for the first time, people could see the work being done in Delhi, and they got an "honest government who works for them and with them", Kejriwal said.

The AAP supremo added that the party has formed governments in Delhi thrice and has become the main Opposition party in Punjab in just eight years due to "love and support of the people".

CM directs officials to speed up project of redesigning Delhi roads on European lines

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

According to officials, the process of appointing a consultant for the redesigning of roads has been completed. The consultant is responsible for preparing and submitting a detailed project report (DPR) by February 2021, based on which tenders will be given and the operations to design the 540 km of roads will begin by June 2021.

working to redesign the 100-foot wide and 540-km long roads of the national capital on the lines of European cities. Kejriwal has envisaged the project to develop the roads of the national capital similar to any developed country in the world. Kejriwal approved the project of redesigning some of the roads falling under the jurisdiction of the PWD in November 2019.

Kejriwal recently redeveloped the Chandni Chowk road as a pilot project, extending the scheme to 100 feet wide and about 500 km long road in Delhi. The development of these roads will be on the lines of the Built-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model and the construction company will take care of maintenance for 15 years.

Jamia violence anniversary: Police stop candle march

NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

Several students organised a candle march to mark the first anniversary of the Jamia Millia Islamia violence on Tuesday and former JNU students' leader Umar Khalid's mother and sisters also participated in it, officials said.

However, they were stopped by police and asked to disperse, the officials said.

The students claimed that 14 of the protesters, including Umar Khalid's mother and sisters, were detained, but the police denied it. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) RP Meena said a group of protesters had assembled at Batla house for a candle march to mark the anniversary of the protest against the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

"The police team removed the agitators from the spot. Meanwhile, three women also accompanied the protesters. The protesters were then counselled regarding COVID guidelines and were requested to return to their respective homes. No one was taken to the police station," Meena said. "On the occasion of the anniversary of anti-CAA agitation and police crackdown on students at Jamia Nagar in 2019, a candle march was held. But the local police detained 14 people, including three women (mother and sisters of Umar Khalid) for holding this candle march," a protester claimed.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF
SH. NIKHIL CHOPRA
Additional District Judge-02
(South)
Court No. 606, Sixth Floor
Saket District Courts,
New Delhi
PC/LA/7/2020
Date of hearing : 10-02-2021
Md. Zakir, s/o Malu, r/o L-2-
107, Madangir Dr. Ambedkar
Nagar, Delhi-110062.
— Petitioner
Versus
The State (GNTC of Delhi).
— Defendant

Whereas, the petitioner abovenamed has applied by a petition under Section 276 of the Indian Succession Act 1925, for grant of Letters of Administration, or Probate or Succession Certificate in respect of the estates left by the deceased Smt. Nargis, w/o Mohd. Zakir, r/o L-II-107 Madangir, New Delhi-110062 died on 21-01-2019.

Notice is hereby given to the General Public having any interest in the Letters of Administration/Succession Certificate of the Estate of the deceased if he/she desires, appears in this Court on 10-02-2021 at 10:00 a.m. and participate in the proceedings before the grant of Letters of Administration/Probate/Succession Certificate or if desire to oppose the application of the petitioner aforesaid, he/she should enter appearance in persons in this court and be prepared to adduce on that day any documentary and oral evidence which he/she may desire to adduce in support of his/her claim to opposition to the application of the petitioner aforesaid.

Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court on this 11th day of December, 2020.
Additional District Judge-02 (South)

Saket District Courts,
New Delhi

Seal of the Court

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT

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

In the Court of
Sh. M. C. Gupta
District Judge

Commercial Court
(Central)-03
Room No. 308

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
CS (Comm): 1503/2020

ICICI Bank Ltd.
Versus
Abhinit Kumar

To : Abhinit Kumar, s/o Sh. Kapil Dev Prasad, Manhar Vilage, Anchal Distt. Vaishali, Bihar, Bihar-844506.

Also at : Office : PNB Metlife India Insurance Company Ltd., Institutional Area, Plot No. A-41, Sector-62, Noida, Near Fortis Hospital, Noida-201301.

Whereas you are intentionally evading service of summons, it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 17-12-2021, the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 08-12-2020.

District Judge
Commercial Court
(Central)-03
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
Seal of the Court

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT

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

In the Court of
Sh. Sanjay Sharma-I
District Judge

(Commercial Court)-01
Room No. 12
Karkardooma, Delhi
Case No. CS (Comm):
202/2019

Bank of Baroda
Versus
Naresh Chand

To : Mr. Naresh Chand (Bor-
rower), w/o Late Sh. Munshi Lal, r/o 162/2, Patparganj Vilage, Delhi-110091, Mob No. 9891100804.

Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court on this 11th day of December, 2020.

Additional District Judge-02 (South)

Saket District Courts,
New Delhi

Seal of the Court

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT

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

In the Court of
Sh. M. C. Gupta
District Judge

Commercial Court
(Central)-03
Room No. 27/5,

Main Market, Block No. 27,
Trilokpur, Delhi-110091.

Also at : R/o 27/27/1, First
Floor, Trilokpur, Delhi-110091.

Also at : R/o 163/2, Patparganj Village, Delhi-110091.

Also at : Shop No. 27/5,
Main Market, Block No. 27,
Trilokpur, Delhi-110091.

Also at : D-10, Pandav Nagar,
2nd Floor, Delhi-110091.

Whereas abovenamed Plaintiff has instituted a suit against you. You are hereby summoned to appear before this court on 23-12-2020 at 10:00 a.m. and to answer to the same.

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

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 25th day of November, 2020.

District Judge
Commercial Court-01
Karkardooma, Delhi
Seal of the Court

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT

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

In the Court of
Sh. M. C. Gupta
District Judge

Commercial Court-03
Room No. 27/5,
Main Market, Block No. 27,
Trilokpur, Delhi-110091.

Also at : R/o 27/27/1, First
Floor, Trilokpur, Delhi-110091.

Also at : R/o 163/2, Patparganj Village, Delhi-110091.

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

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 25th day of November, 2020.

District Judge
Commercial Court-03
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
Seal of the Court

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT

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

In the Court of
Sh. M. C. Gupta
District Judge

Commercial Court-03
Room No. 27/5,
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Also at : D-10, Pandav Nagar,
2nd Floor, Delhi-110091.

Whereas abovenamed Plaintiff has instituted a suit against you. You are hereby summoned to appear before this court on 23-12-2020 at 10:00 a.m. and to answer to the same.

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

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 25th day of November, 2020.

District Judge
Commercial Court-03
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
Seal of the Court

OUR CLIENTS, Sri Harsh Narayan Jha & Smt. Ranju Devi Jha, owners of land

measuring 238.52 decimals, under R.S. Khatian Nos. 311, 1267, L.R. Khatian Nos. 3722, 3725, 733, 2219, 1112, 42, 422, 2060, 2061, 471, 513, 623, 345, 1156, 627, 1359, 2040, 2041, 3347, 791/1, 3722, 4360, 913 & 2042 present L.R. Khatian Nos. 3591 & 3589, R.S. & L.R. Dag Nos. 1053, 1056, 1052/1851, 989, 988, 1022, 1023, 1009, 981, 1004, 1012, 1007, 1005, 1010, 1006, 990, 1014, 1003 & 1008. Mouza: Monber, P.S.: Dankuni, Ward-21, of Dankuni Municipality intends to mortgage their property.

Any Bank / Financial Institution or person having any claim, right, title and / or interest in the aforesaid properties should lodge a claim with us within 7 days from this date failing which no such claim shall be entertained.

M/s. Supriyo Basu & Associates Advocates

'Temple Chambers'



The PWD should remove all hurdles in the redesigning of the city roads along the lines of European cities to complete the project within stipulated deadline

ARVIND KEJRIWAL
DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020

03

BJP is real 'tukde tukde gang' in the country today: Sukhbir

The SAD president, BJP's ex-ally, slams the ruling party for calling protesting farmers 'anti-national', charges that the BJP has been pitting one community against another for petty political goals

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BATHINDA/CHANDIGARH,
15 DECEMBER

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s erstwhile ally Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Tuesday charged that the 'Bharatiya Janata Party is the real "tukde tukde" gang in the country today' and that the 'safron party has been splitting the country into pieces by setting one community against another.'

"So desperate is it (BJP) for power and has no scruples about taking the communal polarisation route and setting the country on communal flames," Sukhbir said while speaking to reporters at Bathinda today.

He charged that the BJP first set the Hindus against the Muslims. "Now, it is determined to replay that evil game and re-enact the same tragedy



In Punjab also. It is conspiring to set our peace-loving Hindu brethren in Punjab against their Sikh brethren with whom they have shared strong bonds of blood for centuries. The BJP wants to replace those bonds of blood with bloodshed," he said in a hard-hitting broadcast at his former ally.

The SAD chief said the BJP has been resorting to "dangerous conspiracies to sabotage the hard-earned atmosphere of peace and communal harmony" just for the realisation of petty political goals.

"The BJP leadership must realise that their party today has become the most powerful divisive force. It has been resorting to dividing the country and its people by spreading hatred in the name of religion," Sukhbir said.

Referring to the continuing farmers' movement against the Narendra Modi-led central government's three controversial new farm laws, Sukhbir said the whole country except the BJP gratefully acknowledges the "debt which we owe to our patriotic farmers and sol-

diers". The BJP is provoking the people to deny that debt. It believes only in emotionally exploiting the farmers' sacrifices but remains so ungrateful to them that it is painting them as anti-national. Today it is the farmers. Nobody knows what the BJP might say even about soldiers tomorrow if it suits that party. The farmers are hurt and angry against the BJP and not against the government," he said.

Later, in a statement issued from the SAD headquarter in Chandigarh, Sukhbir said that "the SAD deems it its national duty to caution the countrymen against BJP's desperate and destructive game-plan in Punjab. This party is so desperate for power that it has no qualms about making Punjabis thirsty for one another's blood and destroying the fabric of unity and fraternal love".

Badal said it was "shocking and unbelievable" that a party which claims to take pride in

India's heritage was determined to destroy the foundations of that very heritage. "This is the heritage that has shown the path of peace, communal harmony and human brotherhood to the entire world. But the BJP is hell-bent upon playing havoc with this heritage and destroying the hard-earned atmosphere of peace and communal harmony," he said.

"Tukde tukde" is a term coined by the BJP and the RSS-affiliated groups to attack the Opposition and their supporters. Reeling under farmers' protracted agitation against agrilaws, the BJP dispensation has now charged that the "tukde tukde gang" was also behind the farmers' movement.

One of the BJP's oldest allies, the SAD quit the Modi government and subsequently the BJP-led NDA a few months ago in protest against its contentious farm laws.

Modi govt playing 'delay tactics' with protesting farmers: HP Cong

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 15 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore on Tuesday accused the Narendra Modi-led government of playing "delay tactics" with agitating farmers and said the government was only "completing formalities" in the name of holding discussions with them.

Rathore said it was a well-thought-out strategy of the Central government to stretch the agitation as long as it is possible so that the protesting farmers leave their demands and protests in disarray and frustration.

"But the protest won't end till the Modi government withdraws the three farm bills and all the farmers unions are united and committed to continue the protests," he added.

State Congress chief further stated that the farmers protest had entered 17th day but the Central government was holding discussions as a mere formality while BJP leaders were making efforts to discredit the entire movement.



"BJP leaders are sending anti-social elements to create unrest in farmers' protests and the Union government is trying to discredit the entire movement by terming it opposition parties' backed protest against the government."

"BJP leaders are sending anti-social elements to create unrest in farmers' protests and the Union government is trying to discredit the entire movement by terming it opposition parties' backed protest against the government."

Former Chief Minister Shanta Kumar, the then BJP government had violently suppressed the protest of horticulturalists in the state that had resulted in the death of five youths.

He termed Shanta Kumar's statement on farmers' protests as unfortunate and said BJP had always promulgated policies which were against farmers and poor and benefited big corporate houses. He urged the farmers and horticulturalists to unite against such draconian laws and called on them to extend wholehearted support to the entire agitation.

Tablighi Jamaat: Delhi court acquits 36 foreigners of all charges

PTI
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

A Delhi court Tuesday acquitted 36 foreigners, who were charged for attending Tablighi Jamaat congregation here by allegedly being negligent and disobeying the government guidelines issued in wake of COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Arun Kumar Garg acquitted the foreigners from 14 countries of all charges.

The court had on August 24 framed charges against the foreigners under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of Foreigners Act, sections 270 (Malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 271 (Disobedience to quarantine rule) of IPC.

The court had also discharged eight foreign nationals from six countries of all charges under which they were charged sheeted in the absence of any record or any credible material against them

the Indian Penal Code and Section 3 (disobeying regulation) of Epidemic Act, 1897.

The charges were also framed under section 51 (obstruction) Disaster Management Act, 2005.

However, they were discharged for the offences under section 14 (1) (b) (violation of visa norms) of For-

eigners Act, sections 270 (Malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 271 (Disobedience to quarantine rule) of IPC.

The court had also discharged eight foreign nationals from six countries of all charges under which they were charged sheeted in the absence of any record or any credible material against them.

The foreigners were charged sheeted for attending Tablighi Jamaat congregation here at Nizamuddin area allegedly in violation of visa norms, indulging in missionary activities illegally and violating government guidelines issued in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak.

MAKING WAVES



Pigeons soaking in a pool of water on a cold day. In Chandigarh on Tuesday.

PARDEEP SAINI

NABARD should work with greater focus in agri sector: Jai Ram

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 15 DECEMBER

NABARD should work with greater focus in the agriculture sector so as to strengthen the rural economy of the state.

This was asserted by Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur while presiding over the NABARD state Credit Seminar 2021-22 on 'Collectivization of Agricultural Produce for Enhancing Farmers Income' here today.

The chief minister also released NABARD State Focus Paper-2021-22 and a booklet on 'Various Refinance Schemes of NABARD' on the occasion.

The chief minister hoped that the 'The State Focus Paper' would act as an input for the credit and infrastructure planning by bankers and state government to prioritize allocation of funds for development.

He said that this annual exercise aimed at promoting the increased production in agriculture and allied sectors and generating job opportunities in the farm as well as non-farm sector by the envisaged credit support.

Thakur said that being a special state, on account of its hilly terrain and other socio-economic conditions, plan-



ning needs of the state cannot be equated with other states of the country. He said that the state needs special parameters, while working out its credit and developmental needs and while implementing development strategies.

He said that average land holding in Himachal Pradesh

was one acre and constitute 88 percent of total land holdings of the state against the national average of 1.15 hectare and 86.21 percent respectively and 80 percent of the total cultivated area in the state is rain-fed.

All these factors of the low production and production of agriculture pose challenges

for the planners and stakeholders, he added.

While appreciating the concept of Farmer Producers' Organizations (FPO) of NABARD, Jai Ram Thakur said that the main objective of the FPOs is collectivization of agricultural produce, value addition and collective marketing so that farmers can fetch

better prices of their produce. He said that the cumulative assistance had been sanctioned to the state under RIDF was Rs. 8679.28 crore as on date which is a major facilitator in creation of infrastructure in the state.

The chief minister said that bankers should issue Kisan Credit Cards to each and every eligible farmer in the State to facilitate them in availing credit as per their needs.

He said that NABARD has estimated credit potential for the year 2021-22 for the State for priority sectors was Rs 27724.04 crore, which shows an increase of 7.22 percent over the previous year plan of Rs. 25857.26 crore. This now needs to be executed appropriately by the bank and stakeholders in the process, he added.

Thakur said that the year 2020 has not been very kind and supportive in terms of promoting economic growth because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said that it is also a great challenge before the government as well as to the institutions like NABARD, to ensure the best possible growth, and more so, in the rural areas since a large population of the nation still lives in these areas.

HP CM calls for proper marketing of natural farming produce

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 15 DECEMBER

An effective mechanism would be developed in Himachal Pradesh to ensure proper marketing and certification of natural farm products so that the farmers could get better prices for their produce.

This was said by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur while addressing a high-level meeting on 'Sustainable Food Systems Mechanism' in Himachal Pradesh under Prakritik Kheti Khushal Kisan Yojna here on Tuesday.

Thakur said that steps must also be taken to create a proper demand and marketing of natural farming. He said that this would create a demand for natural products and will motivate the farmers to adopt natural farming.

He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was committed to double the income of the farmers by the year 2022 and natural farming could go a long way in achieving this target. The chief minister said that it was in the very first budget of the present State Government that a provision of Rs. 25 crore was made to pro-

mote natural farming in the state. He said that natural farming has made agriculture a lucrative avocation for the youth of the State who earlier were leaving the state to get better employment opportunities and to earn their livelihood.

He said that earlier the farmers of the state were reluctant in adopting natural farming as they feared fall in production.

But now the farmers were showing great interest in adopting natural farming, he added. He said that agriculture sector has proved a major booster to sustain the rural economy even during the corona pandemic.

The chief minister also released Handbook of FAO-INRAE on 'Enabling Sustainable Food System' on the occasion. Agriculture, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Virender Kanwar said that natural farming has ensured better price to the farmers, besides being good for health and environment.

Chief Secretary Anil Khadilkar said that the concern of farmers was first articulated by the Prime Minister when he envisioned doubling the farm income by 2022. He said that

it was possible only either farmers go for reckless use of chemical fertilizers or go for natural farming to fetch better price of their produce.

Additional Chief Secretary Agriculture Nisha Singh, while welcoming the Chief Minister and other dignitaries, said that natural farming has potential to transform the economy of the farmers as it fetches good price.

FAO Representative in India Tomio Schichiri said that the handbook lays stress on preservation and conservation of local crops. He said that Himachal Pradesh and Japan were similar in many respects as both have diverse culture and landscape.

Deputy Director Interdisciplinary Laboratory Science, Innovation and Society, French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (INRAE), France Dr. Allison Loconto while addressing the meeting from France said that natural farming was not only good for the environment but equally beneficial for the human health.

She said that better cooperation must be ensured at local level to promote natural farming.

Punjab Police busts drone module involved in narcotics & weapons smuggling, arrests 2

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BATHINDA/CHANDIGARH, 15 DECEMBER

The Punjab Police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested two members of a module using drones for cross-border smuggling of narcotics and weapons through an international network, including Pakistani smugglers with links to Khalistani operatives.

The accused, identified as Lakhbir Singh and Bachittar Singh, were arrested by Amrit-

sar (rural) police through certain leads, with further investigations expected to track their associates, including four drug smugglers currently lodged in Amritsar jail.

The Director General of Police (DGP) Dinkar Gupta disclosed one quadcopter drone with a full support stand and one transmitter, along with mini receiver and camera support, have been seized, along with one .32 bore revolver and one Scorpio as well as some live cartridges and



A drone and a transmitter among other things seized by Punjab Police.

Bachittar Singh at Guru Amardas Avenue, Amritsar.

Further investigations revealed Lakhbir was in close and frequent contact with four major drug smugglers of Ajnala, who are currently lodged in Amritsar jail.

A search in the prison led to the recovery of a touch smartphone from the possession of Lakhbir's associate Surjit Masih, a drug smuggler.

According to the DGP,

investigations so far show Lakhbir had established an extensive communication network with foreign smugglers and entities, and was in close and frequent contact with a notorious Pakistani based smuggler named Chishti. Chishti is also in touch with Pakistan based Khalistani operatives, and has been responsible for smuggling of significant cross-border consignments into India from Pakistan in the past.

MBS SCHOOL OF PLANNING & ARCHITECTURE
(Affiliated to G.G.S.I.P.U and Approved by C.O.A & A.C.T.E)
Sector-9, Dwarka, New Delhi
Affiliated with GGSIP University, Delhi.
**Admission Notice for
B.Arch. Course 2020-21**
Applications for admission to B.Arch. programme against Management quota seats are invited from those candidates who fulfil eligibility criteria of G.G.S.I.P. University, Delhi. Last date for receipt of applications is 29 December 2020.
Ph.No.: 011-25071504 Director

K'taka Council chaos: Members get physical

Deputy Chairman S L Dharmendra pulled down from seat over row pertaining to no-trust move

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BENGALURU, 15 DECEMBER

Karnataka Legislative Council witnessed high drama on Tuesday with members hurling abuses and pushing each other and Deputy Chairman S L Dharmendra being pulled down from Chairman's seat over a row pertaining to no-confidence motion.

Amid the pandemonium, which many senior members termed as "black mark" and "unprecedented" in the House's century-old history, it was adjourned sine-die within minutes after it met for the day.

After it was adjourned sine-die on December 10, the House was convened for a day on Tuesday by the government, which had even petitioned the Governor, accusing the Chairman K Pratapachandra Shetty of "abruptly" adjourning the session, without taking up the no-confidence motion against him.

Though the no-confidence



Chaos in Karnataka Legislative Council as Deputy Chairman S.L. Dharmendra occupied chair even before the House bell stopped ringing on Tuesday. IANS

motion against Shetty moved by

BJP members did not find men-

tion in the Council's agenda for

Tuesday as Shetty had rejected

it citing procedural lapses and

pointing out that no specific

Congress members accused the government of trying to start proceedings even before the Chairman could come with an intention to take up the no-confidence motion against Shetty, which has been rejected by him.

charges were made against him, ruling party members had been insisting that it be taken up.

BJP with the support of JD(S), had planned to remove Shetty as the chairman through the no-confidence motion.

As the House met for the day, Gowda occupied the Chairman's seat even before Shetty arrived and the quorum bell still ringing, which angered Congress MLCs who rushed to the well demanding he vacate it, as he would have allowed the no-

confidence motion against Shetty.

Following this, BJP and JD(S) members, too, rushed towards the Chair in his defence. This resulted in a heated exchange of words and much jostling between members from both sides.

Some Congress members, including Naseer Ahmed, were seen trying to forcefully open the door through which the Chairman enters the House, accusing the ruling side of shutting it with an intention not to allow Shetty inside.

Congress members accused the government of trying to start proceedings even before the Chairman could come with an intention to take up the no-confidence motion against Shetty, which has been rejected by him.

BJP and JD(S) members argued that the Deputy Chairman has the right to conduct the proceedings as the no-confidence was against the Chairman. Following this, some Congress

MLCs, including M Narayanaswamy and Naseer

Ahmed forcefully pulled down the Dy Chairman from the seat.

Several members and marshals were also manhandled in the melee, even as Congress managed to make one of its members occupy the chair until Shetty arrived in the House, and the party MLCs stood guard around the seat.

Several BJP and JD(S) members objected to this and questioned if the person sitting on the Chair was among the panel who could occupy it.

After some time Chairman

Pratapachandra Shetty entered

the house and managed to go up to the chair, from where he announced the House was adjourned sine die.

BJP and JD(S) have decided

to petition the Governor against

the Chairman and on the develop-

ments today. Senior ministers also went into a huddle with JD(S) leaders and the Deputy Chairman on the next

course of action.

Terming the Chairman's act

of adjourning the House sine-

die as unlawful, home minister

Basavaraj Bommai told reporters

outside the council hall that "he

(Shetty) cannot do it as there is

no-confidence against him.

...We'll go to the Governor who

is the custodian of both houses

. Law & parliamentary affairs

minister J C Madhuswamy said

the Chairman has no right, as it

has been 14 plus five days since

no-confidence notice has been

sent. As Shetty cannot run the

House, the Deputy Chairman was

requested to occupy the Chair,

he added. Leader of the Oppo-

sition in the Council S R Patil

alleged the Deputy Chairman occu-

pied the chair against the

rules and procedures and it was

against the Constitution.

With the House being adjourned sine-die, other subjects

in the agenda, including the

contentious anti-cow slaug-

hter Bill, were not taken up.

TENDER

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Tel/Fax: 01704-222373, E-mail: ee-pao-hp@nic.in

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer HP PWD Paonta Sahib, Distt. Sirsa HP on behalf of Governor of HP invites the item rate bids, in electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HP PWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Starting Date for downloading Bid	Earnest Money	Deadline for submission of Bid
1.	CIO Pucca road along canal from village Doliyanwala to Kheri Km: 0/0 to 2/915 under Mukhya Mantri Sadak Yojna. (SH:- CIO retaining walls in Km: 0/0 to 2/915, CIO vented causeway at RD 2/055 to 2/065, 2/100 to 2/110, 2/145 to 2/155, 2/220 to 2/230 & 2/425 to 2/435, CIO cross drainage works & P.I. Metalling/Tarring in Km. 0/0 to 2/915)	Rs. 84,51,710/- HRS	17-12-2020 16:30	Rs. 1,17,000/- HRS	17-01-2021 17:00
2.	CIO fruit processing unit at Chhatkuwan in Tehsil Paonta Sahib; District Sirsa HP. (SH:- CIO Main building portion; boundary wall; water supply and sanitary installation, septic tank with soak pit and rain water harvesting tank)	Rs. 1,54,72,787/- HRS	17-12-2020 16:30	Rs. 1,87,300/- HRS	17-01-2021 17:00

The bidders are advised to note other details of Tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in.

5008/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

"NOTICE INVITING TENDERS"

Sealed item rate tenders are hereby invited 2nd time by the Executive Engineer, Bilaspur Division No. I, HP-PWD, Bilaspur, for the following works from the registered contractors of appropriate class enlisted in HP-PWD, whose registration stand renewed as per the revised instructions and also registered dealers under the Himachal Pradesh, General Sales Tax Act, 1968. The important dates of the tenders are as under:

Date of application	07/01/2021
Date of sale of tender form	08/01/2021
Date of opening of tender.	11/01/2021

The tenders shall be received up to 10.30 A.M. on 11/01/2021 and will be opened on the same day at 11.00 A.M. in the presence of intending contractors or their authorized representatives, who may like to be present. The tender forms can be had from this office against cash payment as shown below (Non-refundable during the working hours on 08/01/2021/2020).

The Earnest money in the shape of National Saving Certificate/Deposit at call/ Time Deposit Account in any of the Post-Office /Nationalised Bank in H.P. duly pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, Bilaspur Division No. I, HP-PWD, Bilaspur must accompany with each application. Conditional tenders and the tenders received without earnest money will simultaneously be rejected. The offer of the tender shall be kept open for 120 days. The XEN reserve the right to accept or reject the tenders without assigning any reason.

Sr. No	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Cost of tender (Rs.)	Time limit
1.	Restoration of rain damages on Chandigarh-Mandi-Manali road KM 127/00 to 156/750 (SH:- Construction of R/wall at RD. 137/198 to 137/215).	2,55,879/-	5,200/-	350/-	One month

TERMS & CONDITIONS:-

1. The contractors should have executed two similar type of works 1/3 of each amount put to tender or single work of amount equal to the amount put to tender within last 3 years.
2. The list of similar type of work executed & work done performance certificate issued by the concerned Executive Engineer should be accompanied with application.
3. The Earnest money should be accompanied with application. Application without earnest money will be rejected.
4. The photo copy of PAN Number/GST Number should be attached with the application otherwise tender form will not be issued.
5. The cost of tender form in prescribed form (Non-refundable) in form of cash in favour of Executive Engineer, Bilaspur Division No. I, HP-PWD, Bilaspur.
6. Copy of contractor registration should be attached with the application.
7. The copy of Tin No should be attached with the application otherwise tender form will not be issued.

5008/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

e-Procurement Notice

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1. The Executive Engineer, Gohar Division, HP-PWD, Gohar, on behalf of Governor of HP invites the online bids on item rates, in electronic tendering system, in 2 Cover System for the under mentioned works from the eligible and approved contractors/Firms registered with HPPWD Department.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost.	EMD	Cost of Tender	Eligible class of Contractor	Time limit
1.	Construction of Indoor Sports Stadium in Govt. Degree College Basra (Gohar) Distt. Mandi HP. (SH:- C/O Building, W.S. and S.I., Septic Tank and rain water Harvesting Tank system).	5,70,65,790/-	6,04,000	500/-	Class- A	Eighteen Months
2.	Construction of Atar Ardash Vidyalaya at Gohar (Gudhara) in Tehsil Chachhot, Distt. Mandi, HP. (SH:- Construction of School building, W.S. and S.I., Septic Tank and rain water Harvesting Tank system and site development)	10,46,64,899/-	10,80,000	500/-	Class- A	Two years
3.	Construction of Atar Ardash Vidyalaya at Gohar (Gudhara) in Tehsil Chachhot, Distt. Mandi, HP. (SH:- Construction of Girls Hostel building, W.S. and S.I., Septic Tank and rain water Harvesting Tank system)	4,18,68,662/-	4,52,000	500/-	Class- A	Eighteen Months
4.	Construction of Atar Ardash Vidyalaya at Gohar (Gudhara) in Tehsil Chachhot, Distt. Mandi, HP. (SH:- Construction of Boys Hostel building, W.S. and S.I., Septic Tank and rain water Harvesting Tank system)	4,25,92,720/-	4,59,000	500/-	Class- A	Eighteen Months
5.	Construction 25.00 mtr. Span Jeepable Bridge over Ghangal Khad at Jawal G.P. Jawal (SH:- C/O Sub Structure and super Structure)	64,28,302/-	97,000	2000/-	Class-C	One Year
6.	Construction of 25.00mtr. Span Jeepable Bridge over Jeuni Khad at Shala in G.P. Shala (SH:- C/O Sub Structure and super Structure i/c Approaches)	72,31,858/-	1,05,000	2000/-	Class-C	One Year
7.	Construction of 40.00mtr. Jeepable Bridge over Jeuni Khad at Ropa in G.P. Nandi Lot (SH:- C/O Sub Structure and super Structure)	85,42,307/-	1,18,000	2000/-	Class-B	One Year
8.	Construction of Science Lab in Govt. Sen. Sec. School at Dharyana, Tehsil Chachhot, Distt. Mandi (HP). (SH:- Construction of Building Portion, W.S & SI & Rain Water Harvesting Tank and site development)	98,50,550/-	1,32,000	2000/-	Class-B	One Year
9.	Construction of Science Lab in Govt. Sen. Sec. School at Dharyana, Tehsil Chachhot, Distt. Mandi (HP). (SH:- Construction of Building Portion, W.S & SI & Rain Water Harvesting Tank and site development)	99,05,910/-	1,32,000/-	2000/-	Class-B	One Year

2. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission:- The Bid document is available online and bid should be submitted in online mode on website <https://hptenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register in the web-site, which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the



...There is a need to tell this government that farmers are not afraid of false propaganda and threats

CONGRESS LEADER PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA
WHILE PAYING TRIBUTES TO SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020

05

THUMBNAILS



Tribals demonstration in support of their demands organised by Bharat Jakt Majhi Pargana Mahal at Burdwan town on Tuesday.

SANJOY KARMAKAR

Basu takes on Shah: State science and technology minister Bratya Basu today said, "Amit Shah did not find any time to meet the agitating farmers who are on hunger strike but has ample time to come to Birbhum or Bongaon. His priority is not the farmers but how to capture power in West Bengal". Basu said, "I have heard that the central BJP had divided West Bengal into 10 zones for upcoming Assembly poll and for each zone they have selected observers from outside. Not a Bengali leader of the BJP or the son of the soil has been selected to be the observer of one of the 10 zones." It shows BJP has no faith in local Bengali leaders and they have to bring observers from different BJP-run states.

Ex-MLA faces attempt to murder charge: A case of attempt to murder has been registered against former Maharashtra MLA Harshvardhan Jadhav and a woman for allegedly assaulting an elderly man in a road rage incident in Pune, police said on Tuesday. "While the man was riding a motorcycle, Jadhav opened its door. This obstructed the passage of the motorcycle due to which the woman sitting in the front received injuries. Later they got into a spat and punched him in his stomach," police said.

Arjun Rampal summoned: The Narcotics Control Bureau has summoned Bollywood actor Arjun Rampal in Mumbai on Wednesday for questioning in a drugs case, an NCB official said on Tuesday. Rampal has been asked to remain present before the NCB team, which is conducting a probe into the alleged Bollywood-drugs nexus following the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, the official said.

Kashmir below freezing point: Night temperatures in the Kashmir Valley dipped below the freezing point owing to a clear sky, with Gulmarg shivering at minus 10.2 degrees Celsius, Met officials said here on Tuesday. Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 5.3 degrees Celsius, and Srinagar recorded a low of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, they said.

Safe flight ops during fog: The Delhi international airport is gearing up to ensure safe flight operations amid increasing fog in the city, operator DIAL said on Tuesday.

Repeal, re-enact: PC on farm laws

Says govt should climb down from its high horse and reach an agreement with farmers quickly

PTI & SNS
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Tuesday asked the government to repeal the new agri laws, which have sparked protest by farmers, and bring in a fresh bill after reaching an agreement with the agitating peasants.

The farmers' agitation against the three agriculture laws has reached almost a month, with many of them sitting in the cold and blocking traffic on the national highways around Delhi.

"Government should climb down from its high horse and reach an agreement with the farmers quickly," Chidambaram said on Twitter.

"The simple way forward is to Repeal the present laws and Re-enact a new law based on the agreement. Repeal and Re-enactment is a well-known legislative tool," he also said.

The former finance minister said it is obvious that any agreement between farmers and the government will necessarily require a new bill to be passed by Parliament.

"It is shocking that after 20 days of farmers' protests in the bitter winter of Delhi, the government continues to stick to the 'no repeal' stand," he also said.

The Congress has been supporting the farmers' agitation and has called for a repeal of the three farm laws. It has also alleged that the farm laws were passed undemocratically in Parliament.

Opposition parties have also appealed to President Ram Nath Kovind to intervene and ensure the laws are withdrawn. The government has been defending the laws, saying they will open new market avenues for farmers and raise their incomes, besides ushering in new technologies in the sector.

Maha speaker asks PM to scrap farm laws:

Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Nana Patole has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that the new farm laws introduced by the Centre be scrapped "without delay".

Patole said he would be forced to join the farmers' protests currently underway, despite being on a Constitutional post, if there was any further delay in repealing



Youth farmers play football at the Delhi-UP's Ghazipur Border on the 20th day of their agitation, on Tuesday.

IANS

For Modi govt, crony capitalists are 'best friends', alleges Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

nobody. Protesting farmers are Khalistani. And crony capitalists are best friends," Gandhi said in a tweet.

Farmers are protesting against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the central government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

these laws.

Danve claims his statement to be misinterpreted:

Union minister Raosaheb Danve on Tuesday claimed his controversial statement made in context of the ongoing farmer protests was "misinterpreted" and asserted he can not make any derogatory remarks against cultivators as he himself hails from the farming community.

Minister says Opp gang-up due to BJP's poll wins:

Uttar Pradesh Cooperative Minister Mukut Bharti Verma on Monday said the opposition parties have joined together in the protest against the three central farm laws because they have become frustrated due to the results of all recent elections in favour of the BJP.

"They are united seeing the results of all the recent elections in favour of the BJP," said

Verma.

Govt denies reports on medal return:

The government today denied a report in a section of the Press that 25,000 awardees of Shaurya Chakra have returned their medals in support of the farmers' agitation.

"This (report) is completely false, utterly baseless and malicious in nature and aimed at damaging the reputation, honour and pride of our valiant defence forces. In fact, between 1956 to 2019, the actual number of Shaurya Chakras awarded stood at 2,048," the Defence Ministry said. It asked the media to exercise caution, verify facts and desist from publishing such blatantly false and malicious news.

The report in a Telugu daily claimed the medals were returned to express solidarity with the farmers protesting at the borders of Delhi.

Colonel accused of raping friend's wife eludes police dragnet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KANPUR, 15 DECEMBER

Trinamul has so far fielded Madhabi Chakraborty, Tapas Pal, Kabir Suman, Satabdi Roy, Sandhya Roy to name a few.

Though the outreach to cultural personalities in the state seems to have been started by Union home minister, Amit Shah's visit to noted classical singer, Ajay Chakraborty's house, the saffron camp's seemingly stealing a march over its principal political rival was lost recently.

Reeling under a series of intra-party squabbles, TMC was quick to seize on this gaffe. A rally led by state panchayat minister, Subrata Mukherjee and Kolkata (south) MP Mala Roy was brought out to drive home the saffron camp's ignorance about the state's culture.

BJP's endeavour to ingratiate itself to the men and women of the state's art and culture had started long before. But the results were not to its liking. The then BJP state chief, Rahul

Sinha was on told on his face by Soumitra Chatterjee when he called on the thespian's home that demonetisation has inconvenienced him.

BJP tried to cover it up contending that Chatterjee have always been close to CPI-M even participating in an election rally led by Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. But the rebuff had taken wind off the sails of the BJP's reaching out endeavour.

The political outfits of the state are no strangers to courting icons of the cultural world. If the last Congress dispensation of the state led by Siddhartha Shankar Ray had financed Satyajit Ray's Sonar Kella though Ray had no love lost for the ruling party's ideology, the Left Front regime picked and chose the recipients of government largesse and made a beeline for the Matua community vote bank which was to be hijacked by pro-active politics of Trinamul and subsequently BJP leadership.

The political outfits of the state are no strangers to courting icons of the cultural world. If the last Congress dispensation of the state led by Siddhartha Shankar Ray had no love lost for the ruling party's ideology, the Left Front regime picked and chose the recipients of government largesse and made a beeline for the Matua community vote bank which was to be hijacked by pro-active politics of Trinamul and subsequently BJP leadership.

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BJP's endeavour to ingratiate itself to the men and women of the state's art and culture had started long before. But the results were not to its liking. The then BJP state chief, Rahul

Race to rope in Bengal cultural icons ahead of Assembly election

TIRTHANKAR MITRA

KOLKATA, 15 DECEMBER

In state politics, BJP and Trinamul Congress leadership are vying with each other to reach out to leading cultural personalities of the state with an eye to the state Assembly elections next year.

TMC Rajya Sabha member Manish Gupta calling upon eminent Sarod player Tejendra Narayan Majumdar in the wake of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's visit is a recent instance of this game plan though Gupta described his dropping in at Majumdar's place as a visit to one who is almost 'a family friend'.

Rankling memory, this appears to be an admixture of pandering to the cultural sentiment of Bengali voters and aping the south Indian political practise of para-dropping film stars in electoral politics. As a step ahead of its then principal opponent Left Front, the

Trinamul has so far fielded Madhabi Chakraborty, Tapas Pal, Kabir Suman, Satabdi Roy, Sandhya Roy to name a few.

Though the outreach to cultural personalities in the state seems to have been started by Union home minister, Amit Shah's visit to noted classical singer, Ajay Chakraborty's house, the saffron camp's seemingly stealing a march over its principal political rival was lost recently.

Reeling under a series of intra-party squabbles, TMC was quick to seize on this gaffe. A rally led by state panchayat minister, Subrata Mukherjee and Kolkata (south) MP Mala Roy was brought out to drive home the saffron camp's ignorance about the state's culture.

BJP's endeavour to ingratiate itself to the men and women of the state's art and culture had started long before. But the results were not to its liking. The then BJP state chief, Rahul

Sinha was on told on his face by Soumitra Chatterjee when he called on the thespian's home that demonetisation has inconvenienced him.

BJP tried to cover it up contending that Chatterjee have always been close to CPI-M even participating in an election rally led by Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. But the rebuff had taken wind off the sails of the BJP's reaching out endeavour.

The political outfits of the state are no strangers to courting icons of the cultural world. If the last Congress dispensation of the state led by Siddhartha Shankar Ray had no love lost for the ruling party's ideology, the Left Front regime picked and chose the recipients of government largesse and made a beeline for the Matua community vote bank which was to be hijacked by pro-active politics of Trinamul and subsequently BJP leadership.

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

Due to Non-Interlocking work at Bhaupur Station in North Central Railway, following Clone Special Trains will remain temporarily cancelled on the dates shown against each :-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

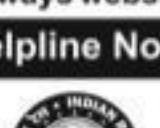
Train No. & Train Name	Date from originating station
02569 Darbhanga Jn. - New Delhi Clone Special	24.12.2020 to 06.01.2021
02570 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn. Clone Special	25.12.2020 to 07.01.2021

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

A delegation of senior BJP leaders on Tuesday met the Election Commissioner here to apprise him of the alleged deteriorating law and order situation in West Bengal and demanded immediate imposition of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in the state in view of the 'extraordinary circumstances' ahead of the Assembly elections early 2021.

The meeting between the

BJP is real *tukde tukde gang*, setting one community against another: Badal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BATHINDA/CHANDIGARH,
15 DECEMBER

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Tuesday said "the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the real *tukde tukde gang* in the country today and saffron party has been splitting the country into pieces by setting one community against another.

"So desperate is it for power and has no scruples about taking the communal polarization route and setting the country on communal flames," he said speaking to reporters at Bathinda today.

Badal said the BJP first set the Hindus against the Muslims. "Now, it is determined to replay that evil game and re-enact the same tragedy in Punjab also. It is conspiring to set our peace-loving Hindu brethren in Punjab against their Sikh brethren with whom they have shared strong bonds of blood for centuries."

The SAD chief said the BJP has been resorting to dangerous conspiracies to sabotage the hard-earned atmosphere of peace and communal harmony just for the realisation of petty political goals.

"The BJP leadership must realise that their party today has become the most powerful divisive force. It has been resorting to dividing the country and its people by spreading hatred in the name of religion," he added.

Later, in a statement issued from the party headquarter in Chandigarh, Badal said, the SAD deems it its national duty to caution the countrymen against BJP's desperate and destructive game-plan in Punjab. This party is so desperate for power that it has no qualms about making Punjabis thirsty for one another's blood and destroying the fabric of unity and fraternal love.

Badal said it is shocking and unbelievable that a party which claims to take pride in India's heritage is determined to destroy the foundations of that very heritage.



Referring to the ongoing farmers' movement, Badal said the whole country except that BJP gratefully acknowledges the debt which we owe to our patriotic farmers and soldiers.

"The BJP is provoking the people to deny that debt. It believes only in emotionally exploiting the farmers' sacrifices but remains so ungrateful to them that it is painting them as anti-national.

Today it is the farmers. Nobody knows what the BJP might say even about soldiers tomorrow if it suits that party. The farmers are hurt and angry against the BJP and not against the government," said Badal.

Later, in a statement issued from the party headquarter in Chandigarh, Badal said, the SAD deems it its national duty to caution the countrymen against BJP's desperate and destructive game-plan in Punjab. This party is so desperate for power that it has no qualms about making Punjabis thirsty for one another's blood and destroying the fabric of unity and fraternal love.

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No proposal from BJP for Cabinet expansion: Nitish

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PATNA, 15 DECEMBER

Expansion of the newly formed cabinet in Bihar will take place in due course in consultation with the BJP and the same was not on cards as of now, chief minister Nitish Kumar said on Tuesday.

Kumar made the statement in response to queries about the intense speculations about a tussle between his JD(U) and the BJP coming in the way of expansion of the cabinet which has 14 members, including himself, less than half of the sanctioned strength.

As per the rule, a maximum of 36 ministers, including the chief minister, can be appointed to the 243-member Bihar Assembly.

"At present we are busy with moving forward on our blueprint for the next five years. A cabinet meeting is scheduled later in the day for the purpose. When the BJP proposes expansion of the cabinet, we will think over it

Fogbound Hills

The title of this comment must transcend the intrinsic connotation. The Hills are in a tizzy on the eve of the West Bengal Assembly elections. Confusion has been worse confounded as double-think runs wild in the camp helmed by Bimal Gurung of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha. As much as the electorate, the Trinamul Congress is worried that while Mr Gurung ~ after severing ties with the BJP ~ has extended support to the state's ruling party three years after he returned to Darjeeling, he has at another remove shilled for a separate state. While this may be central to the ferment in the Hills since the mid-1980s, the GJM leader must be acutely aware that any initiative must constitutionally rest on Parliament, the state Assembly and also, of course, the fractious political class.

The grandstanding on his return and the pledge to support Trinamul cannot, therefore, be enduring. His key demand for a Gorkhaland state runs counter to the first pledge of support to the Trinamul Congress. Gurung has buttressed the demand for Gorkhaland at public meetings; latest reports from Darjeeling suggest that his party activists are no less confused over the contradictory postures. At his meetings in Siliguri and Alipurduar, he has been explicit on the point that despite his support to Trinamul, he will continue to ratchet up the demand for Gorkhaland, indeed a demand that has been consistently opposed by Mamata Banerjee, as it was by Jyoti Basu in his dealings with Subhas Ghising in the high noon of CPI-M rule. Even as realpolitik, it can scarcely be convenient to sup with the likes of Gurung when the state's ruling party is against Gorkhaland.

The GJM leader has his political and ethnic compulsions and cannot be expected to readily abjure the fundamental demand that has roiled the Hills for as long as it has. The crisis can only fester in the context of the fundamental discord. The state tourism minister Gautam Deb's pledge that "all we want is to walk together so that the Dooars can develop in the midst of peace" is the consummation devoutly to be wished for, but there are red herrings across the trail. Darjeeling will have to contend with this fundamental political discord for some time yet.

It is pretty obvious that Gurung is eager to play to the ethnic gallery, even while keeping his political options suitably flexible. Significant, therefore, is the switch of loyalty from the Bharatiya Janata Party to the Trinamul Congress. Even the Gorkha National Liberation Front is arguably trying to test the murky waters. A GNLF delegation is currently in Delhi to meet Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss what they call the scope for a "permanent solution" in the Hills. That "solution" has eluded a swathe of Bengal since 1986. The prospect remains fogbound given the passing show of political loyalties and prejudices.

Unresolved conflict

The most significant impact of the Union government's decision to send three senior Indian Police Service officers, who were in charge of security when BJP president JP Nadda's motorcade came under attack on Kolkata's outskirts last week, on deputation to the Government of India is not political but structural. It brings out in stark relief the unresolved contradiction between two divergent interpretations of the Constitutional scheme of things ~ is India essentially a unitary state with some federal characteristics or is the system premised on a federal architecture with unitary bells and whistles? Politics, in this case between the incumbent TMC which is in power in West Bengal and clearly believes the latter interpretation is correct, and the challenger BJP which holds sway at the Centre and is certain that the former proposition is sound, has only accentuated this systemic fault line.

According to IPS (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. Rule 6 (1) is explicit: "In case of any disagreement, the matter shall be decided by the Central Government and the State Government or State Governments concerned shall give effect to the decision of the Central Government." In theory, therefore, there is absolutely no question that the Union has overriding powers when there is conflict between it and its constituent parts.

The argument that subjects under the Union, State, and Concurrent Lists have been demarcated so the domains of the respective governments are defined does not fly because that is an arrangement which works only when there are no major differences of opinion and varying interpretations are not part of the mix. The fact is that these clashes come to fruition when the political dispensations in power at the state and the Centre are not the same, unlike for the initial decades after Independence. This state of affairs will continue and get more visceral unless the electorate in its wisdom opts for a one-party-dominated political system.

As things stand, there may not be much the Mamata Banerjee administration can do to prevent the Union government's will from being enforced except what it is currently doing ~ stoutly refusing to play ball. But that is a strategy which is subject to the law of diminishing returns because sooner rather than later officers of the All-India Services themselves, unless they harbour political ambitions, will deem it politic to fall in line with the Delhi's directions. Politically, the TMC needs to pick its battles better because administratively, especially on the law-and-order front, it has already suffered grievous wounds. The BJP, on the other hand, would be well-advised not to delude itself into thinking a return to the one-party dominant system is a fait accompli.

Authoritarian dividend

The democratic world would have to have a common minimum agenda of democratic governance which would ensure an average citizen access to resources, justice and education to provide life and content to democracy. Democracies are to overcome their structural shortcomings not only to meet the authoritarian challenge to economic development but also to outwit it



Even before the worldwide spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the GDP of all the democratic countries put together was less than that of the non-democracies. It is now virtually certain that after the outbreak of pandemic the gap would widen as most of the economies of democracies are shrinking and would take a longer time to recover. China has made a quick recovery and by June 2020 was able to reach 80 per cent of its normal target. The singular importance of China is because it is the largest manufacturing economy and exporter of goods. It is also the largest growing consumer market and second largest importer of goods.

The IMF projection for China is that its economy would grow by 1 per cent for the rest of 2020 as compared to 6.1 per cent in 2019. In 2021, it is expected to grow at 8.2 per cent and unlike most other major economies would be able to make up for lost time quickly. The US economy in comparison has contracted by 8 per cent in 2020. In 2019, its growth rate was 2.3 per cent and would be 4.5 per cent in 2021. The Asean economies have contracted by 2 per cent in 2020. In 2019, they grew by 4.9 per cent and in 2021, are expected to grow at 6.2 per cent. India has contracted by 10.3 per cent in 2020. In 2019, it grew by 4.2 percent and is expected to grow by 6 per cent in 2021.

The challenge for democracies to catch up or surpass the economic challenges of non-democracies gets more complicated by the fact that when the present affluent democracies embarked on industrialization and experienced impressive growth and prosperity, they were mostly non-democracies. But even then, their growth rate was much less than China's astounding rate of 10 per cent sustained over a period of forty years in contrast to the US' growth rate at 3.5 per cent and Great Britain which was 1.5 when they were industrializing.

This view was further vindicated by the rise of Asian Tigers whose success led China to emu-

late them and change its own course. Japan's Meiji restoration that took place following Commodore Perry's expedition in 1853 was within an authoritarian structure. Moreover, when Japan debated about the adoption of a suitable constitution in 1868 it accepted the Prussian model, an authoritarian model, over the British, as it considered the latter as unsuitable for the then prevailing situation, despite it being the best. This economic miracle of authoritarian nations in the contemporary world is unexpected. It defies Fukuyama's categorical assertion in the early 1990s about the triumph of liberalism and its uninterrupted march without challenge. Fukuyama's arguments were accepted momentarily as universal in the background of the collapse of communism in East Europe and the de-industrialization process in the erstwhile Soviet Union and in its successor state, Russia.

This deindustrialization process in Russia continues even today. Like many countries of the developing world, Russia continues to be primarily a raw-materials exporting nation and because of trade restrictions imposed on it by the West, is increasingly dependent on China for manufactured goods and even for upgrading its primary export of natural gas and petroleum products.

It is mainly the rise of China, with its own characteristics and its ability to sustain a continuous growth, currently the number one manufacturing exporting nation and projected to surpass the USA as the largest economy of the world within a decade, that has made policy makers think otherwise. Even in the Western European heartland, Italy, Portugal and Greece are signatories to China's Belt and Road initiative. Many critics of democracy also point out that the EU itself is not a democratic body.

The US with its policy of

'America first' has indicated its intention to its allies and friends of withdrawing from its overseas responsibilities weakening the process of democratic expansion and collective effort at economic coordination. This indicates that another Marshall Plan or something to match China's Belt and Road initiative is inconceivable at the present juncture.

It is also no coincidence that

the Chinese economic relationship with other nations is more

pragmatic and less

ideological, similar to the US led containment theory after the Second World War in which authoritarian Pakistan was preferred over democratic India.

Given these facts democracies have to prove that the system is as important for politics as for economics. In attempting to achieve this stupendous task liberal

democracies will have to acknowledge China's unprecedented success both in its domestic and external economic priorities and work out a remedial and a better democratic project.

China has impressively mitigated abject poverty as it has uplifted about 800 million of its people and has also reduced the number of people involved in agriculture to 7 per cent of its population. Simultaneously it has also ensured it has enough surplus to export. China has been able to achieve it with less arable land than India.

All these are because of China's pragmatism and non-ideological stance while a serious limitation of democratic orders has been their compulsion towards populism in order to retain electoral support base and to create a winning coalition. These worked well during the heydays of growing prosperity after the Second World War when western democracies had access to an unlimited supply of cheap oil.

However, this was drastically altered with the rise of OPEC in 1973, the four-fold increase in the

price of oil and a silent revolution, in which the third world became increasingly exporters of finished goods rather than being primarily raw materials exporting countries.

The Chinese allege that electoral mechanisms in democracies lead to compromise with merit. Timothy Garton Ash observes that many Chinese students who come to Oxford and Cambridge are critical of China but they also find the West chaotic and disorderly as demonstrated by the recent racial riots in the USA and a lax work culture. The most important lesson that democracies have to imbibe from authoritarian China is state competence and efficiency and keeping corruption at a manageable level.

It is not to argue that there is no corruption in China as it is quite widespread but it does not affect the basic structure and function of the state, namely its phenomenal success in eradicating poverty, spread of quality education, health care and building excellent infrastructure, with highways of more than 10,000 miles without potholes. In the 1960s, Gunnar Myrdal analysing the economic situation of South Asian nations described them as soft states where lofty policies were announced but never implemented.

The difference between well-established democracies and the newly emerging ones is not the wide gap in GDPs but the fact that the former has been partially reformed while the latter continue to be unreformed. With little commonality between the elite and the masses there does not exist a common denominator to define their common nationhood.

To remedy this, the democratic world would have to have a common minimum agenda of democratic governance which would ensure an average citizen access to resources, justice and education to provide life and content to democracy. Democracies are to overcome their structural shortcomings not only to meet the authoritarian challenge to economic development but also to outwit it.

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

ASIAN VOICES

Why keep watchdogs behind curtains?

Temper frayed during the budget debate, in Parliament, yesterday, with the Opposition MPs taking exception to the use of the parliament logo in some recent news reports on the proceedings of COPE (Committee on Public Enterprises). They asked Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena to find out how that had happened and who was responsible. COPE Chairman Prof. Charitha Herath said information about the COPE discussion at issue had been taken from an official video. But the Opposition would have none of it.

Why the Opposition has seen red is obvious although some of its MPs have said their protest is not against the media coverage of the parliamentary committee proceedings as such, but the use of the parliament logo. The COPE is currently investigating some financial irregularities and the resultant losses to the state during the UNP-led yahapalana government.

Minister and Chief Government Whip Johnston Fernando reiterated that the COPE proceedings should not be open to the media. The people have a right to know who is responsible for causing staggering losses to the state coffers through questionable deals, etc.

There is no reason why the government or the Opposition should object to the media gaining access to the proceedings of COPE, etc., and disseminating it for public consumption if it has nothing to hide.

The people, in whom sovereignty is said to reside, have a right to know

The Island

what Parliament or parliamentary committees do in their name.

The election of a parliament is only a temporary arrangement for facilitating the exercise of the people's sovereignty, and parliamentary privileges do not empower the MPs to subjugate the interests of the public to theirs.

No restrictions should be imposed on the media coverage of the proceedings of parliamentary committees if people's right to information is to be safeguarded.

In advanced democracies, the people are wise enough to ensure that their interests always take precedence over those of their elected representatives, who are denied special treatment. Sweden is perhaps the best example; its ministers are not entitled to official vehicles and have to travel in buses and trains just like the ordinary people. Not even the Speaker of the Swedish Parliament is given an official car. Only the Prime Minister can use an official vehicle. Such is the concern Swedes have about public funds, and no wonder politicians are not living high on the hog at the expense of the public in that country.

It is high time Sri Lankans woke up to the fact that they have to assert their right to hold politicians accountable to them and weed out the corrupt elements in the garb of elected representatives. This is not something easily attainable, but a serious effort has to be made to achieve it.

One may recall that in Australia, Prime Minister of New South Wales Barry O'Farrell had to resign, in 2014, over his failure to declare a gift of wine from a businessman, after admitting to a 'massive memory fail'. In this country, feigned memory losses help politicians get away with their involvement in mega scams.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Seek consensus, not conflict

SIR, The three farm laws rammed through Parliament and given Presidential assent in a hurry have incurred the wrath of farmers, mainly from Punjab and Haryana. They have been protesting for more than two weeks and have laid siege to Delhi. Opposition parties across the country and many trade bodies and unions are opportunistically supporting their

agitation, reminiscent of when a moribund BJP revived itself by jumping on to the Anna Hazare-led India Against Corruption bandwagon. Now the boot is on the other foot. The ruling party is trying to discredit the farmers, comprising a large body of sturdy, stout and hearty Sikhs, and attempting to drive a wedge between different farmers grou-

ps. There is a genuine fear that APMCs may collapse as a result of these laws and farmers will then be at the mercy of large business houses who will eliminate competition and prey on them ~ a trend that started long ago and has steadily grown, with the increasing influence of a few big business houses on government policy. When procurement through MSP is delayed or denied, farmers under duress will fall into the clutches of corporations run by oligarchs. The unresolved question is, therefore, how to ensure that the reforms do not lead to monopolies or cartelisation. Equally important is the issue of federalism. The states play a critical role in the sector, but they have scarcely been involved in the framing and passing of the laws. When leaders in government admit that they may not have all the answers, that no one

has a magic formula for societal and economic problems, it will open up avenues for dialogue and debate and lead to faster, amicable and simpler solutions through consensus instead of conflict. The world suffers most from the disinterested tyranny of the well-wisher. Yours, etc., Shovanl Chakraborty, Kolkata, 13 December.

SUPPORT FARMERS

SIR, The call for a hunger strike on 14 December and the slogan "Delhi Chalo" (March to Delhi) by different farmer unions is justified, given the aggravating condition of the present tussle between farmers and the Central Government over the three newly framed laws. In a democratic country like India, it is a matter of grave concern that ministers of the ruling Government are acting without caring for constitutional rights of different sections of our society. One after another, bills

CONSULTATION VITAL

SIR, Devendra Saksena's article 'Consultation processes' (12 December) contains useful suggestions for the legislature to place in the public domain proposed bills on important matters before they are enacted. Thus can be avoided future protests by the public. In fact, there appear to exist provisions in the Pre-legislative Consultation Policy (PLPC) for such consultation. In the fitness of things, all laws enacted by the legislature which have bearing on public life should invite public opinion before enactment. The prevailing atmosphere in the country in the matter of legislating laws on important matters is in sharp contrast to Saksena's suggestions. Let alone inviting public views, even the public representatives available in Parliament, the MPs of opposition parties, are often unable to express their views. Much trouble could have been avoided if the government had not suspended the usual Question Hour in Lok Sabha and if all aspects were discussed before the three bills on agricultural reform were rushed through.

Yours, etc., Sanjat Ghatak, Narendrapur, 12 December.

are being hastily passed without giving a chance for proper discussion. The Central Government is making a mockery of the Constitution. I am afraid if the ruling dispensation does not pay attention to the demands of farmers, it will surely bring disastrous results to the lives of not only farmers but of the poor and destitute. This protest must be supported by all peace-loving and empathetic people of our country so that farmers are saved from becoming the puppets of mighty capitalists.

Yours, etc., Iftekhar Ahmed, Kolkata, 13 December.



ARMIN ROSENCRANZ,
GOVIND SINGH AND
ABHIROOP CHOWDHURY

A tale of two protests



It is this worrisome decline that made the Haryana government launch schemes like Mera Pani, Meri Virasat (my water, my heritage), urging farmers to shift away from water-guzzling paddy cultivation. The state also expressed full readiness to compensate farmers for losses incurred in this process and for providing the necessary facilitation required for switching away from paddy. The farmers continue to be reluctant since giving up paddy and growing the next-most-suited maize crop reduces their earning substantially.

The big picture emerging from this analysis has implications for the entire country, and for our food security. Agriculture may or may not be its cause, but it is certainly at the receiving end of increasing environmental degradation. We have reached a stage where governments at both the state level and the Centre need to work with the farmers to sustain agriculture and secure food availability.

Declining ground water level is only the tip of the iceberg. The shadows of climate change are also loom-

ing large over the nation's agriculture economy. The U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization indicates that 59 per cent of Indians are engaged in agriculture and 23 per cent of national GDP is dependent on it. It is expected that climate change will impact agriculture immensely. Wealthy farmers will be able to withstand the vagaries of climate change better and bounce back sooner compared to poor, marginalized farmers.

The farmers' plight is not only limited to the environmental degradation resulting from unsustainable,

chemical-intensive agriculture. Farmers are also prone to the economic policies enacted by the Centre that may put them at the mercy of big corporations. Centre and state governments must work together and take positive, apolitical steps to improve the lives and livelihood of the farmers - who deliver food to the hungry mouths of India's 1.35 billion people.

The writers are, respectively, Dean, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor at Jindal School of Environment & Sustainability, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana.

Of tactical victory and retreat



ARIFA NOOR

The Pakistan Democratic Movement show in Lahore has taken place among chilly winds and heated discussions. The *bayaania* (narrative) of the numbers was at its peak on Sunday evening with both sides claiming a decisive victory — the opposition insisted the numbers were historically high and hence the Lahoreis had rejected Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf while the government saw the low turnout as a vote against the PDM, especially the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz.

Having had its fingers burnt rather badly in Multan, the government tried to play it cool by not interfering with the gatherings and crowds in Lahore; however, the restraint was only limited to the use of force. Its members still spent most of Sunday obsessing over the PDM show and the size of the crowds.

Nonetheless, the government was at pains to show how unruffled its feathers were — the hardworking prime minister was shown playing with his dogs and the police was nowhere to be seen, thankfully not doing what it does best. Multan had done the trick where the government's heavy-handedness and ner-

vousness helped the PDM and also led to much criticism from within the ranks — the PTI's Multan representatives are said to have complained about the use of force during cabinet meetings.

But if the government appeared a bit tamed, so did the PDM. Its leaders had whipped up expectations of a major announcement on Sunday. Some had gone so far as to imply that the nuclear options — the date for handing in the resignations — would be announced during the grand show. This didn't happen. Overall, the speeches of the main leaders added little to the narrative or the spectacle. Maryam Nawaz's speech was a bit of a damper after the fire she breathed in Multan and even Nawaz Sharif's speech seemed tame in comparison to his previous ones — no names

were mentioned, no new allegations were made. Neither was there any excitement over a fresh launch like that of Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari.

This will, of course, mean that in the coming days all attention will be focused on the possible and plausible rifts within the opposition over the resignations. This became the much-talked-about issue after Maryam Nawaz's *aar ya paar* (now or never) speech; her announcement was interpreted as a signal that the PDM would submit its resignations from the assemblies but the PDM meetings could not reach a consensus on the issue for obvious reasons. The vague references to the resignations on Sunday night make it evident that for the moment only the long march to Islamabad is possible. And the government will now play up the idea of the PDM differences and its lack of consensus.

But this tactical victory for the government on the issue of the resignations will be just that — a tactical victory. It does not mean the pressure on the government will ease much. As long as the opposition is holding *jalsas* and making speeches, television channels will continue to broadcast their speeches and the bayanah about a selected and incompetent government will continue to echo; especially as the harsher comments by Nawaz Sharif (and occasionally Fazlur Rehman) are blocked.

Hence, this government will have to do far more than count the number of people at the opposition's *jalsas* or hold forth about the ulterior motives of its members. As mentioned earlier, the government realises the need for a little less aggression and a little more rapprochement (and rightly so) but far more needs to be done if the government is willing to recognise that it is the government and consequently, it bears a larger burden to defuse the situation.

The prime minister has said that he is willing to talk to the opposition

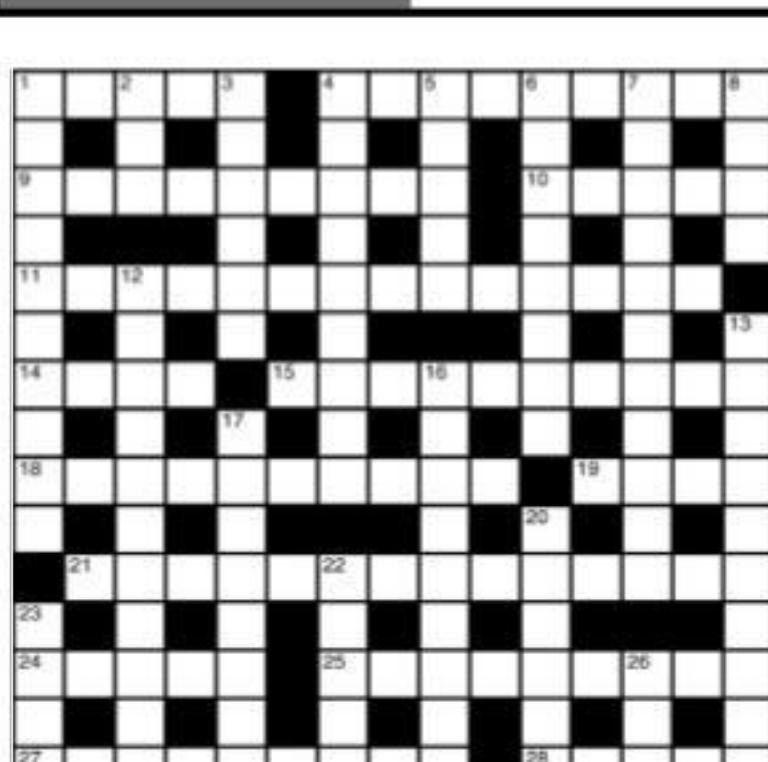
and that parliament is the best place for a national dialogue. But this is really not enough. He needs to reach out to the opposition more actively, quickly and not just in general speeches; and at the same time, direct attacks — such as calling them thieves or describing their *jalsas* as pathetic — need to be discontinued. And the prime minister is capable of it; if he can visit the ailing Chaudhry Shujaat after months of tension and cold relations, he can also reach out to the opposition. A meeting on Covid-19 could be a start; if the opposition refuses, it will, if nothing else, shift the blame of intransigence elsewhere. At best (for the government), it may lead some of the parties to accept the overture.

And his own experience should be the most important lesson for him here. When he announced his own 2014 long march, the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif waited till the last evening before the march to make a televised speech in which he offered an investigation into the 2013 election. But by then, it was too late. If Imran Khan doesn't take hold of the initiative right now, it may be too late for him, closer to the march. And he will do this only when he realises that the loss he faces is not just the loss of government — long-drawn-out opposition movements can and do weaken states and societies through the instability they cause even if they do not change the power equation drastically.

Too many of us are busy predicting a conflagration to realise that sometimes the worst outcome is not a showdown but the constant threat of one. And similarly, the prime minister should not assume that because the government doesn't face an uncerroneous departure, he doesn't need to fear the PDM. Now that the *jalsas* phase of the PDM is over, it is his turn to act.

Dawn/ANN.

NO 28166



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|----|---|
| 1 | Attack in which sergeant-major captures rocky hill (5) | 24 | Pity about Europe wasting its money, some in India (5) | 7 | Problems aired here — such as pain associated with spine? (5,6) |
| 4 | Such radio stations apparently incompatible with 11? (5-4) | 25 | Article on a smart UK Foreign relations manual (4,5) | 8 | Language Beardsley uses occasionally (4) |
| 9 | Bird having resources — tail first — to break perch (9) | 27 | Deceived in trick getting furious inside (7,2) | 12 | Frantically get appeal in for first offence? (6,5) |
| 10 | Jeremy the player for certain clubs (5) | 28 | One renewed after cuts put an end to by Labour (5) | 13 | Combine with two sailors in an investment producing capital (5,5) |
| 11 | Ode by Gogol then adapted for book and film (3,4,7) | 1 | Precious stones beneath rock layers in plots (10) | 16 | Girl having paddle round saw manor demolished (9) |
| 12 | Gloomy music fan acquired heroin (4) | 2 | Strange characters picked up in Buckland Down (3) | 17 | Cheeky little devil — pupil chucking stone (8) |
| 13 | Keep firm grasp in wrestling (10) | 3 | Substance found in mass on Dart (6) | 20 | Places echo after shell goes off in coup (6) |
| 14 | In Paris my new term involves painting here? (10) | 4 | Massacre earl's thug arranged (9) | 22 | Retreat to north to cover country devastatingly attacked (5) |
| 15 | Volcano initially falling under Jovian influence (4) | 5 | Best garden party? (5) | 23 | Swamp creature caught by enormous bird (4) |
| 16 | Country dad eats acceptable fowl with mint (5,3) | 6 | Dither insanely about a good period for retirement activity (5,3) | 26 | Potentially poisonous creature dispenses with a fox (3) |
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NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

OCCASIONAL NOTE

With the annual report of the Calcutta Fire Brigade just gazetted is given the usual tabular statement showing the different classes of buildings in which fires occurred during the year and the causes of the outbreaks. Excluding 124 false alarms, there were 425 fires during the year 1919-20. Half the number - 211 - occurred in dwellings, and a large proportion of the dwelling house fires were due to "sparks from furnaces and chulas," which accounted for 77 outbreaks. With the fires ascribed to chulas might be bracketed 24 others caused by "cooking-stoves and other fires left unattended and unprotected," so that nearly half the fires occurring in dwellings may be traced to carelessness in the use of stoves. Smoking is another subject which figures rather largely in the statistics, 30 fires being attributed to this cause; but, as usual, there is nothing to show whether the cigarette, the cigar, the pipe, the hookah, or the careless handling of matches, is the chief source of danger. Three outbreaks are ascribed to "matches thrown down," and one to "children playing with matches." From all this it appears that a little ordinary care in the use of stoves and lights, and in smoking, would suffer to prevent most of the fires occurring in dwellings and would save the Fire Brigade a good deal of work.

POWER HOUSE EMPLOYEES STRIKE IN DELHI

As a sequel to yesterday's notice the entire Traffic and Power House Staff in the Electric Tramway and Lighting Company is on strike. Mr. A. McDougall, Acting General Manager of the Company, conferred this morning with Mr. Asaf Ali, regarding the demands of the men. The Manager told Mr. Asaf Ali that he had written to the Directors nearly 3 weeks ago recommending 15 per cent increase in wages and 10 per cent bonus to the traffic and power station employees. He also agreed to consider the question of sick leave on half pay, 21 days privilege leave, double wages on any four festival days in a year, and sympathetic consideration of cases of hurt. The management were doing their best to meet the situation.

FORMATION OF ARMY VETERINARY CORPS

The Secretary of State for India has approved in principle the formation of an Army Veterinary Corps, India, which will combine in one organisation all the personnel employed in the veterinary supervision of animals of the Army in India and engaged in their treatment. The Corps will eventually include and absorb the establishment of officers, Royal Army Veterinary Corps serving on a tour of Indian service. The British warrant and non-commissioned officers of the Unattached List, Indian Veterinary Corps, the veterinary assistants of Indian Veterinary Corps, and those serving under agreements extra to establishment until absorbed or otherwise disposed of, the veterinary establishments of veterinary hospitals of remount depots, the veterinary establishment of the Cavalry School at Saugor, the clerical establishment of the Army Veterinary Service in India.

SIR GEORGE LLOYD AND INDIAN ART

Bombay, Dec 15
Speaking at the opening of the exhibition of mural paintings at the Sir Jamsetjee School of Arts yesterday evening, His Excellency the Governor, referring to the attitude of the Government towards art said: From the time of Plato onwards it has been recognised that a state cannot afford to neglect the aesthetic environment of its citizens. In practice however, it is considerably handicapped in doing what it would like for art because there are constantly more strictly utilitarian objects which seem to have the first claim on the public funds. What the Government can do is to provide opportunities for obtaining elementary instruction in technique. We can also follow this up by seeing that the best ideals of art are presented for study, in order to build up good tradition.

HOWRAH BRIDGE

A resolution on the Administration Report on the Howrah Bridge for the year 1919-20, appears in the Calcutta Gazette. It states that the year under review began with deficit on revenue account of Rs 3,22,159. The income of the bridge during the year amounted to Rs 3,91,254 against Rs 3,74,648 of the preceding year. The expenditure was Rs 3,51,994 against Rs 2,93,863 of the previous year, so that the closing deficit on the 31st March 1920, was Rs 2,82,899. The number of accidents during the year was 37 as compared with 35,39,17 and 11 in the preceding four years. The type of the proposed new bridge has not been finally decided, but this important question is under the careful consideration of Government in close communication with all the public bodies concerned.

THUMBNAILS

Spectrum auction guidelines: The Union Cabinet is likely to approve on Wednesday guidelines for the next round of spectrum auction which may begin in the last week of January, sources said. The upcoming auction may not have radiowaves identified for 5G services. "The spectrum auction note has been submitted to the Cabinet. It may come for a decision at Wednesday's meeting," a source said.

PTI

PLI scheme: The host of financial and digital reforms undertaken by the government along with the enhanced coverage of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme have the potential to catapult India as a global manufacturing hub and generate many jobs, Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur said on Tuesday.

PTI

itel: itel launched its first phone with body temperature monitoring facility at anytime, anywhere. The product aims to empower the masses to be self-responsible and adhere to moral responsibilities to keep themselves safe during the Covid pandemic by monitoring body temperature. It is available at a price of Rs 1049, said a Press release statement.

SNS

Paysharp: Paysharp, one of the leading B2B virtual account and payment solution providers in India, offering flat transaction charges to enterprises. It offers Rs 12 for all transactions beyond Rs 2,000. The fintech startup is now looking to expand its B2B product offerings and increase footprints pan-India. Paysharp is trying to empower businesses while keeping their digital-adaptation costs low, said a Press release statement.

SNS

Digital transformation: Biz Analyst, a business management app that allows real-time sales trends, inventory updates, and invoices on the go, reported a growth of over 1,000 family owned businesses and wholesalers in and around Delhi adopting the app to drive digital transformation and efficiency. The app has seen massive adoption by manufacturers, traders, distributors, and wholesalers, says a Press release statement.

SNS

Flipkart Internet: Flipkart Internet, which operates the B2C online marketplace, has seen its consolidated loss widen to Rs 1,950.5 crore for the financial year ended March 2020, even as revenue grew about 32 per cent, as per regulatory documents. The company had registered a consolidated loss after tax of Rs 1,625.7 crore in the previous fiscal, according to Registrar of Companies filing - shared by market intelligence firm Tofler. PTI

Economy to contract 7.7 per cent in current fiscal: S&P

A faster recovery keeps more of economy's supply side intact and can set up more prolonged growth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday raised India's growth projection for the current financial year to (-)7.7 per cent from (-)9 per cent estimated earlier on rising demand and falling COVID-19 rates. For the next financial year 2021-22, S&P projected growth to rebound to 10 per cent. Its revision in growth forecast for the current fiscal reflects a faster-than-expected recovery in the September quarter. "Rising demand and falling infection rates have tempered our expectation of COVID-19's hit on the Indian economy. S&P Global Ratings has revised real GDP growth to negative 7.7 per cent for the year ending March 2021, from negative 9 per cent previously," S&P said in a statement. A faster recovery keeps more of the economy's supply side intact and can set India up for more prolonged above-average growth during the recovery phase, it added. India's gross domestic product (GDP) fell

7.5 per cent in the July-September quarter, against a contraction of 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter. Earlier this month, Fitch Ratings also revised its growth forecast for India to (-)9.4 per cent, from (-)10.5 per cent, on signs of economic revival, while the Asian Development Bank said the economy is likely to contract 8 per cent as against the earlier forecast of 9 per cent contraction, on faster recovery. Last month, Moody's upped India's growth forecast to (-)10.6 per cent for the current financial year, from its earlier estimate of (-)11.5 per cent. In the statement, S&P on Tuesday said India is learning to live with the virus, even though the coronavirus pandemic is far from defeated. However, the reported cases have fallen by more than half from peak levels, to about 40,000 per day. "It is no surprise that India is following the path of most economies across Asia-Pacific in experiencing a faster-than-expected recovery in manufacturing production," S&P Global Ratings' Asia-Pacific Chief Econ-

omist Shaun Roache said. Manufacturing output was about 3.5 per cent higher in October 2020 when compared to the year-ago period, while the output of consumer durables rose by almost 18 per cent. "This recovery underscores one of the more striking aspects of the COVID-19 shock -- the resilience of manufacturing supply chains. Again, as with demand, some slowing of output momentum has emerged more recently," S&P said. The agency said the demand for goods -- not services -- drives India's recovery, and household savings have risen due to an uncertain outlook and constraints of social distancing. But, the demand for durables is rising, it added. "If consumers cannot or will not spend money on a vacation or eating out,

they will divert some of that spending to goods," S&P said. It added that vehicle sales, both two-wheelers and cars, have rebounded sharply since the trough seen in the first quarter of this fiscal, although momentum has faded a touch recently. "External demand for goods is also buoyant, driven by the global trade cycle, with shipments to China especially strong." It said the vigour of this economic recovery is surprising, especially given the tepidity of policies underpinning it. "We have long pointed out that the fiscal impulse (the addition to domestic demand from higher spending and lower taxes) will be only about 1 percentage point of GDP this year. This contrasts with the robust fiscal responses of India's emerging-market

peers, which are four or five times larger," S&P added.

The Reserve Bank of India has also been careful about cutting its policy rate, especially as higher inflation has pushed real rates to exceptionally low levels, it said.

S&P added that it continues to see some upside risks to our forecasts, especially for the financial year 2021-22.

"Rolling out vaccines to India's huge population will be challenging. However, the aim to inoculate 300 million people by August 2021, combined with an existing high infection rate in some parts of the country, could result in a pronounced decline in reported cases later next year."

"This would speed up the transition to a new normal," it said. Roache said that the new forecasts suggest more small businesses can survive and more workers can hold onto their jobs or find new ones. "The less intense and the more transient the effect of the pandemic on economic activity, the lower the permanent damage."

Benchmarks inch up to fresh highs; HDFC twins sparkle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 15 DECEMBER

Equity benchmark Sensex recovered from early losses to end marginally up at its new closing record on Tuesday, led by gains in index majors HDFC twins. The 30-share BSE index ended 9.71 points or 0.02 per cent higher at 46,263.17. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 9.70 points or 0.05 per cent to close at its fresh all-time high of 13,567.85.

Bajaj Finance was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging around 5 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finserv, HDFC, Tech Mahindra, HDFC Bank, UltraTech Cement and Tata Steel.

On the other hand, HUL, Nestle India, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, SBI, TCS and ITC were among the laggards.



S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday raised India's growth projection for the current financial year to (-)7.7 per cent from (-)9 per cent estimated earlier on rising demand and falling COVID-19 infection rates.

Meanwhile, retail inflation declined to 6.93 per cent in November on softer food prices, though it remained

above the comfort level of the Reserve Bank, official data released after market hours on Monday showed.

The rupee closed 8 paise lower at 73.63 (provisional) against the US dollar.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net buyers in the capital markets as they purchased shares worth Rs 2,264.38 crore on Monday, according to provisional exchange data.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Seoul, Hong Kong and Tokyo closed on a negative note.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading with gains in early deals.

The global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.16 per cent to USD 50.37 per barrel.

BPCL to consider buying Oman Oil stake in Bina refinery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

Privatisation-bound Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) has said its board will on Thursday consider buying out Oman Oil Company in the Bina refinery project in Madhya Pradesh.

BPCL board will also consider merging Bharat Gas Resources Ltd (BGRL) with itself, the company said in a filing to the stock exchanges on Tuesday.

BPCL holds 63.68 per cent stake in Bharat Oman Refineries Ltd (BORL), which built and operates a 7.8 million tonne oil refinery at Bina in Madhya Pradesh.

The company board will on December 17 "consider a proposal to approach the Madhya Pradesh government for acquiring 2.69 crore



of 36.62 per cent of equity shares in BORL from OQ S.A.O.C. (formerly known as Oman Oil Company S.A.O.C.)," it said.

This would amount to the acquisition of 88.8 crore equity shares from OQ.

The board would also consider a proposal to approach the Madhya Pradesh government for acquiring 2.69 crore

warrants held by it in BORL.

The meeting would also consider "merger of Bharat Gas Resources Ltd (a wholly-owned subsidiary of BPCL) with BORL," the filing said.

BPCL incorporated BGRL for handling the natural gas business in June 2018. It won the licence to retail CNG to automobiles and piped natural gas to households and

industries in 13 Geographical Areas under round 9 and round 10 of City Gas Distribution (CGD).

BGRL is also planning to put up an LNG import terminal along the East Coast of India.

Oman Oil had recently expressed interest to divest its stake in BORL.

BORL became a subsidiary of BPCL in March this year when it converted warrants into shares taking the state-owned refiner's stake in the erstwhile equal joint venture to 63.38 per cent.

In addition to the equity investment in BORL, BPCL had subscribed to zero per cent compulsorily convertible debentures of Rs 1,000 crore and share warrants of Rs 1,585.68 crores which on conversion would turn BORL into a subsidiary of BPCL.

For certain sectors such

as telecom, media, pharmaceuticals and insurance, government approval is required for foreign investors.

There are nine sectors where FDI is prohibited and that are lottery business, gambling and betting, chit funds, Nidhi company, real estate business, and manufacturing of cigars, cheroots, cigarillos and cigarettes using tobacco. Under the government approval route, foreign investors have to take prior approval of the respective ministry/department.

Through the automatic approval route, the investor just has to inform the RBI after the investment is made. Further, the minister invited investors to invest in India as the country holds opportunities in several areas. "India is a land of opportunities. I invite you to board the bus of development, growth and prosperity... We welcome you with

India is very special & important for us: Zuckerberg

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

Facebook co-founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg today said India is a very special and important country with a remarkable entrepreneurship culture, as he sought to push deeper the just-launched payments services that allow users to make payments over WhatsApp.

Last month, Facebook-owned WhatsApp received approval from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for rolling out its payments services in India. In 2018, WhatsApp started testing its UPI-based payments services in India - a global first - with about a million users. "We just launched WhatsApp



payments in India last month - now you can send money to your friends and family through WhatsApp, as easily as sending a message. That was possible because of the UPI system that has been built in India," Zuckerberg said during a fireside chat with Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani.

He said the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) makes it easy for anyone to instantly accept payments across different apps.

Referring to late Dhirubhai Ambani's vision of affordable connectivity in the country, Zuckerberg said, "...today Indians can communicate with one another for less than the cost of a postcard and that's what we've tried to do with messaging... and hopefully we can do

pete with players like Paytm, Google Pay, Walmart-owned PhonePe and Amazon Pay in the country. In April, Facebook announced an investment of \$5.7 billion (Rs 43,574 crore) in Jio Platforms.

"I have no hesitation in going on record, that it is your investment that set the ball rolling. Not only for Jio, but for the Indian FDI which has been the largest-ever in its history," Mukesh Ambani said. He added that the partnership between Jio and Facebook will "actually demonstrate that it is great for India, Indians, and small Indian businesses". And I believe Mark, that our actions will speak louder than our words in the coming months and years," Ambani said. Ambani stated that technology, with all the digitization steps that India has taken, will democratise wealth and value creation for individuals and small businesses.

Noting that WhatsApp and Jio have hundreds of millions of subscribers in India, Ambani said Jio Mart retail service aspires to "serve tens of millions of small shopkeepers in India, who are the bedrock of employment". means Jio brings digital connectivity. WhatsApp, now with WhatsApp Pay brings digital interactivity, and the ability to move to close transactions and create value, and Jio Mart brings the unmatched online and offline retail opportunity, that gives our small shops which exist in villages and small towns in India, a chance to digitise and be part of anybody else in the world," he added. Zuckerberg

said India has introduced a lot of innovation in areas like education and financial inclusion, and that decisions taken here, shape global discussion about how technology can drive more economic opportunity and better outcomes for people and businesses. He said India is an important country for the social media giant and many of the new features rolled out in its various products are tested here first. "India is building local capabilities and tech capacity to power innovative new business models and provide Indian citizens access to digital and financial inclusion. So, the decisions that are made here, they shape global discussion about how technology can drive more economic opportunity and better outcomes for people," he said.

In the meeting, the council discussed measures which may be required to be taken to ensure consistent support of the financial sector for achieving faster real economic growth and achieving the overall macroeconomic targets, while continuing to maintain financial stability. The Council also discussed the budget proposals submitted by RBI and other Reg-

Demand for chemicals, petrochemicals to grow 9 per cent per annum

D V SADANANDA GOWDA
FERTILISER MINISTER



business

Farmers' protest resulting in daily loss of ₹3,500 cr: Assocham

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

Industry body Assocham on Tuesday urged the Centre and farmers' organisations to resolve the impasse over the new agri laws, saying that the protests are inflicting a heavy blow to the economies of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and J&K. "A daily loss of Rs 3,000-3,500 crore is resulting in the economies of the region from the value chain and transport disruption because of the protests," according to a rough estimate.

Assocham President Niranjan Hirandani said, "The size of the combined economies of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and J&K is about Rs 18 lakh crore. With the ongoing farmers' agitation and blockade of roads, toll plazas and railways, the economic activities have come to a halt."

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said in the last 20 days, trade and other activities of about Rs 5,000 crore have been affected in Delhi and its surrounding states. According to an estimate, about 30 to 40 per cent of the goods coming to Delhi have been affected by the movement of farmers, which is adversely affecting the trade and other activities of Delhi and neighbouring states, the traders' body stated.

the ongoing recovery from the economic contraction due to COVID-19.

Assocham's Hirandani observed that industries such as textiles, auto components, bicycles, sports goods which cater significantly to the export markets would not be able to fulfil their orders, ahead of Christmas, harming the industry's goodwill among the global buyers.

Recovering from the harsh COVID-19 blow, the Indian economy needs to double down on growth which is possible only with a conducive environment for industrial activities, investment including the Foreign Direct Investment, Assocham stated.

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peers, which are four or five times larger," S&P added.

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"Rolling out vaccines to India's huge population will be challenging. However, the aim to inoculate 300 million people by August 2021, combined with an existing high infection rate in some parts of the country, could result in a pronounced decline in reported cases later next year."

"This would speed up the transition to a new normal," it said. Roache said that the new forecasts suggest more small businesses can survive and more workers can hold onto their jobs or find new ones. "The less intense and the more transient the effect of the pandemic on economic activity, the lower the permanent damage."

Govt extends deadline for completing GST anti-profiteering probe till March 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER



The government has extended the deadline till March 31, 2021 for completing GST anti-profiteering investigations, which were to be completed by November this year.

Through a notification, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) extended the deadline for completion of such investigations by authorities, like DGAP, under section 171 of GST Act, till March 31, 2021.

In September, CBIC had extended the deadline till November 30, 2020. Section 171 of GST Act deals with anti-profiteering measures.



President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris should be vaccinated for Covid-19 as soon as possible

US INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERT ANTHONY FAUCI
ON US COVID-19 VACCINATION

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020

09

Singapore police investigates social media posts supporting Indian farmers' protest

SINGAPORE, 15 DECEMBER

The Singapore Police on Tuesday said it is investigating social media posts showing people gathering here without permission in support of protesting Indian farmers and issued a "strong reminder" that it would not allow assemblies that advocate political causes of other countries.

Thousands of farmers are currently camping at Delhi's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh since 26 November in protest against three new farm laws.

"The police did not grant any permits for these cause-based assemblies," the authorities in Singapore said in a news release on Tuesday.

The Singapore Police Force issued a "strong reminder" that organising or participating in a public assembly without a police permit in the city-state is illegal, adding that it would not grant any permit for assemblies that advocate political causes of other countries.

"Foreigners visiting or living in Singapore should abide by our laws," Channel News Asia reported quoting the SPF.

Lahore rally case: Opp leaders booked, PDM asks Imran to quit

11-party opposition alliance set 31 January deadline for Prime Minister Imran Khan to step down

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, 15 DECEMBER

Pakistan Democratic Movement's top leaders, including PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz, were booked on Tuesday for causing irreparable damage to a national asset after its Minar-e-Pakistan rally here, as the 11-party opposition alliance set 31 January deadline for Prime Minister Imran Khan to step down or face long march on Islamabad.

The opposition alliance held its final anti-government rally in Lahore on Sunday despite a ban on the gathering of more than 300 people owing to an increase in Covid-19 cases across the country. The PDM has been holding massive rallies since its inception in September to seek Khan's ouster and press the powerful military to stop interfering in politics.

Lahore police booked Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vice president Maryam Nawaz, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former National Assembly speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, former railways minister Saad Rafique and 125 others under different sections of the Pakistan Penal Code for breaking the locks of Minar-e-Pakistan gates, damaging the official property and violating the Covid-19 guidelines.

The FIR states that the PDM caused irreparable damage to the sanctity of a national heritage - Minar-e-Pakistan. It includes 15 counts of violations, including a violation of coronavirus standard operating procedures and the Sound System Act.

Police also registered an FIR against Mian Imran and Mian Shahid for facilitating the PDM Lahore rally on Sunday by selling 7,000 chairs.

PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Auranzeb said this FIR is a proof of the success of the PDM rally in Lahore. "The FIR is a reflection of a fascist mindset of puppet prime minister Imran Khan," she said.

The opposition parties on Monday evening signed a Lahore Declaration during a meeting at PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif's Jati Umra residence, which was attended by PML convenor Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Pakistan People's



Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan president Shah Owais Noorani, BNP-M chief Akhtar Mengal, Awami National Party's Mian Iftikhar and other leaders of the coalition.

"We ask the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government to resign by 31 January. In case the government does not step down the date of the long march will be announced on 1 February. We ask the people of Pakistan to start preparations for the long march from today," Rehman told reporters after the meeting.

"Prime Minister Khan has time till 31 January to resign from the office. He is under pressure that is why he is talking about NRO (deal). The opposition can hold talks (with the powers that be) only after dissolution of assem-

bles," he said, adding that the opposition lawmakers would submit their resignations to their leadership by 31 December.

Terming the Lahore rally as "historic," Rehman said it revived the memory of 1940 gathering in connection of Pakistan resolution here.

He said the PDM meeting condemned the effort to control the electronic media by the ISPR (media wing of the Pakistan military) for a negative propaganda against the rally and putting pressure on TV anchors. "We are fighting for freedom of the media. They want to make the media a personal property which we will not allow," he said.

Maryam said the time to hold talks with the "selected (Imran) and selectors (establishment)" was over. "The selected and the selectors will have to take the back

seats and now talks will be held with the people," she said.

Bilawal said the time has come for Imran Khan to go home after resigning.

The Lahore Declaration of the opposition parties says there has been unprecedented price hike, inflation, unemployment and social injustice and the selected government and its facilitators are responsible for this. "The facilitators (the military establishment) had stolen the people's mandate in the 2018 election and imposed a 'hybrid and inefficient' government on the masses."

The opposition parties pledge that it will make sure that there is no interference of the institutions of "the establishment and intelligence" in politics and at the same time it will make the security institutions stronger on the professional lines.

The PDM has made it clear that nothing short of fresh elections is acceptable to it.

PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif has repeatedly blamed Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and spy agency ISI chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed for Pakistan's current situation.

Serial murder: Death for Japan Twitter killer

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO, 15 DECEMBER

Investigators said Shiraishi approached the victims via Twitter, offering to assist them with their suicidal wishes.

ed the victims' suicidal wishes, Shiraishi later said he killed them without their consent.

In the ruling, presiding Judge Naoki Yano said none of the victims agreed to be killed and that Shiraishi was fully responsible for their deaths, according to media reports.

He said the crime was extremely heinous and had caused fear and concern in a society where social media have become an indispensable part of everyday life, NHK public television reported.

Japan's suicide rate ranks among the world's highest. Following a recent decline, the number has climbed back this year as people were hit by the effects of the pandemic.

Japan's crime rate is relatively low, but it has experienced some recent high-profile killings.

In July 2016, a former employee of a home for the disabled allegedly killed 19 residents and injured more than 20 others.

TURTLE TSUNAMI



A turtle tsunami at a beach in Brazil on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AP

UK plans hefty fines, blocks on tech firms for harmful online content

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 15 DECEMBER

Home Secretary Priti Patel, social media sites, websites, apps and other services which host user-generated content or allow people to talk to others online will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content, such as child sexual abuse, terrorist material and suicide content.

The UK's regulatory body Office of Communications (Ofcom) is now confirmed as the regulator, which will also

have the power to block non-compliant services from being accessed in the country. We are giving internet users the protection they deserve and are working with companies to tackle some of the abuses happening on the web, said Patel. We will not allow child sexual abuse, terrorist material and other harmful content to fester on online platforms. Tech companies must put public safety first or face the

consequences, she said.

The new legislation also includes provisions to impose criminal sanctions on senior managers. The government said it will not hesitate to bring these powers into force should companies fail to take the new rules seriously for example, if they do not respond fully, accurately and in a timely manner to information requests from Ofcom. I'm unashamedly pro tech

but that can't mean a tech free for all. Today Britain is setting the global standard for safety online with the most comprehensive approach yet to online regulation, said Dowden.

We are entering a new age of accountability for tech to protect children and vulnerable users, to restore trust in this industry, and to enshrine in law safeguards for free speech. This proportionate new framework will ensure we

don't put unnecessary burdens on small businesses but give large digital businesses robust rules of the road to follow so we can seize the brilliance of modern technology to improve our lives, he said. Under the rules, tech platforms will be expected to do far more to protect children from being exposed to harmful content or activity such as grooming, bullying and pornography.

The most popular social media sites, with the largest audiences and high-risk features, will need to go further by setting and enforcing clear terms and conditions which explicitly state how they will handle content which is legal but could cause significant physical or psychological harm to adults.

Dame Melanie Dawes, Ofcom's Chief Executive, said: "Being online brings huge benefits, but four in five people have concerns about it."

Noun describing social distancing is Dutch word of the year

THE HAGUE, 15 DECEMBER

One-and-a-half-metre-society has been voted the Dutch word of the year by a (social) distance.

Anderhalvemetersamenleving, a compound noun describing life under the Dutch government's 1.5-metre (5-foot) social distancing requirement, was the runaway winner of a vote held by the Van Dale dictionary company.

The lengthy new word, which was added to the dictionary in April during the first spike in Dutch coronavirus infections, garnered just under 30 per cent of some 12,000 votes in the annual competition. The results were announced Tuesday, the day the Netherlands began a strict five-week lockdown to counter sharp rises in infections.

In second place with 11 per cent was *fabeltjesfuik* a noun which Van Dale defines as the "phenomenon that users of social media who are interested in conspiracies are offered more and more messages about conspiracies due to the operation of social media, which gradually leads them to believe in them."

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



CROSS

- 1 Former Indian coin (4)
- 3 Instrument of torture (4)
- 9 Once more (5)
- 10 Built (7)
- 11 Domesticated (4)
- 12 Line of descent (8)
- 14 Unconditional (11)
- 17 Food fish (8)
- 18 Deities (4)
- 22 Foolish (7)
- 23 Saying (5)
- 24 Border (4)
- 25 Depend (4)

DOWN

- 1 Blood deficiency (7)
- 2 Convent residents (4)
- 4 Following (5)
- 5 Bodily organ (6)
- 6 Final (4)
- 7 Charity (11)
- 8 Shortfall (7)
- 13 Keepsake (7)
- 15 Irregular (7)
- 16 Posts official (6)
- 18 Hold tightly (5)
- 20 Toboggan (4)
- 21 Labyrinth (4)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

& SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886,

54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

• Baroda Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280,

29958747

• Deen Dayal Upadhyay

25496320, 25494403

• Guru Tegh Bahadur

23717473, 2325320

• Punjab Roadways 23867842,

port 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838

• Rajasthan Roadways 23864470

• U.P. Roadways 23868709

FLIGHT INQUIRY

• AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 09910383838, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513186

• INDIGO AIRLINES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181

• AIR FRANCE Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)

• KUWAIT AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

SCRABBLE® BRAND



SUDOKU Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



Difficulty Level ★★★

Answer to previous puzzle

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with 3x3 boxes. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

Instructions: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each square. Add points of each word, using scoring system. Letters in words get 50% bonus if used as any letter in another word. All 7 letter words are in the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (Merriam-Webster's Official Scrabble Players Dictionary), Judging's tomorrow. 10-25

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Russian-American cooperation based on the principles of equality and mutual respect would meet the interests of the people in both countries

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN

CONGRATULATING JOE BIDEN ON WINNING THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

THUMBNAILS



Sandra Lindsay (L), an ICU nurse at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, being inoculated with Covid-19 vaccine in New York on Tuesday.

IANS

Indian national sentenced: A 44-year-old Indian national, Sethu Selvaraj, was sentenced to two years' jail and two strokes of the cane on Tuesday for molesting an Indonesian domestic worker in Singapore. He was convicted in August 2020.

PTI

Russian diplomat boycotted: Bosnia's Muslim and Croat representatives in the country's three-member presidency on Tuesday boycotted a meeting with Russian Foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, a major snub to Moscow's top diplomat. On his second day of the two-day visit to Bosnia, Lavrov was due to hold talks with all three presidency members.

AP

252 Indian Jews of Bnei Menashe community immigrate to Israel



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

TEL AVIV, 15 DECEMBER

A total of 252 Jews, including infants and elderly, from India's north-eastern Bnei Menashe community on Tuesday landed at the Ben-Gurion airport here as immigrants and to start a new life in Israel.

They include 50 families, 24 singles, four infants under the age of two, and 19 people over the age of 62. Their immigration was approved by the Israeli government in October.

After landing, they went through the immigration process.

"Some 90 per cent of them have completed their aliyah (immigration) permit process and soon all of them will be taken to a Shavei Israel absorption centre in the Nordinya moshav close to Netanya," a Bnei Menashe community member present at the airport told media.

Shavei Israel is a non-profit organisation which has led the movement to bring back Jews looking to immigrate to Israel.

"They will complete their quarantine period at the

moshav (an agricultural commune) and spend some three months there going through the formal absorption process, including learning Hebrew. Following that they are likely to be settled in the north in the Nazareth Illit area," he said.

Some 2,437 people from the Bnei Menashe community have so far immigrated to Israel from the north-eastern states of Manipur and Mizoram since 2003, the ministry of Immigration and Absorption said.

I am happy that I have the merit to bring the Bnei Menashe to Israel after many years of waiting, Minister for Immigration and Absorption Pnina Tamano-Shata said.

There have been intense debates around the Jewishness of Bnei Menashe in the past but in 2005, the then Chief Rabbi of the Sephardi community, Rabbi Shlomo Amar, recognised them as descendants of Israel paving the way for their immigration to Israel. The community claims that it belongs to the Menashe tribe, one of the ten tribes pushed into exile by the Assyrians some 2,700 years ago.

(REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE)

TENDER

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI (M.I.D.), DIVISION DHARMARI

Email: xeniddharmari@k.gov.in, xenphedharmari@k.gov.in

Notice inviting e-Tender

E-NIT NO:- 55 of 2020-21 Dated:- 11/12/2020

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of UT of J&K e-tenders (Two cover System) on Item Rate Basis are invited from reputed and resourceful contractors/Firms/companies/joint venture of repute, which should be uploaded on the e-Procurement web portal <http://www.jktenders.gov.in> up to last bidding date:- 18/12/2020 up to 06:00 PM for the subject work referred below to be received in the office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti [Mahore Irrigation] Division Dharmari and as per the details mentioned in this e-tender notification and to whom all the terms and conditions of detailed NIT /Tender Documents/ PWD Form No:- 25 double are acceptable. The detailed tender document and Specifications etc. can be downloaded on the e-procurement Portal <http://www.jktenders.gov.in>. The cost of tender documents (Non-refundable/ Non-Transferable) should be in the shape of e-Challan or Treasury Challan/ Receipt in favour of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti [Mahore Irrigation] Division Dharmari.-

S.N. 1 Name of work:- 1. WSS Channa Neoshi, 2. WSS Malikote
Adv. Cost of Work (s) in Lacs:- 1135.06, Earnest Money In Rs.: 2270120/-, Class of Contract :- Special "A", Cost of Document:- 3000/-, Period of completion:- 08 months, M.H.of Account:- 4215.
No. DIP/J-8654/20 Dated:- 15.12.2020

Mahore Irrigation Division Dharmari



In this 18 January, 2011 file photo, a protestor faces riot police officers during a demonstration against the party of Tunisian ruler Ben Ali, in the center of Tunis, Tunisia. Ten years ago, an uprising in Tunisia opened way for a wave of popular revolts against authoritarian rulers across the Middle East known as Arab Spring.

Many of his comrades from the protests languish in prisons in Egypt.

In December 2010, the uprising began in Tunisia and quickly spread from country to country in revolts against longtime authoritarian rulers. It became known as the Arab Spring, but for those who took to the streets, the call was revolution. The uprisings were about more than just removing autocrats. At their heart, they were a mass demand by the public for better governance and economies, rule of law, greater rights and, most of all, a voice in how their countries are run.

For a time after 2011, the surge toward those dreams seemed irreversible. Now they

are further than ever.

Those who keep the faith are convinced that yearning was real and remains or is even growing as people across the Arab world struggle with worsening economies and heavier repression. Eventually, they say, it will emerge again. We have lowered our dreams, said Amani Ballour, a Syrian doctor who ran an underground clinic treating casualties in the opposition enclave of Ghouta outside Damascus until it collapsed under a long, brutal siege by Syrian government forces in 2018. She was evacuated with other residents to northwest Syria, and from there she left the country.

The spirit of the demonstrations may be over for now ... But all those who suffered from the war, from the regime's repression, they won't put up with it, she said from Germany.

Activists and analysts have had a decade to pore over why it went wrong.

World

UK urged to rethink easing of restrictions around Christmas

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 15 DECEMBER

of the virus in geographic areas, limiting the number of people allowed to gather both inside and out of the home.

London will join other major cities in England, including Birmingham and Manchester, in the highest level of restrictions so-called Tier 3 on Wednesday.

This will involve, among other new restrictions, the closure of pubs and restaurants apart from takeouts and deliveries and the banning of anyone meeting someone else from another household. People living in Tier 3 areas, which from Wednesday will be the majority of the population of England, are not allowed to meet socially in a private garden or at most outdoor public venues with anybody they do not live with.

With restrictions being tightened in many parts of the country, questions are being raised about the wisdom of allowing a relaxation around Christmas. That's particularly true in Wales, where infections have risen especially fast over the past few weeks. London Mayor Sadiq Khan also called on the government to look at the easing of restrictions over Christmas.

"Thankfully, a unanimous Supreme Court immediately and completely rejected this effort. The Court sent a clear signal to President Trump and his allies that they would be no part of this unprecedented assault on our democracy," Biden said.

"And I respectfully suggest they do so now. If anyone didn't know it before, they know it now, Biden said as he referred to the allegations of voter fraud by Trump, which were dismissed by the US courts.

This legal manoeuvre by the Trump campaign was an effort by elected officials in one group of states to try to get the Supreme Court to wipe out the votes of more than 20 million Americans in other states and to hand the presidency to a candidate who lost the Electoral College, lost the

US courts.

Study: First 10 days after leaving hospital carry high risk for Covid-19 patients

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 15 DECEMBER

It compared post-hospital outcomes for nearly 2,200 veterans who survived their hospitalisation at 132 hospitals for Covid-19, with outcomes for nearly 1,800 similar patients who survived a stay for pneumonia that wasn't related to the disease, and 3,500 who survived a heart failure-related stay.

In the first two months, 9 per cent of the Covid-19 patients who survived hospitalisation had died, and almost 20 per cent had suffered a setback that sent them back to the hospital, the researchers said. That was in addition to the 18.5 per cent who had died during their hospitalisation, they said.

By comparing Covid-19 patients' long-term outcomes with those of other seriously ill patients, we see a pattern of even greater-than-usual risk right in the first one to two weeks, which can be a risky period for anyone," said John P. Donnelly, the study's first author and an epidemiologist at the University of Michigan.

All but 5 per cent of the patients were male, and half were Black, which is not nationally representative but focuses on two high-risk groups. However, within the veterans studied, the only factor that made a significant difference in outcomes was age, the researchers said.

About half of veterans in their 70s and 80s died in the 60 days after leaving the hospital, they said.

The 2,179 Covid-19 patients spent a total of 27,496 days in the hospital.

Boko Haram claims abduction of Nigerian students in North

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LAGOS (NIGERIA), 15 DECEMBER

tion permitted by Allah and his Holy Prophet, the paper quoted Shekau as saying.

There has been no independent verification of the audio message but Shekau in the past has released video and audio messages on Boko Haram's behalf.

Nigerian presidential spokesman Garba Shehu said in a statement Monday that the kidnappers had made contact and discussions were already on, pertaining to the safety and return of the children to their homes. Shehu said nothing about the identity of the abductors.

Armed groups operate in northwestern Nigeria where Katsina state is located. It was originally believed that the attackers were bandits, who sometimes work with Boko Haram. Government said a joint rescue operation was launched on Saturday.

After Arab Spring, a decade of upheaval and lost hopes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAIRO, 15 DECEMBER

Was it real? It's all been erased so completely, so much blood has been shed and destruction

wreaked over the past decade. The idea that there was a moment when millions across the Middle East wanted freedom and change so much that they took to the streets seems like romantic nostalgia.

It was very brief, man. It was so brief, said Badr Elbendary, an Egyptian activist.

Elbendary was blinded on

the third day of his country's revolt in 2011, when security forces shot him in the face. It happened during a clash that became iconic among Egypt's revolutionaries, when protesters and police battled on a bridge over the Nile in Cairo for hours, ending with the police scattering.

Today, he's in the United States. He can't return home.

It happened during a clash that became iconic among Egypt's revolutionaries, when protesters and police battled on a bridge over the Nile in Cairo for hours, ending with the police scattering.

Today, he's in the United States. He can't return home.

It became known as the Arab Spring, but for those who took to the streets, the call was revolution. The uprisings were about more than just removing autocrats. At their heart, they were a mass demand by the public for better governance and economies, rule of law, greater rights and, most of all, a voice in how their countries are run.

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Secular liberals failed to present a cohesive front or leadership. Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood overplayed their hand. Labor organisations, neutered by decades of autocratic rule, couldn't step up as a powerful mobilizer or political force.

It's perhaps no coincidence that the countries with some success, Tunisia and Sudan, both had strong labor and professional movements.

The international scene was pitted against the uprisings. The United States and Europe were muddled in their responses, torn between their rhetoric about backing democracy and their interest in stability and worries about Islamists. In the end, they largely listened to the latter. Gulf monarchies used oil wealth to smother any revolutionary tide and back reactionary powers.

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Display model of brain tissue

The human brain is perhaps the most complex organic structure there is

— ANANTHANARAYANAN

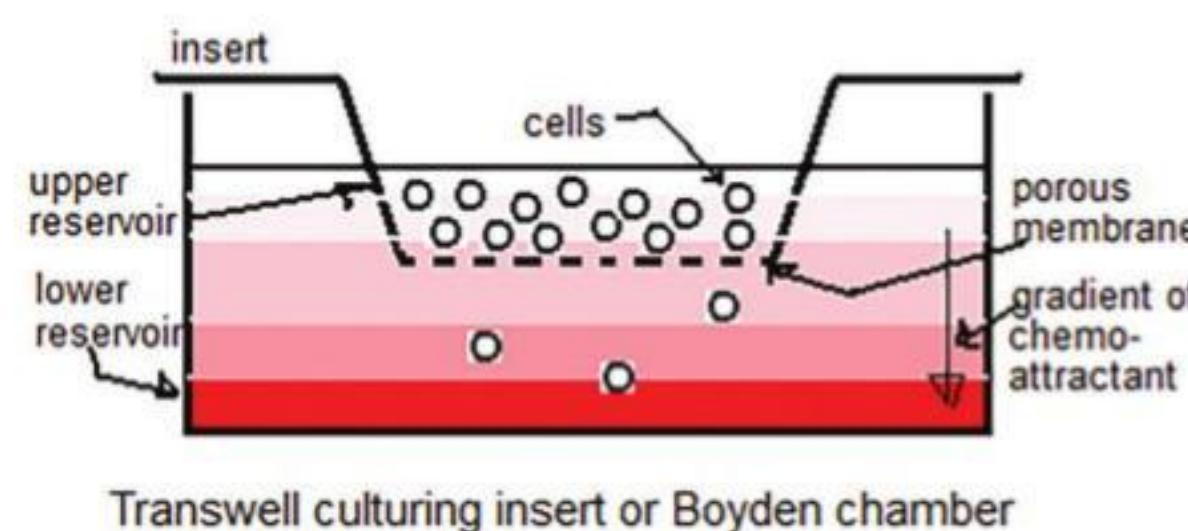
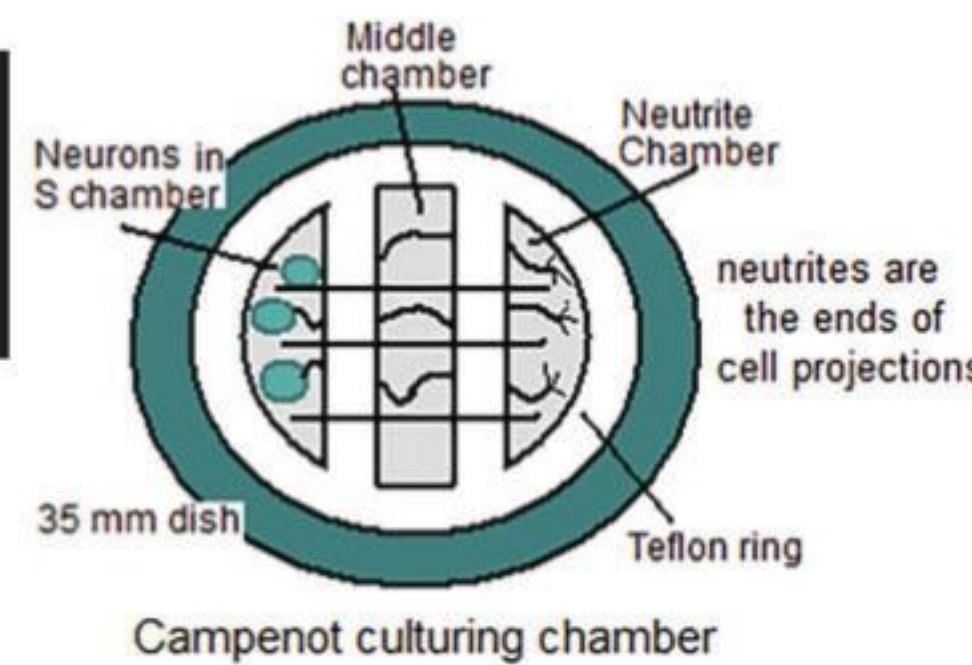
The human brain has a hundred billion neurons, or nerve cells, and a trillion supporting cells. The brains cells train themselves to carry out tasks of cognition, reasoning, automation and memory, in ways that baffle computer scientists. But, the complexity of its functions apart, the living brain is a delicate organ, and a study of its physical structure is not within easy reach.

Hsih-Yin Tan, Hansang Cho and Luke P Le, from the National University of Singapore, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea, University of California at Berkeley, Harvard Medical School and Brigham Women's Hospital, Boston, in a review article in the journal, *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, recapitulate current laboratory methods to get a glimpse of the brain's working. With the help of a scaffold that holds human nerve cells, the methods seek to create a model of a bit of brain, that allows conditions that lead to different brain diseases to be simulated and studied, the paper says.

The brain, being, quite literally, the nerve centre of the body, needs both protection and nourishment. In respect of nourishment, the brain receives blood supply – three quarters of a litre, which is 15 per cent of the blood circulating in the body, every minute. The supply comes through two main sets of arteries, the carotid arteries to the front of the brain and the vertebral arteries that supply the rear parts of the brain. While the arteries are "autoregulated", to keep up the supply of blood, the two artery systems are interconnected, so that supply continues even if one stream is blocked.

As for protection, the brain is kept separated or quarantined, one may say, from physical contact, even contact with the bloodstream. A system of tissue, known as the blood-brain barrier, only permits what the brain needs, which is oxygen, glucose and nutrients, like amino acids, to pass from the blood to the brain, and not any infection, things dissolved in the blood, or some large molecules. Antibodies and immune cells are kept out, even therapeutic agents are not admitted. Within the brain, however, there is a system to receive, by diffusion, what the brain cells need, and to evacuate waste.

The paper explains that this system, which separates brain tissue from the bloodstream, while keeping the environment within the brain steady, is a key component of brain function. Damage to the system, mechanical or biological, results in the entry of harmful substances and disturbing the internal balance, leading to damage



age and loss of brain cells. Conditions like formation of plaque in the blood vessels in the brain could increase the pressure and lead to rupture of blood vessels, which could also come about if there is physical injury, like a blow to the head.

These, and other brain conditions that arise from genetic or pathological causes, need invasive study to understand and analyse. As it is not practical to carry out such studies in a living brain, the recourse has been to animal studies. Animal studies are not effective, the paper says. For instance, studies on the brains of mice have shown that a gene that promotes a particular protein leads to conditions like Alzheimer's disease. However, as the ratios of neurons and other cells in animals are different from the ratio in humans, and there are different immunological responses, the results of the gene and Alzheimer's disease in mice cannot be carried over to draw conclusions about the human brain, the paper says.

There is hence a need, the paper says, for a functional model of the human brain, which can more realistically represent the characteristics and capture the way the brain responds to different kinds of stress. It is with such a "working model", the paper says, that we can understand brain mechanisms and the reasons for many brain diseases. This would bring brain research on par with other fields, like analysis of civil structures, or aircraft design, where parameters are varied and measured on models, as a means of discovering the behaviour of the real objects.

The paper carries out a review of the methods developed so far, to build a bit of the brain, using brain cell cultures, coaxed to form into desired structures with the help of mechanical scaffolds. Building on early methods of growing neuron cells on Petri dishes, were the *Campanot Chambers*, of specially shaped Petri dishes to guide the cell growth. An improvement was the *Transwell culturing insert* or the *Boyden chamber*, which separated cells by a porous membrane, the two sides to represent the "blood side" and the "brain side", which helped assess migration of cells across thin barriers.

More effective simulation of the 3-D structure of brain cells has been by growing cells in a 3-D microenvironment of a gel – to act as the



extracellular matrix for cell growth. These structures have enabled recording spontaneous activity of neural and other cells and key mechanisms and pathways. However, there are limitations, the paper says, in simulating how brain cells relate to surrounding tissue – and these are better modelled in the *brain organoid culture*.

Organoids form when cells, derived from stem cells, organise themselves into 3-D structures. These cultures can be shaped to replicate a great part of the complexity of an organ, or specific aspects, such as the kind of cells that grow in the culture. "A simplified version of an organ produced in vitro in three dimensions that shows realistic micro-anatomy," is one way it has been described. The advances in biomaterials engineering and genome editing techniques, to enable neural cells to be grown, have enabled such mini-brain models to be formed, the paper

says. The techniques have become sophisticated and we are able to create personalised brain models, using the patient's own body cells and re-enacting the path of disease progression.

Progress in organoids, with advances in 3-D printing techniques to build matrices to guide cell growth, has promoted brain modelling as a prime candidate for study of major neurological diseases. The development of Amyloid plaque, implicated in Alzheimer's disease, is one. Parkinson's disease, the second most common neurodegenerative disease, is another. Then, there is brain cancer. And next, what happens when there is traumatic injury to the brain. Mini brain modelling has the potential to develop precision and personalised therapy for diseases of the brain or the nervous system, the paper says.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in

PLUS POINTS
New whale species?



Scientists searching for a little-known species of beaked whale, which has only ever been found dead, believe they have stumbled across another new species of whale off Mexico's western Pacific coast. If confirmed, the new species would be a significant new discovery, and one among some of the planet's largest mammals.

The research team spotted three of the whales while on the lookout for Perrin's beaked whale, specimens of which have only ever been seen when they've been washed up dead on the shore. The team, led by the non-profit Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, were near Mexico's remote San Benito Islands on 17 November, when they saw the whales. But they didn't initially realise they were looking at what could be a previously unrecognised species.

"These animals popped to the surface right next to the boat," Jay Barlow, a marine mammal biologist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego told Reuters. "It was just a phenomenal encounter. It's very rare to even see a beaked whale, and to find a friendly group of beaked whales, it's even rarer," he said.

It was only when they later studied the photographs they took of the animals that they realised they could be looking at a species which has never been described before. The whales' teeth were unusually placed, Barlow said, and underwater recordings of the whales' calls also suggested they were unique.

The research team took three water samples in the vicinity of the animals in hopes of getting an "environmental DNA sample from their sloughed skin cells," which will be submitted for laboratory analysis. This could help determine whether it is a new species. Researchers hope to mount another trip next year to see if they can find both the new beaked whales and Perrin's beaked whale. Beaked whales are named for their pointy, beak-like snouts, which resemble those of dolphins. They are found mostly in remote waters, such as those off the San Benito Islands.

Despite their large size – growing up to five metres (16.4 feet) long, they can be difficult for humans to observe as they tend to swim and feed mostly at depths of over 900 metres (3,000 feet), surfacing only occasionally for air. At such depths, the animals have a better chance of avoiding their main predator, killer whales.

— THE INDEPENDENT/AGENCIES

TRAINING YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Vaccines against Sars-CoV-2 will have side effects – and that's a good thing

supplemented with synthetic danger signals, which immunologists refer to as "adjuvants."

Adjuvants are safe but designed to inflame

To make vaccines more effective, whole labs have been dedicated to the testing and development of new adjuvants. All are designed with the same basic purpose – to kick the immune system into action in a way that maximises the effectiveness and longevity of the response. In doing so, we maximise the number of people that will benefit from the vaccine and the length of time those people are protected.

To do this, we take advantage of the same sensors that your immune system uses to sense damage in an active infection. That means that while they will stimulate an effective immune response, they will do so by producing temporary inflammatory effects. At a cellular level, the vaccine triggers inflammation at the injection site. Blood vessels in the area become a little more "leaky" to help recruit immune cells into the muscle tissue, causing the area to become red and swell. All of this kicks off a full-blown immune response in a lymph node somewhere nearby that will play out over the course of weeks.

In terms of symptoms, this can result in redness and swelling at the injection site, stiffness and soreness in the muscle, tenderness and swelling of the local lymph nodes and, if the vaccine is potent enough, even fever (and that associated generally crappy feeling). This is the balance of vaccine design – maximising protection and benefits while minimising their uncomfortable, but necessary, side effects. That's not to say that serious side effects don't occur – they do – but they are exceedingly rare. Two of the most discussed serious side effects, anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction) and Guillain-Barré Syndrome (nerve damage due to inflammation), occur

at a frequency of less than one in 500,000 doses.

Vaccination against Sars-CoV-2

Early data suggest that the mRNA vaccines in development against SARS-CoV-2 are highly effective – upwards of 90 per cent. That means they are capable of stimulating robust immune responses, complete with sufficient danger signalling, in greater than nine out of 10 patients. That's a high number under any circumstances and suggests that these vaccines are potent.

So let's be clear here. You should expect to feel sore at the injection site the day after you get vaccinated. You should expect some redness and swelling, and you might even expect to feel generally run down for a day or two post-vaccination. All of these things are normal, anticipated and even intended.

While the data aren't finalised, more than two per cent of the Moderna vaccine recipients experienced what they categorised as severe temporary side effects such as fatigue and headache. The percentage of people who experience any side effects will be higher. These are signs that the vaccine is doing what it was designed to do – train your immune system to respond against something it might otherwise ignore so that you'll be protected later. It does not mean that the vaccine gave you Covid-19.

It all comes down to this – some time in the coming months, you will be given a simple choice to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community from a highly transmissible and deadly disease that results in long-term health consequences for a significant number of otherwise healthy people. It may cost you a few days of feeling sick.

Please choose wisely.

The writer is instructor, Lowance Center for Human Immunology, Emory University, US. This article first appeared on www.theconversation.com

Tackling disinformation

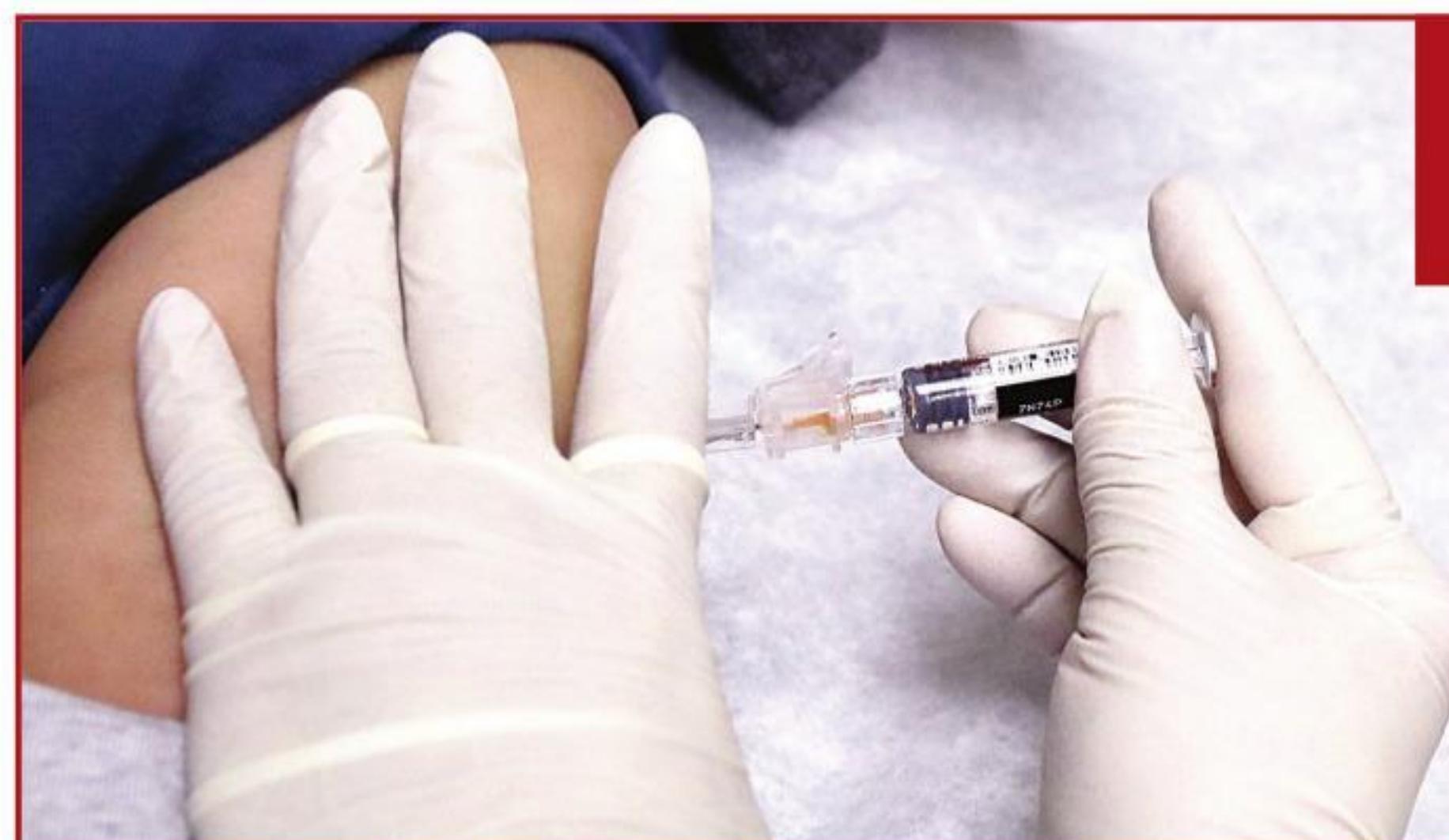


A team of researchers, led by Yida Mu and Nikos Aletras from the University of Sheffield's department of computer science, has developed a method for predicting whether a social media user is likely to share content from unreliable news sources. Their findings have been published in the journal *PeerJ*.

The researchers analysed over one million tweets from approximately 6,200 Twitter users by developing new natural language processing methods – ways to help computers process and understand huge amounts of language data. The tweets they studied were all publicly available for anyone to see on the social media platform.

Twitter users were grouped into two categories as part of the study – those who have shared unreliable news sources and those who only share stories from reliable news sources. The data was used to train a machine-learning algorithm that can accurately predict (79.7 per cent) whether a user will repost content from unreliable sources sometime in the future.

Results from the study found that the *Twitter* users who shared stories from unreliable sources are more likely to tweet about either politics or religion and use impolite language. In contrast, the study found that users who shared stories from reliable news sources often tweeted about their personal life, such as their emotions and interactions with friends.



MATTHEW WOODRUFF

to foreign things. It responds to foreign things that it perceives to be dangerous.

Now, 30 years later, immunologists know that your immune system uses a complex set of sensors to understand not only whether or not something is foreign, but also what kind of threat, if any, a microbe might pose. It can tell the difference between viruses – like Sars-CoV-2 – and parasites, like tapeworms, and activate specialised arms of your immune system to deal with those specific threats accordingly. It can even monitor the level of tissue damage caused by an invader and ramp up your immune response to match.

Sensing the type of threat posed by a microbe, and the level of intensity of that threat, allows your immune system to select the right set of responses, wield them precisely, and avoid the very real danger of immune overreaction.

Immunology's 'dirty little secret'

In 1989, immunologist Charles Janeway published an article summarising the state of the field of immunology. Until that point, immunologists had accepted that immune responses were initiated when encountering something foreign – bacteria, viruses, and parasites – that was "non-self".

Janeway suspected that there was more to the story, and famously laid out what he referred to as "the immunologist's dirty little secret": Your immune system doesn't just respond

to foreign things. It responds to foreign things that it perceives to be dangerous.

important (imagine if it started attacking the thousands of species of friendly bacteria in your gut!) and highly problematic. The requirement for danger means that your immune system is programmed not to respond unless a clear threat is identified. It also means that if I'm developing a vaccine, I have to convince your immune system that the vaccine itself is a threat worth taking seriously.

This can be accomplished in a number of ways. One is to inject a weakened – what immunologists call attenuated – or even killed version of a pathogen. This approach has the benefit of looking almost identical to the "real" pathogen, triggering many of the same danger signals and often resulting in strong, long-term immunity, as is seen in polio vaccination. It can also be risky – if you haven't weakened the pathogen enough and roll out the vaccine too fast, there is a possibility of unintentionally infecting a large number of vaccine recipients. In addition to this unacceptable human cost, the resulting loss of trust in vaccines could lead to additional suffering as fewer people take other, safer vaccines.

A safer approach is to use individual components of the pathogen, harmless by themselves but capable of training your immune system to recognise the real thing. However, these pieces of the pathogen don't often contain the danger signals necessary to stimulate a strong memory response. As a result, they need to be

recalled by the immune system to trigger a strong memory response. This is why you need to get booster shots for things like tetanus and polio – your immune system needs to be reminded of the threat to keep it strong and ready to respond if you're exposed again.

It's also why you need to get a flu shot every year – the flu virus changes slightly each year, so your immune system needs to be trained to recognise the new version.

The writer is instructor, Lowance Center for Human Immunology, Emory University, US. This article first appeared on www.theconversation.com



MARKED MAN

Australia coach Justin Langer has said Virat Kohli (in photo, left) will be sought to be marginalised when the first Test starts on Thursday by denying him the runs he will obviously try to score. "We'll keep him out of the game with his runs," said Langer.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

World Cup: Team India will open their campaign against a qualifying side on 6 March in the women's World Cup of 2022 beginning on 4 March. It will see 31 matches played across 31 days in the first global women's cricket event since the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia.

Misconduct alleged: An interim board of Cricket South Africa has suspended its acting chief executive officer Kugandrie Govender, announcing a disciplinary hearing into misconduct allegations against her. The hearing is to take place on 28 January.

Injured, out: New Zealand head coach Gary Stead on Tuesday confirmed that all-rounder Colin de Grandhomme would not be in two-match Test series against Pakistan because of a foot injury. Stead said de Grandhomme had a bone stress reaction in his right foot.

Freeman dies: Ex-Australia all-rounder Eric Freeman has died aged 76. He made his debut against India at the Gabba in 1968, removing the openers in the tourist's first innings with his right-arm fast-mediums. His finest series came against the West Indies in 1968-9.

Tokyo Games: An opinion poll has shown more than 30 per cent of respondents think the Tokyo Olympic and the Paralympic Games should be cancelled. It received answers from more than 1,200 people who were asked if the Olympics should be held next year.

Oz project: The Australian Olympic Committee has launched a project to help its athletes manage difficulties associated with Covid-19 before, during and after the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics. AOC officials revealed it on Monday evening, calling it Project Wagasa.

Dream Team: Lionel Messi, Ronaldo and Cristiano Ronaldo are in the "greatest team of all time" announced by France Football. The Ballon D'or Dream Team were thought of when the magazine cancelled its annual awards ceremony for the world's best player.

Cech returns: Veteran goalkeeper Petr Cech returned to action for the first time since May 2019 after he was named in Chelsea's development squad for Monday's Premier League 2 game against Tottenham Hotspur. Cech played for Chelsea from 2004 to 2015.

Houllier dead: Former France manager Gerard Houllier, who rebuilt Liverpool from Premier League under-achievers into a Cup treble-winning side in 2001, has died aged 73. Houllier also coached Paris St Germain, Olympique Lyonnais and Aston Villa.

Sreesanth named in Kerala probables: Former India fast bowler Sree Santh, who was banned for life for betting-fixing before being reprimed by the Supreme Court, appeared to have got a new lease of life on Tuesday as he was named among the 26 probables of Kerala for the T20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy starting January 10.

Yuvraj Singh named in Punjab's probables: World-cup winning former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh is set to come out of retirement and play domestic cricket again after being named in Punjab's 30-strong list of probables for next month's Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament. Yuvraj, the star of India's 2011 World Cup-winning campaign, had announced his retirement last June but he decided to resume playing for his home state after being approached by Punjab Cricket Association secretary Punit Bali.

Rahane spells very little ahead of 1st Test

AGENCIES
ADELAIDE, 15 DECEMBER

India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane (in photo) on Tuesday conceded that pacer Ishant Sharma's absence is a "big miss" but sidestepped queries on his team's possible first XI combination for the opening Day/Night Test against Australia starting here on Thursday.

Rahane, who is expected to lead in the last three Tests after regular skipper Virat Kohli goes on paternity leave, also spoke about how pink ball's increased pace off the pitch during the 40-50 minutes of the twilight session, will be the biggest challenge for any batsman.

"I think, we do really have a strong attack but yes we will definitely miss Ishant, being the senior fast bowler," Rahane said during a virtual press conference. Ishant is recovering from a rib injury sustained during the IPL. Rahane, however, is confident that despite Ishant's absence, the pace attack comprising Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami will step it up for the Australians.

On the possible opening combination among the four available options (Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Shubman Gill and KL Rahul) and two options for wicket-keeping (Wriddhiman Saha and Rishabh Pant), Rahane said a decision will be taken on the eve of the match.



The guys who are here (Umesh Yadav), (Navdeep Saini, Mohammed Siraj) with Jasprit (Bumrah) and (Mohammed) Shami, they are all really good and experienced and they know how to bowl in these conditions," he said. "...this is a new series starting with the Pink ball, so it is all about getting that momentum, but I do believe that we have the attack to get 20 wickets," he said.

On the possible opening combination among the four available options (Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Shub-

man Gill and KL Rahul) and two options for wicket-keeping (Wriddhiman Saha and Rishabh Pant), Rahane said a decision will be taken on the eve of the match.

"See, we have still not decided what's our combination going to be. We will sit tomorrow, there is another day to go, one more practice session to go, we will sit tomorrow and discuss what's our combination," Kohli's deputy said. "...but see who ever plays, it is going to be like, everyone is equally there, everyone is equally talented, whoever

plays, they can win the match for us, so it is all about trusting our players," Rahane said.

He also didn't give any definitive answer on what would be senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's role although he did acknowledge that his all-round skills will be very handy going into the first Test. "Ashwin's role will be very important. We all know that he is an experienced bowler, he has got variety in his bowling, so his role as a bowler and also as a batsman will be really important," he said.

Australia plotting India's downfall

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ADELAIDE, 15 DECEMBER

Top-ranked Australia are plotting revenge in their first day-night Test against fellow powerhouse India on Thursday, as both teams grapple with injuries and selection dilemmas. Virat Kohli's men clinched their maiden series in Australia in 2018-19, triumphing 2-1, but the hosts were without leading batsmen Steve Smith and David Warner who were serving year-long bans for ball-tampering.

Smith, the world's number one batsman, is back and in form, although in a massive blow Warner has been ruled out of the opening Test with a groin injury. "It's a great rivalry... bring it on," Australia coach Justin Langer said today ahead of day one at Adelaide Oval, where more than 20,000 fans -- 50 per cent capacity, owing to coronavirus restrictions -- are expected. "We have a very senior team now and can't wait to get the show on the road."

Despite losing the last series,

Australia head into the four-Test showdown, where the Border-Gavaskar trophy and World Test Championship points are at stake, with an apparent advantage before a ball is bowled. They are the world's most successful team in day-night Tests, having played seven and won the lot, including four in Adelaide.

In contrast India, who were long reluctant to embrace the concept, remain novices, playing just one day-night Test in Kolkata last year. They thrashed Bangladesh in just over two days, limiting their exposure to twilight conditions where visibility can be an issue and the ball tends to swing as the sun sinks. India did enjoy a day-night warm-up in Sydney at the weekend, where Shubman Gill (65), Mayank Agarwal (61), Rishabh Pant (103 not out) and Hanuma Vihari (104 not out) all capitalised.

India's two best batsmen, Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara, sat out the match but Vihari insisted their lack of pink-ball experience would not hinder them. Warner's injury is one of a

series of setbacks Langer has faced in recent weeks with concussed Will Pucovski, who was set to take his place, also ruled out. Marcus Harris has been recalled as cover, but who opens remains to be seen.

Incumbent Joe Burns is horribly out of form with Matthew Wade firming as the best option to replace him. That would open the door for red-hot young-gunner Cameron Green, who Langer said would definitely play if he recovered from a mild concussion. Their all-star bowling attack is set in stone with quicks Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins complemented by spinner Nathan Lyon, Australia's top wicket-taker in the last series.

India won the opening Test at Adelaide in 2018 largely on the back of Pujara, who ground out 123 then 71 to set up a 31-run win. He again shapes as key, particularly with Rohit Sharma out injured. Superstar skipper Kohli will want to make his mark in his only Test of the series, before heading home for the birth of his first child.

ATK Mohun Bagan reboot to face FC Goa charge

AGENCIES
MARGAO, 15 DECEMBER

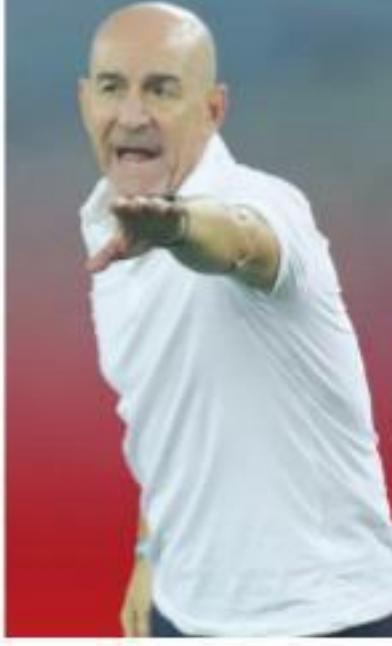
ATK Mohun Bagan vs FC Goa: Having slipped from the top position after going winless in their last two outings, ATK Mohun Bagan will aim to get their mojo back when they take on an in-form FC Goa in an Indian Super League match in Margao on Wednesday. While the Mariners are placed third on the table with 10 points after five games, their opponents, FC Goa, occupy the fifth spot with eight points.

The contest will not only see two of the strongest teams in the league cross swords but will also pit two tactically sound managers with contrasting philosophies.

ATKMB coach Antonio Habas (in photo) does not rely much on possession football. His side is known for counter-attacking and being defensively organised. So far, the Kolkatta giants have had an average of 46 per cent possession -- the third-lowest by a team this season.

Juan Fernando's FC Goa side are the opposite. The Gauris love dominating opponents and usually accounted for the lion's share of the ball. They have averaged 59 per cent possession -- the most by a team this campaign.

ATKMB are facing two injury concerns with doubts over Javi Hernandez and Tiri. Injuries to the duo have disrupted the balance of the side and Habas acknowledged the problem after his side dropped points in their previous game against Hyderabad FC.



"There is a long way (to go this season). Obviously, we don't want to lose but we have many problems with injuries. But we have to recover the players and make them compete," Habas said.

While Igor Angulo will aim to extend his goal-scoring tally for the Gauris, Roy Krishna will be key for ATKMB during counter-attacks. The Fijian has scored four of his team's six goals so far with all their goals coming in the second half.

Out of the five goals FC Goa have let in so far, three have come after the break and Ferrando is aware his side will need to be alert throughout the game. "It's so very important to have one plan for the team since we play against a very good team, not only Krishna," Ferrando said.

"It's important to be compact of course (but) also (take care of) the time, area of the ball and the spaces. It's important to focus on these details for 90 minutes. This team is incredible because for 90 minutes they are working hard," he added.

Santana magic douses SC East Bengal's glimmer of first win

AGENCIES
GOA, 15 DECEMBER

Thirty-nine seconds was all it took for Aridane Santana to turn the game around as unbeaten Hyderabad FC condemned SC East Bengal to yet another defeat in the Hero Indian Super League at the Tilak Maidan, here on Tuesday.

Robbie Fowler's men took the lead with their first goal of the season through Jacques Maghoma (26'). But Aridane swept aside any hopes of a first win with a 56th-minute brace that was separated only by 39 seconds. Halicharan Narzary (68') put the Nizams further ahead. Maghoma scored again (81') but Hyderabad held on for a 3-2 win.

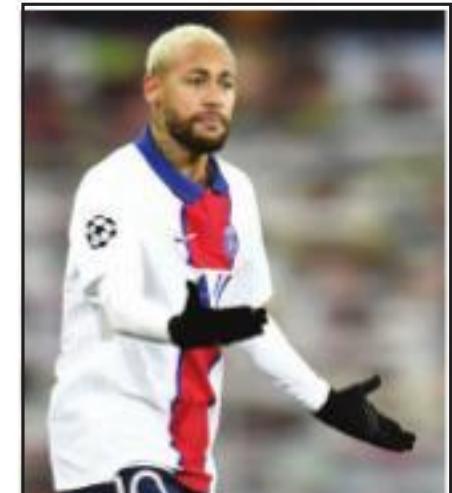
Hyderabad were clearly the better side in the opening quarter and kept their opponents limited to their own half. The Nizams nearly opened the scoring in the 13th minute when an attempted clearance from East Bengal keeper Debjit Majumder hit the onrushing Nikhil Poojary and nearly looped into the net. Mohamed Ishak headed it out for a corner.

The home side created a number of chances but their frontline of Aridane and Poojary couldn't get the ball in the back of the net.

Then, in the 26th minute, East Bengal scored their first goal of the season with their first shot on target, totally against the run of play. Anthony Pilkington played Matt Steinmann through on the flank, who squared it for a cross.

There was still time for Maghoma to score a second for SCEB, but it was too little too late.

It's 2017 once more though Neymar is with Parisians

AGENCIES
LONDON, 15 DECEMBER

in their tie but will be wary of Simone Inzaghi's Lazio team who have reached this stage for the first time in 20 years.

Premier League champions Liverpool will play last year's semi-finalists RB Leipzig, creating a match-up between Germany's most highly rated young coach Julian Nagelsmann (***) and Leipzig's Jürgen Klopp, the country's number one coach. Liverpool are unbeaten in their last 10 matches against German teams in all

European competitions, a run going back to 2002.

Thirteen-time European champions Real Madrid face Serie A club Atalanta, who reached the quarter-finals in their first Champions League campaign last season. Real have won 10 of their last 11 games with Italian clubs. Atlético Madrid will face Chelsea in a game which could include the return of striker Diego Costa to Stamford Bridge. Manchester City will take on Borussia Mönchengladbach, who are in the last 16 for the first time in the Champions League era. Italian champions Juventus will face Porto, a game where Cristiano Ronaldo will return to his homeland Portugal. The two-leg ties will be played from 16 February.

Europa League

Manchester United will face La Liga leaders Real Sociedad in the last 32 of the Europa League following Monday's draw in Nyon, after they were dumped

out of the Champions League last week. Arsenal also have a tricky tie - with Benfica - after topping their group with six wins from six, while fellow Premier League outfit Tottenham Hotspur and Leicester City will clash with Austria's Wolfsberg and Slavia Prague respectively. United dropped to the Europa League, which they won in 2017, after RB Leipzig knocked them out of the Europe's top competition at the group stage.

But Sociedad represent one of the toughest draws of the first knockout round. They reclaimed top spot in La Liga on Sunday and made it out of the Europa League group stage thanks to a dramatic late draw at Napoli, combined with AZ Alkmaar's last-gasp defeat at Rijeka.

United are eighth in the Premier League after Saturday's goal-less draw with local rivals Manchester City, although they are only five points behind joint-leaders Tottenham and Liverpool (25), having played a game fewer.

Langer says a fit Wade could come in as an opener

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
ADELAIDE, 15 DECEMBER

Australia head coach Justin Langer today stated that Marcus Labuschagne would not be opening the innings in the first Test of the four-match series against India. Langer though hinted that Matthew Wade (in photo) could play as an opener.

Australia, who had initially chosen David Warner, Will Pucovski and Joe Burns as openers for the first Test, suffered twin blows with Warner getting injured and Pucovski being hit on the head. Both are ruled out of the pink-ball Test which begins on Thursday at the Adelaide Oval. And there are doubts about Joe Burns, who has had a terrible season.

He failed in both the warm-up games and had struggled in Sheffield Shield cricket too. Left-handed opener Marcus Harris has been called up. "Marcus won't be opening. He does an amazing job at number three. Steve Smith does an amazing job at number four

, we can't make any decisions yet," he added. The Australia coach said though Burns remained a contender, he recognised the need to have runs under the belt.

Green's debut

Langer said Cameron Green would make his Test debut in the first match of the Border-Gavaskar series if declared fit. Green is undergoing concussion protocols after getting hit on the head during a warm-up tie against the touring Indians on Friday and had to be substituted. Green's test on Tuesday yielded positive results. Langer, however, said that the all-rounder would play only as a batsman. "Yeah, if he is passed fit, he will definitely play. We are just going through the protocols, the concussion protocols. It was a very unusual incident that happened with him. If Cameron gets through the protocols and gets through training and he is feeling good, he will play," said Langer.