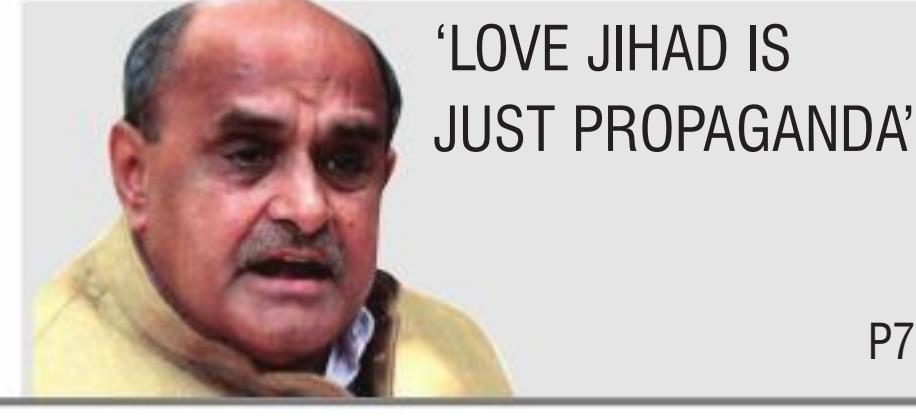




KARNATAKA TO ISSUE
ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER
ORDINANCE

P5



'LOVE JIHAD IS
JUST PROPAGANDA'

P7



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

PROBE INTO SON'S
FINANCES MARS
BIDEN'S TRANSITION

P10



WHY ITALY'S 1982
WIN MEANT SO
MUCH TO ROSSI

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with very light rain/drizzle. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 26 and 13 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 98% Min: 60%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 25.8°C (+3) Min: 11.3°C (+2)

SUN RISES

07:05 hrs

MOON RISES

05:20 hrs

SUN SETS

17:26 hrs

MOON SETS

15:33 hrs

THUMBNAILS



President Kovind pays homage to former President Pranab Mukherjee on his birth anniversary. At the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Friday. IANS

Delhi HC stays order on PM's foreign visits:

The Delhi High Court on Friday stayed the Central Information Commission (CIC) order directing the Indian Air Force to provide information regarding Special Flight Returns (SRF) II, which contains details of Prime Minister's entourage on his foreign trips. Justice Navin Chawla said the information sought by the RTI applicant with regard to details of the Ministry or department officials who accompanied the PM cannot be disclosed, but there was no harm in providing details of number of passengers on flights.

India, Uzbekistan ink nine pacts: India and Uzbekistan on Friday signed nine agreements to further broadbase cooperation in an array of areas even as they vowed to combat the threat of terrorism by "destroying" terrorist safe-havens, networks and funding channels. At a virtual summit, Prime Minister Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev agreed to step up efforts for an early conclusion of a bilateral investment treaty.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 11 DECEMBER

The tussle between the Centre and the state over the attack on BJP president JP Nadda's convoy yesterday has intensified with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) summoning the state chief secretary and director general of police to Delhi to discuss the prevailing law and order situation in Bengal on 14 December.

But the state government officials requested to be excused from the meeting as further investigation was on and the state government was "addressing the issue with utmost seriousness".

The MHA on Friday asked state chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay and DGP Virendra to present themselves on 14 December for an explanation on the law and order situation in the state soon after Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar sent a report to the Ministry about the details of the attack and how it transpired, as well as giving a grim picture of the law and order situation in the state.

In a letter to Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla, Mr Bandopadhyay wrote that "further reports are being obtained and compiled, in the circumstances, I am directed to request you to kindly dispense with the presence of the state officials in the meeting, considering that state government is already addressing this issue with utmost seriousness."

Don't play with fire: Dhankhar

KOLKATA, 11 DECEMBER



Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday criticised chief minister Mamata Banerjee over the attack on BJP president JP Nadda's convoy yesterday, calling it a "slur on democratic fabric" and condemned her for her comments after the attack, warning: "Madam, please don't play with fire."

Expressing concern over the law and order situation in the state, Mr Dhankhar told a Press conference here: "Yesterday, the leader of a national political party

was blatantly attacked. And state actors were involved. Violators worked with the protection and immunity of the administration and the police. This is like a death-knell to democracy. I have said so in my feedback." He asked the CM to apologise for her comments mocking Nadda.

SNS

(SEE PAGE 4)

Mr Bandopadhyay said that elaborate security arrangements were made by the state government apart from the Central protective arrangements that were already in place for Mr Nadda, who is entitled to Z category security, but the situation became difficult for the authorities due to presence of a large number of vehicles that got tagged to Mr Nadda's convoy.

"The tagging of many vehicles to the protected convoy however made the situation unwieldy, because typically, security authorities are to handle a protected convoy of a few vehicles only, and not with/in the presence of so many other vehicles which got tagged to the convoy travelling together," the letter said.

Soon after the attack, Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla had sought a report from the state government yesterday. During the day, director general of police Virendra submitted a report to chief minister Mamata Banerjee contending that adequate security arrangements were made for Mr Nadda's visit. The state police's report stated that seven people were arrested and three separate cases were lodged in connection to yesterday's incident.

Refuting the BJP's allegations of poor security arrangements by the state government, the report elaborated that apart from the Z category security cover for Mr Nadda, a bullet-proof car and a pilot car were given to him and four ASPs, eight DySPs, 14

inspectors, 30 officers, 40 RAF personnel, 259 constables and 350 members of auxiliary forces were deployed on the route and at the Diamond Harbour venue.

Of the three cases, one was lodged for provocation in Sirakol police station against Rakesh Singh, a BJP worker who currently has 59 police cases against him. The remaining two cases were lodged for vandalism at Falta and Usti police stations.

On the other hand, the Trinamul Congress hit out at the MHA for summoning the two senior officials and accused the saffron party of trying to create a situation where the Centre can interfere in matters related to states.

Senior Trinamul MPs BKUB, through its Mathura-based president Bhanu Pratap Singh, has sought impleadment as a party in the lead petition filed by DMK lawmaker Tiruchi Siva.

Meanwhile, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday said some "anti-social elements" are conspiring to spoil the atmosphere of the peasants' movement under the guise of farmers and appealed to the protesting farmers to be vigilant against their platform being misused.

He also said the government is sensitive towards farmers and is in discussion with them and their representatives to resolve their concerns. "A proposal to resolve the farmers' objection has also been sent to the farmers union and the government is ready for further discussion," Tomar tweeted.

If the government wants to talk to farmer leaders that should be formally convened like in previous occasions, said Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait, asserting that anything less than scrapping of the new agri laws won't be accepted. "They (government) should first tell us

BJP to hold nationwide campaign on farm laws

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

With some farmer unions intensifying their protest against the Central government over the recent agri reforms, the BJP has decided to hold nationwide programmes, including *chaupal* in rural areas, to highlight the benefits of three farm laws.

Party sources said events, including press conferences and public programmes, will be held in most of the over 700 districts of the country in this regard.

The development comes amidst opposition parties' united support to the farmers' protest and attack on the Narendra Modi government over the issue.

The BJP has accused its rivals of misleading the farmers over the farm reforms and has alleged that opposition parties have been inciting them for selfish political interests. PTI

Farmers' body moves SC against agri laws



Farmers protest at the Singhu border in Delhi. SNS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

Amidst continuing protests at Delhi's borders against the Centre's farm laws, farmers' body Bhartiya Kisan Union (Bhau) has moved the Supreme Court seeking to intervene as a party in a pending plea challenging the constitutional validity of the legislation.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Justice S A Bobde, on 12 October, had issued a notice to the Centre agreeing to test the validity of the laws on the pleas filed by RJD lawmaker from Rajya Sabha, Manoj Jha and DMK Rajya Sabha MP from Tamil Nadu, Tiruchi Siva, and one by Rakesh Vaishnav of Chhattisgarh Kisan Congress.

The three laws - Farmers' Empowerment and Protection Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020 - took effect from September 27 after President Ram Nath Kovind's assent.

when and where they want to meet us. If they invite us for talks, we will discuss that with our coordination committee and then take a decision," Tikait said.

Thousands of farmers have been staying put at Delhi border points - Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Chilla (Delhi-Noida) - for nearly two weeks against the new farm laws.

For every bribe taker, there is bribe giver: SC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

The Supreme Court on Friday it cannot direct the Parliament to pass a law to award life term imprisonment in graft cases, as for every bribe taker, there was always a bribe giver. A bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said: "Personally, I feel, we in society should change our thinking. For every person taking money, there is a person distributing money."

The sharp observation came from the bench, which also comprised Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Rishabh Roy, as it declined to entertain a PIL by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay seeking directions to confiscate 'Benami' properties and disproportionate assets in cases of corruption and also award life term to offenders.

The top court observed that the petitioner cannot expect the judiciary to take over all roles and asked him to withdraw the PIL and move the Law Commission.

The petitioner was represented by senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, who submitted before the bench that there were pending sentences under Acts such as Prevention of Money Laundering Act, which were yet to be executed.

allowed the petitioner's counsel to withdraw the plea. "Due to weak and ineffective anti-corruption laws, India has never been ranked even among top 50 in Corruption Perception Index but Centre has not strengthened them to weed out the menace of corruption, which brazenly offends rule of law as well as right to life liberty dignity guaranteed under Articles 14 and 21," said the plea.

The plea urged the top court to issue appropriate direction to the Centre to ascertain the feasibility of confiscating cent percent black money, benami properties and disproportionate assets and awarding life imprisonment in offences relating to bribery, black money, benami property, disproportionate assets, tax evasion, money laundering etc.

Covid active caseload drops to 3.63 lakh, lowest in 146 days

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

and added that total recoveries are nearing 93 lakh.

India's total Covid-19 active caseload has dropped to 3.63 lakh (3,63,749), the lowest in 146 days, and comprises just 3.71 per cent of the total coronavirus infections, the Union Health Ministry said today.

The total active cases were 3,58,692 on 18 July. "The country has reported a trend of sustained decrease in the number of active cases. India's present active caseload consists of just 3.71 percent of India's total cases," the ministry said. It said that 37,528 people recovered from Covid-19 in a span of 24 hours and this led to a net decline of 8,544 cases from the total active caseload. The country has registered 29,398 new cases in a span of 24 hours, the Ministry said

SEE P2



US FDA panel approves emergency use of Pfizer Covid vaccine



A special US government advisory panel has recommended emergency use authorisation for Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine, in a major step towards its widespread use in US, worst-hit by the pandemic.

After an eight-hour public hearing on Thursday, the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) voted 17 to 4 with 1 abstention to recommend the vaccine developed by American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech to combat the disease that has killed over 2,92,000 people in the United States.

An emergency use authorisation (EUA) is short of a full approval. Pfizer would have to file a separate application for full FDA approval for its vaccine. Thursday's vote does not mean the vaccine will be authorised immediately, US media reported.

There is a clear benefit, and all we have on the other side is theoretical risks, said committee member Paul Offit, vaccine expert with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The vaccine's potential benefits outweigh its risks, he said.

The Pfizer vaccine has already been approved for the public in the UK, Canada, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The recommendation comes a day after the US recorded more than 3,000 deaths in the latest 24-hour period—the highest total in a single day anywhere in the world. AP

(DETAILS ON PAGE 10)

Rawat calls on 'like minded nations' to check China's hegemony

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat today observed that like-minded countries need to build "dissuasive deterrence" against China's attempts at establishing its hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region.

He was speaking at the Global Dialogue Security summit on 'Contesting the Indo-Pacific for Global Domination' organised online by Global Dialogue Forum in partnership with Global Dialogue Review and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Though he did not mention India's ongoing military stand-off with China in eastern Ladakh, Gen Rawat allud-



We need to build bilateral, trilateral and multilateral mechanisms like Japan, Australia and India (JAI), India-ASEAN and similar existing mechanisms to have the right balance in our strategic autonomy.

GEN BIPIN RAWAT
CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

ed to the country's neighbour in several references to the Indo-Pacific region.

For nations like India, Rawat said, the security of land and borders remained a primary concern.

"Therefore, there is a need to develop integrated structures to ensure modernisation programmes to be undertaken by our armed forces based on correct assessment of the nature of threats and challenges.

"In addition, we are also partnering with like-minded nations to ensure peace and stability in our region," he added.

The US, he said, recognises Indo-Pacific as consequential for its future, adding that similarly, Japan, Australia, France, the UK, Indonesia and Germany also find the region

of strategic importance to them. However, China's rise as a military and economic power, has made the region highly contestable.

Based on the challenges India faced as a rising regional power, he said, "We require structured long-time planning

for capability building and development of our defence forces. In the quest to build a stronger India, we need a peaceful and stable secure environment."

"We need to maintain strategic autonomy and cooperative relations with extra regional powers, regional linkages. We need to build bilateral, trilateral and multilateral mechanisms like Japan, Australia and India (JAI), India-ASEAN and similar existing mechanisms to have the right balance in our strategic autonomy."</



The BJP's stand on caw slaughter ban is diametrically opposite in Goa state to what the party has taken here. In both the states it is the ruling party.

SIDDARAMAIAH

LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN KARNATAKA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Capital records 2,385 corona cases; positivity rate 3.33 pc

For the past 10 days, Delhi's positivity rate has been below 5 pc, health minister Jain points out

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

Delhi today recorded 2,385 positive cases of coronavirus infection (Covid-19), which were detected out of 71,679 tests, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. The positivity rate was 3.33 per cent.

The city's coronavirus case-load thus mounted to 6,03,535, the health bulletin said.

The infectious, deadly virus claimed 60 more lives in the national capital, which pushed its Covid toll to 9,934, the bulletin stated.

The number of coronavirus patients who recovered during the past 24 hours was

2,402, which raised the cumulative figure of such recoveries in Delhi to 5,74,925

so far. The city's Covid recovery rate thus climbed to 95.25 per cent.

Delhi's tally of active Covid cases was 18,676 with 5,405 patients remaining hospitalised. As many as 10,886 patients were getting treatment under home isolation.

The number of contain-

ment zones in the national capital stood at 6,501, the bulletin added.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain iterated that the third wave of Covid was on the wane in the city.

He said the third wave was

Delhi when the positivity rate was 15.26 per cent. But it has been on the decline since then. "For the past 10 days, the positivity rate has been below 5 per cent," he said.

"I can say that the third wave is on the wane. More than 70,000 tests are being done on a daily basis. Now the situation is under control. But my request to all is to strictly wear a face mask and observe social distancing," Jain said.

Referring to the reportedly delayed availability of RT-PCR test reports, the minister said, "We are looking into the issue of delay. We, however, understand that the delay has been caused by the doubling of the tests conducted following an order by the Central government."

Delhi had yesterday recorded 1,575 Covid cases detect-

ed from 64,069 tests. The positivity rate had then come down to 2.46 percent. The city had then logged 61 Covid fatalities.

The national capital had on 9 December recorded 2,463 coronavirus infections, which were detected out of 72,079 tests, with the positivity rate coming down to 3.42 per cent. It had then logged 50 coronavirus fatalities, which was the lowest figure of such casualties since 1 November when it was 51.

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

Farmers' protest: Several roads remain closed in Delhi

PTI
NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

In a series of tweets, the Delhi Traffic Police said Tikri and Dhansa borders are closed for traffic movement, while Jhatikara border is open only for two-wheelers and pedestrians. Those travelling to neighbouring Haryana can take routes via Jharoda (only single carriage-way), Daurala, Kapashera, Badusarai, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dunda-hera borders, the police said.

The announcement came a day after farmers' leaders rejected the government's offer to amend the new agri laws and give a "written assurance" on continuing the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system.

Farmers worry these laws will eliminate the safety net of MSP and do away with mandis that ensure earning. But the government says the MSP system will continue and the new laws will give farmers more options to sell their crop.

HC dismisses plea to transfer Tablighi leader Maulana Saad's case from police to NIA

PTI
NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

The Delhi High Court Friday dismissed a plea seeking direction to transfer from Delhi Police to the NIA, the investigation of a case lodged against Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad for holding a congregation in March in alleged violation of the orders against large gatherings to contain the spread of COVID-19.

A bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Talwanti Singh dismissed the petition after the petitioner sought to withdraw it with liberty to approach the Supreme Court.

"Advocate Yash Chaturvedi for the petitioner seeks liberty to withdraw the petition with liberty to further prosecute the petition seeking similar relief instituted by him herein before the Supreme Court. Leave and liberty granted. The petition is dismissed a withdrawn," the bench said while dictating the order.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF
SH. H. S. JAGGI
ADJ South West-02,
Room No. 605, 6th Floor
District Court Complex,
Dwarka, New Delhi
GP No. 15/2020
CNR No. DLSW01/0007882020
Mithun — Petitioner
Versus
Anuradha — Respondent
CITATION

Whereas a petition under Section 14 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 for Appointment of the petitioner, namely Sh. Mithun (Elder Brother), s/o Late Shri Gang Prasad, r/o A-567, JJ Colony, Panthi Road, Uttam Nagar, D.C. Mohan Gardan, S.O. West Delhi-110059 as a Guardian in person and to operate and manage the movable and immovable properties and assets including bank accounts of the subject person his younger sister Ms. Mangala Ranji, r/o Late Shri Gang Prasad.

The 14-12-2020 has been fixed for hearing of the application and notice is hereby given to general public that if any other relatives/friends, kinsman or well-wisher of the aforesaid minor/desire to adopt be appointed declare as guardian of the person and property of the said minor/Lunacy of desire to oppose the application of the petitioner aforesaid he/she should enter appearance in persons in this court on the aforesaid date and be prepared to adduce on that day and documentary or oral evidence which he may desire to adduce in support of his/her claim to such adoption/appointment of declaration in support his/her opposition to the application of the petitioner aforesaid.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 07-12-2020.

ADJ South West-02,
Room No. 605, 6th Floor,
District Court Complex,
Dwarka, New Delhi,
GP No. 15/2020
Seal of the Court

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

Mrs. Renu Sharma, r/o Late Shri Ashok Kumar Sharma, r/o E-53, 3rd Floor, Kirti Nagar, New Delhi-110015 — Petitioner/s
Versus

STATE FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To,

All concerned.
Where in the abovesigned petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 in respect of the debt and securities of Shares of Bayer Crop Science Ltd. to be standing in the name of Late Sh. Ashok Kumar Pathak, s/o Late Sh. Ram Subhag Pathak, r/o RZ-C-17, Gali No. 11, Durga Park, New Delhi-110045.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court this 9th day of December, 2020.

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

IN THE COURT OF
SH. HARGUVARIN DASS
SINGH

Addl. District Judge-02
Court No. 605, 6th Floor,
Dwarka Courts, New Delhi,
PC No. 26/2020
Sh. Rajatabh Bhattacharya — Petitioner
Versus
State (NCT of Delhi) — Respondents

CITATION UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

Whereas an application under Section 270 and 276 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, for Grant of Probate/Letters of Administration to the estate of Late Sh. Rajendra Prasad Bathla, who died on 12-06-2020 and left behind a will dated 11-09-2015 has been preferred by Shri Rajatabh Bathla, s/o Late Sh. Rajendra Prasad Bathla, r/o Flat No. 613, Sardogha Apartment (Sardogha Vihar Co-Operative Ground Housing Society Ltd.), Plot No. 13, Sector-7, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075 in respect of an immovable property bearing Flat No. 613, Sardogha Apartment (Sardogha Vihar Co-Operative Ground Housing Society Ltd.) Plot No. 13, Sector-7, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075.

Whereas the 19-12-2020 has been fixed for hearing of the case. Notice is hereby given that any person having any interest in the Administration of the Estate of the said deceased may if he/she desires to appear in this court on the said 19-12-2020 and see the proceedings before the Grant of Probate (or for Letter of Administration).

The State & (NCT of Delhi), CITATION UNDER GUARDIANS AND WARDS ACT, 1890

Versus

The State & (NCT of Delhi), CITATION UNDER GUARDIANS AND WARDS ACT, 1890

Versus

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Versus

The State & (NCT of Delhi), CITATION UNDER GUARDIANS AND WARDS ACT, 1890

Versus</



In the first three months (after becoming Governor), I visited all the districts of Mizoram and I will have to say that the state lacks infrastructure development, especially roads, agricultural operations and the health sector.

P S SREEDHARAN PILLAI
MIZORAM GOVERNOR

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER 2020

03

24.19 pc Punjab population Covid positive: Sero-survey

As per the 2nd sero-survey conducted in 12 districts of Punjab, 96 pc of those found coronavirus positive were asymptomatic; CM Capt Amarinder announces fresh restrictions

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, 11 DECEMBER

Even as Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday ordered restrictions on public gatherings in the state, as many as 24.19 percent of Punjab's population has been infected by Covid-19, as per the second sero-survey conducted in 12 districts of the state.

Sharing the findings of the survey, conducted among randomly selected districts and population, health secretary Hussan Lal said 4678 participants were interviewed and their blood samples collected.

Of these, 1201 tested IgG reactive, of which only 4.03 percent were symptomatic and



95.9 per cent were asymptomatic.

The state's urban areas showed a Covid positive rate of 30.5 per cent, while rural areas reported 21.0 per cent

positivity. Ludhiana, with 54.6 per cent total positivity and 71.7 per cent urban positivity was found to be the worst hit, followed by Ferozepur, Jalandhar and SAS Nagar

(Mohali).

Female positivity was found to be higher in both urban and rural areas.

Meanwhile, amid complaints of mass violations of Covid norms at weddings and parties, the Punjab CM ordered a capping of a maximum of 100 people for indoor gatherings and 250 people for outdoor gatherings in the state.

Taking cognisance of the high case fatality rate in the state, the CM also extended night curfew restrictions (10 p.m. to 5 a.m.) till January. The night curfew was earlier imposed from 1 December to 15 December.

Chairing a high-level Covid review meeting, Capt Amarinder also ordered an end to home quarantine for those

above the age of 70 with comorbidities, unless adequate medical facilities can be made available at home.

Health secretary Hussan Lal pointed out during the virtual meeting that a large number of Covid deaths were also being reported from home isolation cases.

Lal disclosed that so far, close to 35 lakh samples had been tested in the state, of which 1.5 lakhs were found positive.

Though the second wave in Punjab had so far been mild, the health authorities were fully geared to tackle any eventuality, he said. He noted that 87 per cent of the deaths had been of patients over the age of 45, with about 50% of the deaths taking place at private tertiary care centres.

Delhi court sends woman, her brother-in-law to jail for life for murdering husband

PTI

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

A Delhi court has sent a woman and her brother-in-law to prison for life for murdering her husband in a pre-planned conspiracy.

Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav sentenced Shanti Sharma and her brother-in-law Satender Sharma to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 15,000 each for murdering Dilip Sharma by administering poison to him.

The court had held guilty

Shanti and Satender for the offences under sections 302 (murder), 201 (disappearance of evidence), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. It said, in its order passed on December 10, that interest of justice would be met if the convicts were sentenced to life imprisonment for the offence of murder, five years rigorous imprisonment for the offences of criminal conspiracy and five years rigorous imprisonment for the offence

of disappearance of evidence.

The court said the sentences would run concurrently. While convicting the duo, the court had said illicit relationship is the "biggest weapon" of cheating that destroys a whole family.

"Illicit relationship is the biggest weapon of cheating that destroys the whole family. Illicit relationship is a perfect mix for disaster. Most times, it turns the family system into hell. The case in hand is a perfect example of this."

"I am of the considered opinion that the deceased (Dilip Sharma) was found dead in the secured precincts of his house raises an irresistible inference that the deceased was murdered by the accused persons in a pre-planned conspiracy," the judge had said in his order.

The court had further said from the testimony of the deceased's sister-in-law it was quite clear that there existed "illicit relations" between both the accused persons.

"It is clearly evident from the

record that just prior to his unnatural, untimely and unexpected death, the deceased had been residing within the secured boundary walls of his house (at the ground floor) along with his wife (accused Shanti Sharma) and their three children.

"...it is quite clear that accused Satender Sharma had been carrying out his business of manufacturing 'plastic dibbi' from the first floor residence of the deceased," the court had said.

During the trial, Shanti and Satender claimed they had been falsely implicated in the case and were innocent. They had claimed that Dilip had died by slipping and falling on the staircase of the house.

As per the prosecution, in 2015, Dilip was found dead in his north-east Delhi's Brahmputri house, lying near the staircase and the police had noticed injury marks and blood stains on his face and neck.

The case was filed on the complaint of Dilip's brother and both the accused were arrested during the investigation.

Strong winds, light rain likely to improve Delhi's air quality

PTI

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

Delhi's air quality was recorded in the poor category on Friday, and is likely to improve significantly over the next two days due to a predicted increase in the wind speed and light rain.

The city's air quality index (AQI) was 271 at 11 a.m. The 24-hour average AQI was 284 on Thursday.

The neighbouring cities of Ghaziabad (AQI 330), Greater Noida (322) and Noida (310) recorded air quality in the very poor category.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and

200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

The central government's Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi said the air quality is likely to improve significantly on Saturday and Sunday owing to better ventilation conditions and rainfall.

The India Meteorological Department said the national capital and its neighbouring cities are likely to receive light rainfall on Friday and Saturday under the influence of a fresh Western Disturbance passing over the Himalayas. Calm winds and low temperatures trap pollutants close to the ground, while favourable wind speed helps in their dispersion.

The maximum wind speed is predicted to be 15

kmph, favourable for dispersion of pollutants, it said.

After the Western Disturbance withdraws, icy cold northwesterly winds blowing from snow-laden Himalayas will bring temperatures down in the plains, the IMD said.

The minimum temperature is expected to drop to 8 degrees Celsius by Monday, according to an IMD forecast.

The city recorded a minimum of 10.9 degrees Celsius on Friday. The maximum temperature is likely to settle around 29 degrees Celsius.

Calm winds and low temperatures trap pollutants close to the ground, while favourable wind speed helps in their dispersion.

PTI

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

ADelhi court Friday sought reply of the Mandoli jail authorities on whether an accused in a north east Delhi riots case, who alleged that he was badly beaten by the prison officials, can be transferred to another prison.

Tanveer Malik, arrested in the case related to the communal violence in Dayalpur area in February this year, alleged that the incident happened on December 8 and he was not taken to the hospital for medical examination.

The court directed the Jail Superintendent to conduct an inquiry on the fresh allegations also.

Copy of this order was sent to the Jail Superintendent concerned with direction to com-

plete the inquiry as soon as possible and file the report before the court.

Further, the Jail Superintendent is also directed to make inquiry in fresh allegations of the inmate. He shall also file a reply whether the accused can be transferred to some other jail in view of his allegations, it said in its order.

The court put up the matter for further hearing on December 18. It had earlier directed the Jail Superintendent to get Tanveer medically examined from a government hospital before filing the report.

The court in its earlier order had noted the names of the officials against whom allegations have been made by the accused.

It was alleged that the Head

Warden, wardens along with their associates had beaten the accused. He had further claimed that Assistant Superintendent was also present at that time.

Tanveer had alleged his medico-legal case was prepared in the Out-Patient Department (OPD) and he was not taken to the hospital for medical examination. He complained of severe pain and being unable to eat meiseven.

The court in the order had also noted the allegation that money was demanded from him and the Deputy Superintendent had threatened him to implicate him in a false case of smuggling items inside the jail if he made any complaint to any

one. He had prayed that proper medical treatment be provided to him and sought an inquiry on the incident and to punish the culprits.

The incident came to light when advocate Salim Malik, appearing for the accused, informed the court on December 8 that Tanveer has been allegedly beaten inside the jail and was badly injured.

The counsel said he came to know of the incident through the accused's father. Communal violence had broken out in northeast Delhi on February 24 after clashes between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 200 injured.

HC closes suit by Ashok Arora challenging SCBA's decision

PTI

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

With feuding leaders of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) consenting for a settlement, the Delhi High Court Friday closed a suit filed by advocate Ashok Arora challenging the decision of the SCBA to suspend him from the post of secretary, observing that when the bar gets divided, it also weakens the bench which gets strength from lawyers.

Justice Rajiv Shakdher passed an order putting an end to the proceedings after both the parties – Arora and SCBA President Dushyant Dave – consented for a settlement.

EC proceedings henceforth.

The court also said that Arora's suspension will not come in the way of his participation in fresh elections.

Arora said he will withdraw all legal proceedings initiated by regarding his suspension.

Earlier in October, another judge of the high court had refused to grant interim relief of staying the SCBA resolution to Arora. The single judge's order was upheld by a division bench in November. In the suit, Arora has challenged his suspension on the ground that his removal by the Executive Committee of SCBA was in violation of principles of natural justice.

SCBA had earlier told the court that principles of natural justice were followed before suspending its secretary Arora from the post.

It had claimed that there was an attempt to hijack the functioning of the association after which the need to suspend Arora arose.

The Executive Committee of the SCBA had passed a resolution on May 8, sus-

pending Arora from the post of secretary with immediate effect in a meeting held through an online conference.

The suspension had come a day after Arora had called an emergency general meeting (EGM) of the lawyers' body on May 11 to deliberate on the agenda for removing senior advocate Dushyant Dave from the post of SCBA President.

The Executive Committee had also cancelled the proposed EGM and decided to set up a three-member panel to look into the allegations against Arora, an SCBA official had said.

The official had said the decision to suspend Arora was taken by the majority of participating lawyers.

Differences appeared among the top office bearers in the SCBA over the stand taken by the lawyers' body on a "resolution" concerning statements made by Justice Arun Mishra (since retired) about Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the International Judicial Conference-2020.

The BCI had on May 10 stayed the May 8 decision of the Executive Committee of the SCBA to suspend Arora with immediate effect by terming the suspension as illegal, cavalier, undemocratic and autocratic.

Shortly after Dave had issued the February 25 "resolution", allegedly signed by several members of the lawyers' body expressing con-

cern over Justice Mishra's statements, Arora had claimed that "no resolution has been passed" as he did not sign the statement released to the media.

Arora had then said, "There was no executive council or general body meeting of the Association. The President has taken an arbitrary dictatorial and irresponsible stand. He cannot speak on behalf of the SCBA without calling a general body meeting or meeting of the executive council on such a serious issue".

Arora had said that all the communication to the media is to be sent through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is General Secretary of the SCBA.

The lawyers' body in its resolution had said, "The SCBA expresses its strong reservations on the statement and condemns the same strongly. The SCBA believes that the independence of the judiciary is the basic structure under the Constitution of India and that such independence be preserved in letter and spirit."

On February 22, Justice Mishra had praised Prime Minister Modi, while delivering the vote of thanks at the inaugural function of the International Judicial Conference 2020 - "Judiciary and the ChangingWorld" and termed him as an "internationally acclaimed visionary" and a "versatile genius, who thinks globally and acts locally".

Jai Ram submits proposal to Centre for setting up electronic hub in HP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, 11 DECEMBER

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Friday met Union Minister for Railways, Commerce and Industry Piyush Goel at New Delhi on Friday.

The chief minister said that Himachal Pradesh has submitted a proposal to the central government for setting up an electronic hub in the state to fulfil the dream of "Atmanirbhar Bharat" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Thakur said that presently there is huge dependence on China in this sector and with the setting up of this park India would be able to manufacture indigenous electronic devices thereby building self sufficiency in this sector.

He said that the state government was ready to provide land and electricity at competitive rates and requested the centre to provide grants for providing common facilities.

The HPCM pleaded for setting up of Bulk Drug Pharma Park and Medical Devices Park in the state as Himachal Pradesh provides a conducive environment for growth of industries.

He requested the centre to consider the claim of Himachal Pradesh for the project out of the three states to be chosen. Thakur also requested for setting up of power generation transmission distribution equipment hub in the state.

He also thanked the centre for extending its support for the growth of state in all spheres due to that state has reached 7th position from 17th position in ease of doing business. He said that the efforts and hard work of state government is evident as results are speaking volumes of its commitment to growth.

The chief minister also spoke to Mansukh L. Mandaviya, Union Minister of State for Chemical and Fertilizers regarding Bulk Drug Pharma Park and pleaded the claim of the state strongly.

The minister instructed the officials of MC Baddi to start work on new projects and complete them within the deadlines. Elaborating about the projects, the Minister said 22 shops worth Rs. 29 lakh, community hall worth Rs. nine lakh, road works worth Rs 49 lakh, women gym worth Rs. nine lakh and other projects were inaugurated.

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He said that a community hall, open gym, roads, Community Kitchen and parks would be constructed in Baddi.

The minister said that development works would be completed in time.

He said keeping with the pace of urbanization, there is a high demand for infrastructure in urban

areas. "The priority of our government is to facilitate people. We have instructed the officials to complete the projects within stipulated times," he said.

Bhardwaj added that Baddi MC has constructed parking with a capacity of 550 vehicles, converted 6300 square meter areas into parks.

Director Urban Development, RK Gautam was present with the Minister here in Shimla while, MLA Baddi Paramjit Singh Pammie, Chairman MC Baddi Narendar Kumar, Dr. Shrikant, RS Verma and others were present in Baddi on this occasion.



Purnadas Baul and others during the inauguration of Kolkata Festival 2020 at ICCR organised by Shri in Kolkata on Friday.

■ ANAGHA BANIK

More metros for ICDS exam: Metro Railway has decided to run 74 services instead of 68 this Sunday for the aspirants of the ICDS supervisor (female only) Recruitment Examination (Main) 2019. Examinees will just need to show admit cards to gain entry.

SNS

ER maintenance: A planned down time of two hours is required by Eastern Railway for maintenance of two of its PRS Core Routers from 00.30 am. to 02.30 am. this Sunday. For this, Kolkata PRS Data Centre will be unavailable for PRS Internet booking, parcel management system, returning Room transaction during the above period. SNS

TENDER

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, SHIBPUR HOWRAH - 711103
(An Institute of National Importance under MHRD, Govt. of India)
Date: 10.12.2020
Advt. No. CE 1638
RE-TENDER OF E-PROCUREMENT
Quotations are invited for Laser Scanning Vibrometer (1 No.) for DFR sponsored by the Department of Civil Engineering. Please visit the website: <http://www.iiests.ac.in> and <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>. Last Date : 23.12.2020 at 06.00 pm. (A. Code DRCT-019/20-21).
Dean (R&C)

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Second Corrigendum
Sub:- 2nd corrigendum against Tender Notice No. 178-Sig/CW/32/95/Pt-III Dated: 25.11.2020 to be opened on 21.12.2020 invited by Dy.CSTE/CW/NDLS for and on behalf of president of India for the work of "S&T work (Indoor & Outdoor) for Provision of Distributed Electronic Interlocking at Mundhala Kalan and Garhi stations alongwith block working and associated telecom work in c/w new line between Rohtak - Maham - Hansi on Delhi Division of Northern Railway" may now be treated as cancelled. It will be cancelled due to administrative reasons.
No. 178-Sig/CW/32/95/Pt-III Dated 11.12.2020
2770/2020
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)
NIT No. 31-2020-21-W-V
1 Name of Work Provision of C&W examination infrastructure facilities required at Farukh Nagar for the examination of BCA/BCB (Automobile Loading) Rakes under ADEN/DEE. Similar nature of work: Any civil work other than track work.
2 Approx. Cost of work Rs. 6673412.98
3 Earnest Money (It should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only. Note:- FDR will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Boards letter no. 201025/CE-ICT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016) Rs. 133500.00
4 Completion period of the work 4 Months
5 Date & Time for submission of tender and opening of tender Upto 15.00 hrs on 08.01.2021 Opening of tender at 15.00 hrs on 08.01.2021
6 Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.
Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in

No. 128-W/280/OET/2020-21-W-V/NIT-31 Dated : 10.12.2020
2767/20
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
For and on behalf of the President of India, the Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer (Train Set), Northern Railway Charbagh Workshop, Lucknow invites following e-tender from reputed firms for works as given below:
Tender No. W-CB-IC-Door-2020-21-05R
Name of work AMC & POH (18 Months Schedule) for Vande Bharat (Train-18) for IC Coaches. Make- M/s Parag Polymers. Qty.: 02 Rake (64 Nos.)
Estimated Cost of work ₹90,17,560/- inclusive of GST @18%
Earnest Money ₹1,80,400/- only (accepted through net banking or payment gateway only)
Cost of Tender Form ₹5000 only (accepted through net banking or payment gateway only)
Period of Contract 18 Years
Date & Time for Submission of Tender From 17.12.2020 to 06.01.2021 upto 15:00 hrs.
Date and Time for Opening of Tender After 15:15 hrs on 06.01.2021
The tender form may be submitted at the website: www.ireps.gov.in from 17.12.2020 to 06.01.2021 (upto 15:00 hrs.). Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payment against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipt, FDR etc. are not allowed. The tender will be opened on specified date and time as above. In case the above date is a holiday the tender opening would be conducted at the same times on the next working day. No post tender correspondence for submission of additional documents shall be entertained after opening the technical & commercial offers. Even suo-moto post letter of the tender shall be treated as NULL & Void.
Tender Notice No. NR/CB Workshop/December/IC Door/2020-21/05R
Dated: 10.12.2020
2771/20
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE



We can only say he is a conduit pipe of Bharatiya Janata Party

REACTING ON JAGDEEP DHANKHAR'S STATEMENTS OVER THE ATTACK ON JP NADDA'S CONVOY

Dhankhar submits report to Centre, asks Mamata not to play with fire

Governor said a dangerous game of insiders and outsiders is going on in Bengal; called attack on Nadda's convoy slur on democratic fabric

SNS & PTI
KOLKATA, 11 DECEMBER

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar Friday said he has sent a report to the Centre about "extremely disturbing developments" in the state, in the backdrop attack on the convoy of BJP president P Nadda.

Castigating the Mamata Banerjee government over the attack, allegedly by TMC supporters, Dhankhar said a dangerous game of insider and outsider is going on in Bengal.

Several vehicles in Nadda's cavalcade were damaged and BJP leaders and workers injured by stone-throwing protesters carrying TMC flags at Sirakol when he was travelling to Diamond Harbour to address a public meeting.

"Finding the situation alarming, as my constitutional duty, I have sent a report to the central government about the extremely disturbing developments that do not augur well for democratic values, that are antithetical to rule of law, that sound death knell of constitutional parameters," he told a press conference at the Raj Bhawan.

"If you move away from the path of the Constitution, then my responsibility begins," the governor said.

The TMC reacted sharply to the governor's remarks, calling him a "conduit pipe" of the BJP.

"The governor has made a habit of speaking to the press daily. We do not want to react to his statements, we can only say he is a conduit pipe of Bharatiya Janata Party," TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee said.

Addressing the press conference where he excoriated Miss Banerjee, Dhankhar asserted, "The governor will vindicate his oath, come what may." He said it is shameful that such an incident occurred on International Human Rights Day. "Accountability will be enforced," he said, cautioning Banerjee not to "play with fire".

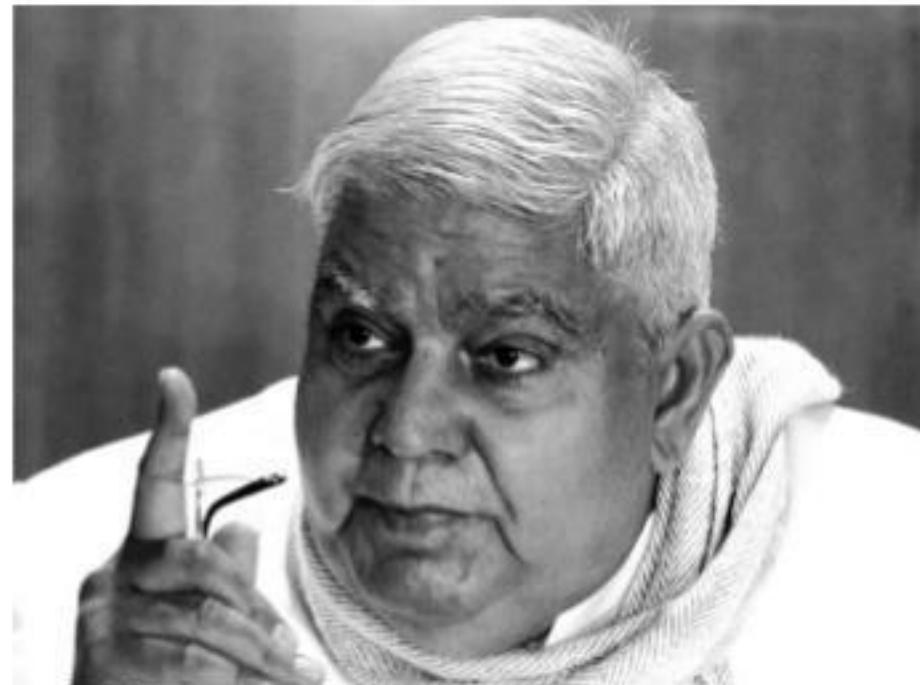
Noting that calling an Indian citizen an outsider is an attack on the Constitution, he said, "This is too dangerous to be acceptable by anyone who believes in Indian Constitution and rule of law."

The TMC supremo has on several occasions said that the BJP is bringing outsiders into the state for the upcoming assembly elections.

Claiming that the BJP is bringing musclemen from outside and sending them to the villages in West Bengal, she had told a farmers' protest rally here on Thursday to challenge them and file FIRs against such entrants.

"If you move away from the path of the Constitution, then my responsibility begins," the governor said.

"The law and order situation in the state has been worsening with each passing



West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar during a press meet at Raj Bhavan in Kolkata on Friday. ■ SNS

day. Despite cautioning the chief minister and the administration nothing has happened," he said.

Dhankhar said the non-responsive stance of the CM towards the Raj Bhawan is an indication that governance in the state is not in accordance with the Constitution.

Claiming that distancing of governance from the rule of law cannot be accepted in democracy, he said, "unconstitutional parameters are at an alarming level making it extremely difficult for me to conclude that governance in the state is in accordance with the Constitution."

Describing the attack on Nadda's convoy on Thursday as most "unfortunate and a slur

on our democratic fabric," he said "The violators of law in Bengal have immunity and protection of political police and administration." Present political scenario in West Bengal is that any opposition is ruthlessly suppressed...human rights were in flames yesterday on World Human Rights Day," Dhankhar said.

Describing Banerjee's comments on the incident of attack on Nadda's convoy as "most unfortunate," he said, "I take a very serious note of the statement that emanated from Hon'ble the Chief Minister, how can a responsible chief minister believing in rule of law, Constitution, subscribing to the rich Bengali culture talk the way she did."

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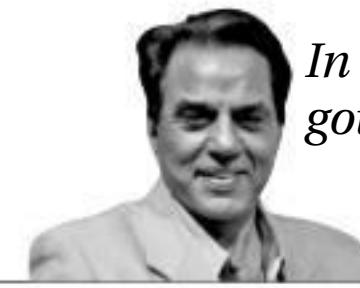
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*In extreme pain to see farmers suffering,
government should step in.*

URGING THE CENTRAL GOVT TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE CONCERN RAISED BY FARMERS

VETERAN ACTOR DHARMDHRA

The Statesman

05

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER 2020

THUMBNAILS



Protesting farmers at Singhu near Delhi on Saturday. ■ DEEPAK RAJPAL

Flesh trade racket: Police busted a flesh trade racket being run under the guise of a massage spa at Thane in Maharashtra and arrested its manager, police said on Friday. Three women employed at the outlet, located in the Kopri area of Thane, were rescued, a spokesman of the city police said. ■ PTI

Bike crash: Two people died when their motorcycle was hit by a vehicle on the Bhopal-Morna road here, police said on Friday. Pradeep Kumar and Deepak were returning from a wedding ceremony in Kakra village in the district on Thursday night, they said. ■ PTI

Dense fog in UP: Dense to very dense fog was observed at isolated places in Uttar Pradesh on Friday, the meteorological department office here said. Day temperatures climbed appreciably in Gorakhpur and fell quite a few notches in Bareilly. ■ PTI

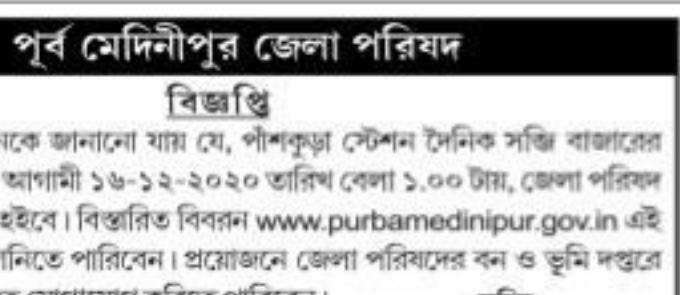
IMA strike: UP private hospitals, doctors support

LUCKNOW, 11 DECEMBER

Private hospitals, nursing homes, and diagnostic centres in Uttar Pradesh on Friday extended support to the strike called by the IMA against the Centre's move allowing post-graduate practitioners of Ayurveda to be trained in performing surgical procedures. Emergency services and treatment of Covid-19 patients have been exempted from the strike.

Government doctors are not a part of the strike.

According to the Uttar Pradesh unit president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) Dr Ashok Rai, there are 21,500 private hospitals, pathologies, diagnostic centres and private doctors in the state who are observing strike. ■ PTI



PUBLIC NOTICE
The general public is informed that State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Haryana vide its Letter No. SEIAA(125)/HR/2020 dated 04.12.2020 has granted Environment Clearance to M/s RPS Infrastructure Ltd. for 'Expansion of IT Park at Village Sarai Khawaja, Sector 27C, Faridabad, Haryana'. And whereas, vide this Public Notice, the general public is also informed that copies of said Environment Clearance letter are available with the Haryana State Pollution Control Board and on the website of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change at www.environmentclearance.nic.in
Place: Faridabad M/s RPS Infrastructure Ltd

FREQUENCY REDUCTION OF TRAINS DUE TO FOGGY WEATHER

It has been decided to cancel the following trains on specified date as mentioned below in the upcoming foggy season 2020-21 w.e.f. 16-12-2020 to 31-01-2021 as under:

Train No.	From — To	Day	Date of Cancellation
02549	Kamakhya - Anand Vihar(T)	Daily	16 th Dec'2020
02550	Anand Vihar(T) - Kamakhya	Daily	18 th Dec'2020
05483	Alipurdur Jn. - Delhi	Daily	16 th Dec'2020
05484	Delhi - Alipurdur Jn.	Daily	18 th Dec'2020
12523	New Jalpaiguri - New Delhi	Tuesday & Saturday	19 th , 22 nd , 26 th , 29 th Dec'2020, 2 nd , 5 th , 9 th , 12 th , 16 th , 19 th , 23 rd , 26 th & 30 th Jan'2021.
12524	New Delhi - New Jalpaiguri	Wednesday & Sunday	20 th , 23 rd , 27 th , 30 th Dec'2020, 03 rd , 06 th , 10 th , 13 th , 17 th , 20 th , 24 th , 27 th & 31 st Jan'2021.
15705	Katihar - Delhi (Champaran Express)	Monday & Thursday	17 th , 21 st , 24 th , 28 th , 31 st Dec'2020, 4 th , 7 th , 11 th , 14 th , 18 th , 21 st , 25 th & 28 th Jan'2021.
15706	Delhi - Katihar (Champaran Express)	Tuesday & Friday	18 th , 22 nd , 25 th , 29 th Dec'2020, 1 st , 5 th , 8 th , 12 th , 15 th , 19 th , 22 nd , 26 th & 29 th Jan'2021.
15483	Alipurdur Jn. - Delhi (Sikkim Mahananda Express)	Daily	16 th Dec'2020 to 31 st Jan'2021
15484	Delhi - Alipurdur Jn. (Sikkim Mahananda Express)	Daily	18 th Dec'2020 to 2 nd Feb'2021

Inconvenience caused to the Passengers is regretted

General Manager (Operations), Maligaon

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

India approves \$448m credit for Uzbekistan

India-Uzbekistan summit: The two countries also resolve to combat terrorism

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 12 DECEMBER

India today approved a \$448 million Line of Credit (LoC) for Uzbekistan for development projects as the two countries resolved to combat terrorism by destroying terrorist safe-havens, networks, infrastructure and funding channels.

They underlined the need for every country to ensure that its territory was not used to launch terror attacks against other countries. The two countries also called for an early finalisation of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev today co-chaired a virtual summit between the two countries and held an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations, the Covid-19 pandemic and regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Both leaders expressed their continued commitment to take India-Uzbekistan strategic partnership to a new and higher level.

"We have similar concerns about extremism, fundamentalism and separatism. We both stand firmly together against terrorism. We also have a similar approach on regional security issues," PM



Narendra Modi said.

At the end of the summit, the two countries also signed nine MoUs in different fields, including new and renewable energy.

Taking stock of the considerable success achieved in their respective countries in containing Covid-19, both leaders emphasised the need for bilateral and global cooperation to continue the fight against the pandemic, a joint statement said.

"India has great potential in areas such as infrastructure, IT, education, health, training and capacity building, which can be useful for Uzbekistan. The establishment of a joint working group on agriculture among us is an important and positive step," he said.

Recalling that both India and Uzbekistan have a mutually identified target of \$ one billion for bilateral trade, the two leaders stressed the importance of making concerted efforts to achieve this target.

The two leaders agreed that both sides should work towards an early conclusion of a bilateral investment treaty which shall facilitate investment promotion and protection for further improvement of trade and economic cooperation.

The Indian side confirmed the approval of \$ 448 million LoC to be extended by India for four developmental projects in Uzbekistan in the fields of road construction, sewerage treatment and information technology.

The Indian side reiterated its commitment to further deepen the development partnership between India and Uzbekistan, including under the framework of India-Central Asia dialogue.

The two leaders welcomed the deepening of their bilateral civil nuclear cooperation, in particular, the con-

clusion of the bilateral agreement between the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership, India and the Agency for Development of Nuclear Energy, Uzbekistan

Noting that defence was an important component of bilateral strategic partnership, the leaders appreciated the enhanced pace of bilateral defence cooperation.

In the context of Afghanistan, the two leaders noted that the establishment of peace and stability in that country was of great importance to the security and stability of the entire region.

They called for the settlement of the Afghan conflict on the principle of Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled peace process.

"We agree that the restoration of peace in Afghanistan requires a process that itself is led, owned and controlled by Afghanistan. It is also necessary to preserve the achievements of the last two decades," Mr Modi said in his remarks.

The statement came in the midst of renewed momentum in the Afghan peace process.

Top Afghan peace negotiator Abdullah Abdullah and several other senior leaders from the country visited India in the last few months to apprise Indian leaders about the peace process.

Don't test tolerance of farmers: Pawar tells Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 11 DECEMBER

The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) has urged the central government to announce a stimulus package for the country's pandemic-hit newspaper industry

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

Amid the ongoing protest by farmers against the Centre's new agriculture laws, NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Friday asked the government not to test the tolerance of the cultivators.

Talking to reporters, the former Union agriculture minister also said that the protest at Delhi borders may spread elsewhere if no timely decision was taken by the Centre on the farmers' demands.

He maintained that the farm bills concerned were passed in a "hurried" manner in the Parliament despite the opposition parties calling for a detailed discussion on them.

Farmers from different states have been camping at Delhi's Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Chilla (Delhi-Noida) border points for nearly two weeks to demand a repeal of the farm laws enacted in September.

Farmers say these laws will eliminate the safety net of minimum support price (MSP) and do away with mandis that ensure earning. But the government says the MSP system will continue and the new laws will give farmers more options to sell their crops.

"Today, farmers have made the extreme demand of withdrawing the laws first and said the issue can be discussed later. The Cen-

tre's position on the same, however, does not seem to be favourable. Hence, there are signs that the deadlock may continue for some more days," Pawar said.

The veteran leader said that more people travelling in around 700 tractors joined the ongoing protest near Delhi border on Friday morning.

"The protest is restricted to Delhi border. But it cannot be ruled out that it may spread elsewhere too if no decision is taken in time.

"We insist the Government of India that the farmer is the 'annadata' (food provider) of the country, his tolerance should not

be tested," he added.

Pawar also refuted speculations made in a section of media on Thursday about him becoming the chairman of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

"It was a false news. Do not run such false news," he said in response to a query.

Pawar also criticised Union minister Raosaheb Danve over his "China and Pakistan behind farmers' protest" remark, saying that such comments should not be given importance.

"Some people are such that they do not have the sense of what should be said where and how. He had made such statements in the past too," Pawar said.

BTC polls counting today

GUWAHATI, 11 DECEMBER

Counting of votes after two-phase polling for Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) will begin tomorrow morning and the results are expected in the afternoon. The second phase polling on Thursday witnessed an impressive participation of electorates of nearing 80 per cent, while the first phase recorded about 77 per cent.

The polls were peaceful and hence there was no re-polling scheduled for today. The ruling Bodoland People's Front is expected to emerge as the single largest party in 40-member council covering four districts in western and central Assam. The other Bodoland dominated party UPCL may merge as the second. The third, fourth and fifth places are expected to be taken by BJP, AIUDF/Congress and GSP respectively.

National Data Centre: A data centre is being established at Amingaon in North Guwahati to cater to the need of the entire northeast India. Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal has taken the lead for the 350-crore state-of-the-art National Data Centre. The required funds for the project will be provided by the Union electronics & information technology ministry. The initiative is expected to emerge as a digital boon for the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura besides Assam. ■NS

AIIMS-Patna sees few volunteers for Covid vaccine trial

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, 11 DECEMBER

Authorities at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Patna are encountering a fairly new problem—very few volunteers are turning up for trial of Covid-19 vaccine. They say while everyone looks interested to be vaccinated against Covid-19, only few offer themselves for trial.

Currently, the trial for the third and final stage of the vaccine is in progress at the AIIMS, Patna but ironically only 40 volunteers turned up

almost missing now. AIIMS authorities said the first phase of trial was completed in just two days while the second phase was completed in three days.

Health experts have expressed concern over this lack of enthusiasm, warning the vaccine use may get longer if the people continued displaying cold response.

"We appeal to the people to reach us in large numbers and offer themselves for vaccine trial so that they could get clearance for use soon," AIIMS director Prabhat Kumar Singh and medical superintendent Dr SM Singh said today.

They added that anyone who has attained 18 years of age and don't have coronavirus infection may register themselves for trial on two numbers issued by the AIIMS. They said the insti-

tute was also giving the conveyance allowance of Rs750 to the volunteer coming to AIIMS with this exclusive purpose.

"They could be partner in containing the deadly Covid-19 by offering themselves for vaccine trial," said AIIMS director.

Reports said the two recent controversies associated with the vaccines have prompted the people to stay away from trial. The first story was reported from the Haryana where the home minister Anil Vij himself tested positive for COVID-19

Ladakh Lt. Gov seeks restoration of Chikhtan Razi Palace

JAMMU, 11 DECEMBER

Lt. Governor of Ladakh, RK Mathur on Friday stressed the need to restore the glory of the Chikhtan Razi Palace, a masterpiece of Tibetan architecture, that is in an advanced stage of decay in the Kargil district.

During a visit to the Shakar Chikhtan Sub Division, Mathur said that necessary restoration of the palace should be done through the expertise of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) in a professional manner. He stated that restoration of the palace will go a long way in giving impetus to heritage. ■NS

India-Uzbekistan summit: The two countries also resolve to combat terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU, 11 DECEMBER

With the Karnataka legislative council getting adjourned sine die without taking up the contentious anti-cow-slaughter Bill passed by the Assembly, chief minister BS Yediyurappa on Friday said, the government will promulgate an ordinance to bring it into effect.

The CM also expressed reservations about the legislative council's Chairman K Pratapachandra Shetty's decision to adjourn sine die "abruptly" and said that the government has decided to convene the house on Tuesday and also petitioned the Governor in this regard.

Shetty on Wednesday set aside the BJP's attempt to move a no-confidence motion against him stating that he was taking legal opinion on the matter, and had refused to include it in the agenda citing rules that the subject could be taken up only after 14 days after submission of notice of no-confidence.

Shetty was elected as the Chairman of the Council during the Congress-JD(S) coalition government.

Currently the ruling BJP is the single largest party in the Council with 31 seats, followed by Congress with 29 seats including the chairman.

The JD(S) has 14 seats and there is one independent.

Free to air?

An unfortunate by-product of the lockdowns that were imposed across the country in March was the impact it had on distribution of newspapers. Some states went so far as to ban distribution, while in others the fears voiced by ill-informed citizens, and fuelled we must say by half-baked experts, led to a boycott of newspapers. Many group housing societies banned the entry of delivery boys, not for the poison some of them may have carried within their pages but out of worry that they came coated with a dreaded virus. When rail and air operations were suspended, supplies to distant places were hit. To overcome this, some people began to circulate digitised pages of the daily newspaper using platforms such as WhatsApp. For some time, newspapers looked the other way, happy the content they had put together overcoming health and other risks that journalists and other newspaper employees faced, were finding an audience even if they did not garner revenues. While restrictions have eased and modes of transportation are available, although with restricted schedules, the practise of distributing newspaper editions through WhatsApp continues, despite legal experts having warned that this is illegal in terms of both the Copyright Act as well as the Information Act. It also entails significant loss of revenue for those who have made their e-papers available only on a subscription model.

Of course, the dissemination of copyrighted content is unlikely to concern WhatsApp, set up in 2009 and owned now by Facebook. For the rapacious aggregation of content to further their own business models has long been a practise of social media giants like Google and Facebook, one that has largely gone unchecked in most parts of the world. While regulators in some jurisdictions, most recently Australia, have sought to inject a degree of balance in the relationship between the publisher and social media companies, India has made no moves in the direction, starry-eyed as the establishment finds itself in the presence of tech giants, especially those from America. Newspapers were among the worst hit by the pandemic but there has been no attempt by the Finance Minister or the Information and Broadcasting minister to recognise the distress of the industry. What is worse, governments in New Delhi and at state headquarters have the spottiest payment records among advertisers, with some like the rulers in Nabanna injecting whimsy into the payment mechanism. To add to their many woes, publishers now find the fruits of their labour being mass circulated through the ether. While publishers must act to protect their intellectual property from opportunistic social media platforms, it devolves on the Ministers of I&B and Information Technology to summon WhatsApp and read its managers the Riot Act. The government may not have time for newspapers or be overly concerned about their health. But surely Mr Prakash Javadekar and Mr Ravi Shankar Prasad ought to be committed to defending the laws of the land. There is, after all, the little matter of the oaths they took.

Bubble trouble

Cricket is quite unlikely ever to tell us if it loses more money when action is frozen because of the Covid-19 pandemic or when scheduled series get scuppered in what could soon be seen as its less than secure bio bubbles. Even if it deigns to let us in on a secret or two, much in the manner of the affable fiftysomething offering the deer in the zoo a kindly lettuce, a lot of the people in or out of their salad days will be quite thankful that England's tour of South Africa ended before its appointed finish, a few suspected coronavirus infections causing it to be abandoned for the moment. Let us not make too much of the fact that a later round of tests nullified results that had earlier been said to be positive, given that well might a third one have upheld the first: Covid-19, after all, is yet to be tamed. England, who had earlier hosted a few series in what is euphemistically described as controlled isolation, would probably have gone home a little doubtful of the efficacy of the new-normal procedure, obliged as they were to deal, with strong denials, the charge that they had not lived up to the requirements of South African coronavirus protocols. So far so bad.

Over in New Zealand, a rapid rise in the number of infections among a purportedly excitable lot of Pakistani cricketers might have led to just as bad a situation, if not worse. And then, the rules of living in the bubble came to be enforced so strictly that the visitors were left wondering aloud if they did not get even to tune up, how they would play. A very, very valid point, that, and, apart from hinting at some vulnerability inside the putatively fool-proof captivity, the goings-on, contrasted with the South African situation, also highlighted a certain lack of administrative leadership in the game. Why must sport carry on like business as usual when people are still dying of the disease? Does the entire, elaborate and in-camera arrangement not look pathetic in the absence of fans in the stands? What if fissures in the fabric of the supposedly hermetically sealed sanctuary ~ many cricketers consider it incarceration ~ result in a loss of life? What about the widely voiced complaint about the psychological damage cricketers suffer inevitably inside the luxurious prison? These are questions for the International Cricket Council to answer but, monomaniacally pursuing revenue, it lets everything else drift. The South African situation showed, however, that cricket was taking too much for granted, and as fresh series, here, there and everywhere were planned and announced, the world could only send up silent prayers for it to dawn on officialdom that being cavalier, and getting away with it might not be the story every time it is written.

Consultative processes

The Government would do well to devise a mechanism to avoid the outpouring of public anger of the kind being witnessed now. The public resents being taken for granted; even beneficial steps have to be taken after discussion. The first step by the Government could, therefore, be to shed its propensity to act in haste, without consulting stakeholders



The current farmers' protest brings back memories of the Jan Lokpal agitation of 2011 when Delhi was almost overrun by protesters. To recapitulate, a draft Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill was proposed by a Group of Ministers in 2011, which was found highly inadequate by civil society. Anna Hazare and some other leaders of India Against Corruption sat on an indefinite fast against the proposed Bill. In a show of solidarity, lakhs of Anna supporters milled around Delhi for four days, holding the city to ransom.

The Government of the day capitulated to the protesters, promising immediate passage of the Bill, in the form desired by the protesters. However, the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act could be passed only in 2013, that too, after two more rounds of protests. The Act was implemented only in 2019, after several more rounds of protests and fasts by Anna Hazare.

It would thus appear that governments listen to public opinion only when forced to do so. But protests derail normal life and entail a heavy toll on the economy. Surely, in a democracy like ours, a way could be found to convey the public's concerns to legislatures, after which all concerned can have an informed dialogue leading to an acceptable conclusion.

It would probably be better if before drafting any legislation, public comments are invited and the legislation is drafted keeping all concerns in mind. Of course, there are many situations where the Government needs to act in a hurry or to observe secrecy; the extant procedure of moving bills or ordinances may be followed in such cases.

Prior public consultation before presenting a Bill is not unheard of; prior to announcing any policy or moving a legislative proposal, the British government puts in the public domain consultation documents called Green Papers that allow people, both inside and outside Parliament, to give the concerned department feedback on its policy or legislative proposals. The British Government also issues White Papers as statements of policy, that often set out proposals for legislative changes, which may be debated before a Bill is introduced. The practice of issuing Green and White Papers lessens acrimony and ensures that the Government comes to know of all reservations that the public has vis-à-vis any proposed

policy or legislation.

Theoretically, similar provisions exist in India. A Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy (PLCP) was announced by the Government on 5 February 2014. Under PLCP, all Departments and Ministries are required to proactively publish the draft legislation or at least essential elements of the proposed legislation, a brief justification for such legislation, its broad financial implications, and an estimated assessment of the impact of such legislation on environment, fundamental rights, lives and livelihoods of the affected people. Such details are to be proactively shared with the public and kept in

the public domain for a minimum period of thirty days. Thereafter, the summary of feedback/comments received from the public/other stakeholders is also to be placed on the website of the Department/Ministry concerned. At the time of examination of the draft legislation or rules, the Ministry of Law and Justice must ensure that the concerned Department/Ministry had complied with the process of pre-legislative consultation. Finally, before presenting the new policy or Bill to the Parliament, the Cabinet is to be made aware of the feedback of the public and the response of the Department/Ministry thereto. Alternatively, after recording reasons, Departments/Ministries have been given the option of bypassing this procedure.

It would appear that the Government has invariably pursued the latter option, because in practice, laws are drafted by bureaucrats who have little concern for public opinion. Arun PS and Sushmita Singh in their study "Democratising Law Making - The Tale of PLCP" state that 89 per cent of Bills introduced in parliament from June 2014 to May 2019 were passed in secrecy, after little or no consultation. The ruling party ensured the passage of Bills by its majority in Parliament; most amendments moved by opposition MPs to improve upon the legislation were defeated, often influenced by political factors rather than policy-based ones.

Also, far-reaching changes in policy are often rammed through. For example, the Draft Coastal Regulation Zone Notification

2019 was not put in the public domain and 90 per cent of the objections raised by the fishing community and environmental groups were ignored. Similarly, the deadline for providing feedback on Environment Impact Assessment Notification 2020 was unilaterally pushed back from 10 August 2020 to 30 June 2020, by the Minister concerned.

Disturbingly, debates in Parliament are becoming fewer; important Bills like the Finance Bill 2018 (Union Budget for 2018-19) are often passed without debate or with little debate. Not many Bills are being referred to Parliamentary Committees, from

68 Bills being referred in the 15th Lok Sabha the number came down to 24 in the 16th Lok Sabha ~ and touched zero in 2020. The last Bill referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee was the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Second Amendment) Bill in

2015. Then, there is the recently invented practice of presenting ordinary Bills as Money Bills; the Finance Act 2017 had numerous provisions that had nothing to do either with the imposition of taxes or appropriation of sums out of the Consolidated Fund of India. While striking down certain provisions of the Finance Act 2017, a five-judge Constitution Bench, led by the Chief Justice of India, ordered that the validity of the passage of the Finance Act 2017 as a Money Bill should be decided by a larger Bench.

Lawmakers are supposed to abide by the golden maxim of parliamentary democracy. "The majority will have its way but the minority must have its say." But a major controversy surrounds the enactment of the contentious farmers' Acts, with opposition parties alleging that they were not given enough opportunity to debate or vote on the Bills.

The endless protests over the three farmers' Acts could, probably, have been avoided had the Government consulted the public and listened to their concerns before enacting these laws. However, the Government appears to have disregarded public concerns. There were sporadic protests when the three Ordinances, that preceded the farmers' Acts were promulgated in June 2020.

Enactment of the farmer's Acts in September, 2020 led to widespread protests in Punjab from September to November 2020, which were mostly ignored by the Central Government. Only when tens of thousand farmers descended upon Delhi did the Government move to address their concerns. A head in the sand attitude scarce behoves a Government that enjoys an absolute majority in both Houses of Parliament. The legislative practices followed by State Legislatures are even worse. As pointed out in my article "Legislative Overreach" (*The Statesman*, 29 November), State enactments often try to criminalise personal preferences in matters of diet, lifestyle and sex. Laws passed by State Legislatures are often unnecessarily harsh and sometimes fail the test of judicial scrutiny or to achieve their avowed objects.

The Government would do well to devise a mechanism to avoid the outpouring of public anger of the kind being witnessed now. The public resents being taken for granted; even beneficial steps have to be taken after discussion. The first step by the Government could, therefore, be to shed its propensity to act in haste, without consulting stakeholders. Then, the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy should invariably be followed and the Manual for Parliamentary Procedures may be amended to ensure that reasons are invariably assigned for rejecting public feedback or the recommendations of a Parliamentary Committee.

Of course, Parliament is supreme and can pass whatever laws it deems fit. However, Parliamentarians would do well to remember their responsibility of keeping the interests of their constituents foremost, which has been beautifully summed up by the Supreme Court in the celebrated case of Peoples' Union of Civil Liberties vs. Union of India: "The citizens of the country are enabled to take part in the Government through their chosen representatives."

In a Parliamentary democracy like ours, the Government of the day is responsible to the people through their elected representatives. The elected representative acts or is supposed to act as a live link between the people and the Government. The peoples' representatives fill the role of law-makers and custodians of Government. People look to them for ventilation and redressal of their grievances. They are the focal point of the will and authority of the people at large."

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Decentralising public health for post-Covid recovery

The coronavirus has had a disproportionate impact on developing countries such as Bangladesh. Although the number of cases and fatalities has been higher in developed countries, the absence of a sufficient surveillance and reporting infrastructure has meant that the toll of the virus in informal communities, peri-urban areas and secondary cities remains untold. Developing countries are also disproportionately impacted economically, with many poor households losing their jobs due to the coronavirus induced slowdown of the global economy, and not possessing the kind of jobs or technological capacity to engage in working from home, or the assets to buffer against economic shocks. Bangladesh in particular remains highly vulnerable in being able to address both the health and economic issues relating to the coronavirus.

Despite this, secondary cities (cities with populations in between 50,000 and three million) can improve Bangladesh's resilience to external shocks by diversifying economic opportunities and supporting the social environment. Critically, Bangladesh's secondary cities can relieve demand pressures on existing urban infrastructure in places such as Dhaka. This does not entail a relocation policy, but rather local investment and providing the stimulus to allow these cities to establish their own comparative advantages. Above all and in light

The Daily Star

of the pandemic, significant investment must be made in health infrastructure to create an enabling environment for growth in these areas and provide an opportunity for populations becoming increasingly displaced and disenfranchised by climate change. In terms of healthcare, Bangladesh is crippled by an overwhelmed health infrastructure that remains highly concentrated in major metropolitan areas such as Dhaka or Chattogram. Although secondary cities constitute 40 percent of Bangladesh's urban population, state investment in its health infrastructure remains lacking. The absence of healthcare services has meant that citizens have been denied healthcare during a pandemic.

The lack of healthcare in secondary cities presents a bidirectional problem; it prevents access to coronavirus-related treatment but also compromises the ability for epidemiologists to undertake effective surveillance of the coronavirus or other endemic diseases. In secondary cities such as Dinajpur, the absence of public hospitals has resulted in the private sector filling this void, leading to large out-of-pocket expenses and denying most people access to healthcare.

PERSONAL

ANNUAL General Meeting of Calcutta Y.M.C.A. will be held today at 4:30 p.m. Keeping in mind the prevailing pandemic situation, meeting will be organized and held on a digital platform (Zoom) this year (Virtual mode). Mr. Terence John, President of the Association will be in the Chair.

ANNUAL Public Meeting of Calcutta Y.M.C.A. will be held today at 5:30 p.m. Keeping in mind the prevailing pandemic situation, meeting will be organized and held on a digital platform (Zoom) this year (Virtual mode). Mr. Bertram Devadas, National General Secretary, The National Council of YMCAs of India will bring the Anniversary Greetings.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Rajni's entry

SIR, This refers to Kalyani Shankar's article, "Rajnikant stirs up TN politics" (Perspective, 6 December). Rajnikant, the superstar-turned politician is all set to launch a new party in January, to the surprise of the people of Tamil Nadu. His entrance in politics assumes importance in that it could redraw the political contours of the state. He has achieved astounding success in the entertainment industry. From humble beginnings he has risen to become "Thalaivaa" for his fans. His fan base is the sole solid asset he has to make it as a politician.

The seamless transformation of his fan clubs into a viable political organization could become a daunt-

ing task. Many of his fans could already be members of other political parties; they may even have their own ideological convictions and they may find it difficult to transfer their loyalty to a



new party despite their devotion to their demi-God.

As an actor, Rajnikant has scaled the heights of fame and made a name for himself with his inimitable style. His heroics on the screen have earned him immense commendation. But politics is a different arena altogether and requires more than cinematic gimmicks. Acting skills do not translate into leadership qualities. An actor could be as clueless in the political sphere as a politician in Tinseltown. The distance between the realm of fantasy and the rough and tumble of politics remains as great as ever. Some have, however, made this transition. Now Rajnikant has to show that he has it in him to travel the distance. The greatest hindrance for Rajnikant's emergence

as a widely acceptable leader and the 'translation' of his appeal as a film hero into votes is his identification with the Hindu right-wing.

He has already been called out on his support for right-wing, Hindutva-oriented political forces. With his

political posturing, he has earned the epithet of being 'a closest sanghi'. His 'safron politics' is what he is trying to disguise as 'spiritual politics'. It is not clear why he is floating a new party instead of just joining the BJP. The future will say what is in

store for the superstar. Ms Shankar has rightly concluded ~ "The picture is hazy right now but in a month or two, the poll scene will become clearer."

Yours, etc., Narayan Chandra Ghosh, Madanpur, 8 December.

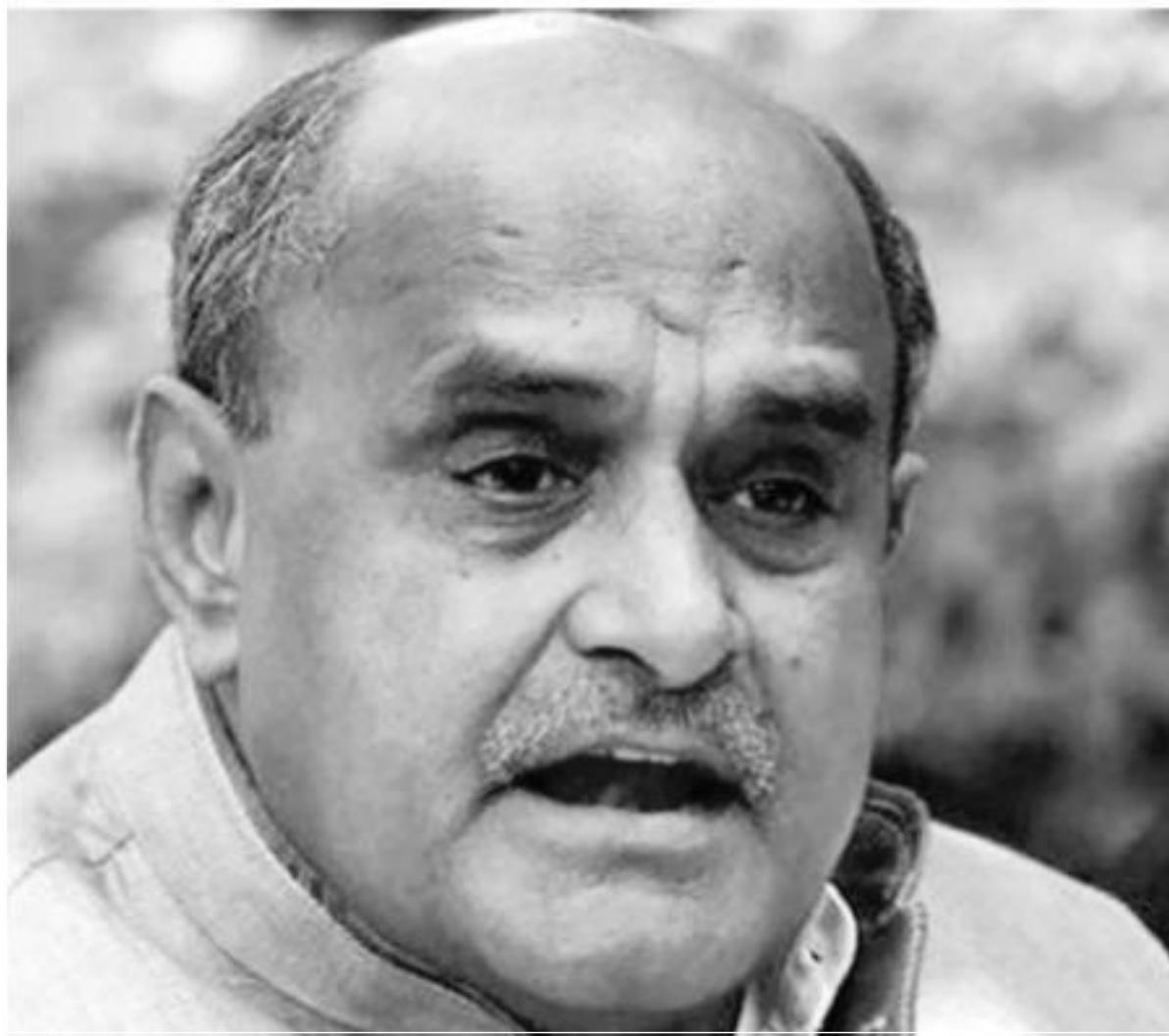
UTTERLY UNFAIR

SIR, Australia's Matthew Wade enjoyed a controversial reprieve in the third and final T20I when India was denied an lbw referral after the umpires had begun the DRS process.

The incident happened in the 11th over of the match when T Natarajan hit Wade on the pad, with umpire Rod Tucker declining the lbw appeal. India then went for the DRS, which Tucker accepted, even as Wade and non-striker Glenn Maxwell pointed out that the replay had been shown on the giant screen. Third umpire Paul Wilson too began the process of review but withdrew abruptly. India captain Virat Kohli later walked up to umpire Tucker for a clarification which was neither entertained nor the referral accepted. The decision was not changed although the entire world saw that Wade had been out plumb leg-before-wicket. Wade was on 50 off 35 balls at that stage. He went on to make 80 off 53 as Australia ended with 186 for 5. ICC need to take disciplinary action against Matthew Wade and caution both third Umpire Paul Wilson and field Umpire Tucker for a clear breach of impartiality/neutrality and making a jaundiced decision in favour of Wade.

Yours, etc., Samares Bandyopadhyay, Kolkata, 8 December.

'Love jihad's just propaganda'



A veteran socialist leader, **K C TYAGI** is national general secretary and national spokesman of the Janata Dal United. He entered politics in 1974 when he joined the Rashtriya Lok Dal. He contested for the Lok Sabha elections for the first time in 1984. A distinguished parliamentarian, Tyagi is a former member of the Lok Sabha as well as the Rajya Sabha. He was also chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry. In an interview with **ABHIJEET ANAND**, Tyagi shares his thoughts on various issues—especially those relating to the recent Bihar Assembly polls in which chief minister Nitish Kumar-led JD-U fared poorly although it managed to retain power thanks to its alliance partner BJP's sound performance. Excerpts:

Q. The Grand Alliance lost the Bihar elections and yet it claimed that it got victory. Your reaction?

A. The RJD plus and particularly the JD have no faith in constitutional authority and its organs. They are accusing the NDA of rigging the election results. They approached the Election Commission. There is a tradition that if you have some objections during the counting you can put it before the Counting Officer. They did not protest even once... when the margin became so narrow and it became very evident that they are going to lose. After the result was declared they approached the Election Officer that recounting must be done. There is a process. I have contested the Lok Sabha elections six times. There is a process that if you have some doubt in your mind then during the counting process you can put your objections on record. Now they are accusing the Election Commission also.

Q. The RJD has intensified its attacks on the JD-U after the elections. Has the drubbing at the hands of the RJD

put the JD-U on the backfoot?

A. There was a conspiracy from within and outside to cut JD-U and Nitish Kumar down to size. The entire campaign of the Grand Alliance was against Nitish Kumar, not against our other partner. The LJP called Narendra Modi its leader and he (LJP chief Chirag Paswan) said he is Hanuman of PM Modi. He (Chirag) was doing all the dirty things in the name of Narendra Modi. All top BJP leaders including Modi, Amit Shah and even party president J P Nadda said many times that the NDA in Bihar means the JD-U, BJP, VIP plus him (Chirag). Even then he was continuously contesting elections and abusing Nitish Kumar. He is responsible for the defeat of major candidates of JD-U... some BJP candidates... but mostly of JD-U candidates in 40 assembly seats. So it was a conspiracy to cut JD-U and Nitish Kumar down to size.

Q. But Nitish Kumar looks demoralised after the elections?

A. Why should he be demoralised? We got 16 per cent votes. Last time also we had got 16 per cent votes. The vote percentage of the JD-U indicates the popularity of Nitish Kumar among certain sections of society. This is what used to be earlier also. We are not demoralised. We are angry.

Q. Are you doing an introspection as to why you got fewer seats?

A. As I earlier told you, it was a conspiracy against the JD-U and Nitish. Covid-19 is not the product of Nitish Kumar. It is a natural calamity. Even then we are accused for that. Bihar is the least affected state by Covid and has seen number of deaths. The so-called states and cities which claims to be Class I including Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai etc. So it was a conspiracy to cut JD-U and Nitish Kumar down to size.

and Bengaluru... people are dying, cases are growing. But this is not the case in Bihar. Yes, there was migration from Bihar. This is not Nitish-made. This is the outcome of the wrong policies of the government. We are not an industrialised state. The poor people after the lockdown, they wanted to come back because they were ousted from their houses and from jobs also. Lot of people gathered. They were suffering all kinds of hardships during their return to Bihar. We are very sorry. If there would have been some jobs and opportunities in Bihar they wouldn't have met this kind of problems which they faced. They were angry. But the anger was not against us. It was against the system.

Q. Why are you blaming Covid for the drubbing in elections?

A. Even the mightiest man of the world, Trump, lost because of Covid. Because maximum number of people have died in America (due to Covid). And the mighty Trump and Trump administration was not able to find a vaccine. Even he was accused by them. And it was the main campaign of Biden against Trump that he failed to resolve this Covid problem. So the result is very evident. For the entire episode of migration, agony, disaster and hardship, Nitish Kumar is being blamed as if Covid has been brought by Nitish and the suffering is because of him.

Q. But, at the same time, you are blaming the LJP too?

A. The LJP claims to be a part of the NDA. He (Chirag) was asking seats from the BJP. The JD-U and the LJP have never contested elections together. 2005, 2010, 2015 and now 2020. We never contested together. They are the partner of the BJP. They were asking some seats from the BJP. Even Amit Shah is on record that he (Chirag) was demanding more seats. It was not possible for the BJP to fulfill. So, he directed all his ammu-

tion against the JD-U and Nitish Kumar, claiming that we are responsible for it. And he was putting up candidates particularly against the JD-U candidates. He had a secret understanding with the RJD also. In the seats of Tejashwi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav, such candidates were put up, which was beneficial for both of them.

Q. Have you written any letter to the BJP asking for removal of the LJP from the NDA?

A. Even Prime Minister has said in his public meeting... in Bihar, the NDA means to be led by Nitish Kumar in which the JD-U, BJP, VIP and HAM exist. We don't consider him (Chirag) a part of the NDA. He is not in the NDA.

Q. What are your views on the legislation being framed against the so-called 'love jihad' or unlawful conversion?

A. The Supreme Court has said on record that an adult man and a woman can marry and also can be in a live-in partnership. So religion doesn't come into it. It is unnecessary propaganda by some persons and organisations. And there does not exist anything like "love jihad" in Bihar. Therefore, there is no need of any such legislation in Bihar.

Q. What would you say about parties like the AIMIM gaining five seats in the Bihar polls?

A. They (AIMIM) contested last time also but they could get only one seat. This is the incompetency of Tejashwi Yadav and the Grand Alliance that they could not get support even from the minority community. They were paying lip service to the minority community. Therefore, a person came from Hyderabad and was able to get five seats. It used to be the strongest base of the RJD. But, now the RJD is losing its support among the minorities also.

even at incredibly small levels.

In India, after planning to ban 27 pesticides, the Centre has now moved to curb the use of glyphosate, a widely used herbicide in the country. A draft notification issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, published on July 8 said: "No person shall use glyphosate except through Pest Control Operators".

The Restriction on use of Glyphosate Order, 2020, will come into force on the date of its final publication in the Official Gazette, the Ministry said in a notification. The use of glyphosate has been on the rise as farmers have been increasingly relying on chemicals to tackle labour shortage, rising costs and to protect their yields from weeds. According to the industry, the government's proposed move is impractical.

While issuing this draft notification, the government did not critically appraise the full set of repercussions with glyphosate considering its ill-effects, correct dose of chemical that would not harm human health and environment and availability of pest control operators in rural areas. The Government must think of banning the chemical to ensure safe food and to protect the environment.

Scientific truth must not be manipulated simply to maximize profits of the corporate brigades at the expense of human health and environment. Despite knowing the ill effects of glyphosate, huge amounts of toxic lentils, pulses and chickpeas are still being imported from countries that use glyphosate and other synthetic chemicals. The high level of pesticides including glyphosate residues in both Indian and Canadian pulses, based on the findings of researchers, is a matter of serious health risk to a billion plus nation, as dal is ubiquitous in our diet.

The writer is former Senior Scientist, Central Poultry Control Board.

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The controversy on the question of battleships v. submarines shows amongst other points that expert opinion can be obtained to support both sides - not an uncommon experience. Sir Percy Scott utterly condemns the building of battleships, and maintains that, if neither Britain nor Germany had possessed any, the result of the naval war would have been the same. On the other hand, Captain Dewar, who served on the Naval War Staff, is equally decided in his opinion that battleships must remain an integral part of the British Navy for many years. When experts differ, the public, like the jury, must decide; and the ordinary common-sense of the man-in-the-street probably would decide that we want both battleships and submarines and cannot do without either. Moreover the physique of the personnel of the Navy is a consideration not to be overlooked, and to the lay mind it seems doubtful whether the splendid body of men trained on the surface craft of the Navy could maintain the same physical standard under the conditions of submarine service. The big battleship was supposed to be doomed first by submarines, and then by aircraft; but big ships are still being built because they are relied upon as the mainstay of naval power, while on the other hand, the fighting value both of submarines and of aircraft has been counterbalanced to no small extent by the means of resistance which were developed during the progress of the war.

NEWS ITEMS

RAILWAY EARNINGS

As the financial prosperity of the railways, as evidenced by the statistics of approximate gross earnings published weekly, is liable to be interpreted as indicating an unduly favourable state of affairs the following facts are of interest. The favourable results in regard to gross earnings have been accompanied by a very heavy increase in expenditure, due to the general rise in wages, in the cost of material, and in the price of fuel. As a result of these causes it is now estimated that the ordinary working expenses of the railways in India have risen by about 82 per cent since 1914 as compared with a rise of about 54 per cent in the gross earnings for the same period. In addition to this, it has to be remembered that heavy renewals, long overdue on account of the war, have to be made good.

BRITISH OFFICER'S BRAVERY

A splendid act of individual courage by an Englishman in the Crimea has only now been reported. It appears that Wrangel's big ammunition dump in Sevastopol was blown up by Bolshevik agents. The explosion was extremely violent, and a large quantity of shells for the field artillery was destroyed shells and big brass cartridge cases for them were hurtling through the air, and some of the Allied warships lying in the harbour were obliged to weigh anchor precipitately in order to escape the deadly shower. A big steamer of the Russian Volunteer Fleet had just been berthed alongside the quay where the ammunition dump was situated. Part of the panic-stricken crew tumbled into the boats and rowed away; the rest disappeared below.

ALL-INDIA POULTRY SHOW

Lucknow, Dec 11
The eighth All-India Poultry show which took place in the Government Horticultural gardens yesterday was of a very successful character. There were about 200 exhibits. The heavy varieties were specially good and a feature of the show was the number of exhibits by Indian residents. His Honour, Sir Harcourt Butler, after distributing the prizes presented by the U.P. Government and local donors, said there was every reason to be proud of the show and of its representative character. He regretted that Colonel Tyrrell was not present, but said that a very efficient substitute had been found in Mrs. Fawkes, whom he congratulated on the results of her energy. He said he had been greatly impressed with the importance of the poultry industry.

FALL OF THE RUPEE

The Times points out that the fall of the rupee below one and five pence has created a bad impression, but it is the natural outcome of the deadness characterising the Indian export trade for some time past. Eastern bankers in London think that the weakness has been overdone and they foreshadow an immediate reaction upwards. However, there is small cause to anticipate a sustained recovery until there are signs of improvement in Indian trade. The Times says that there are no grounds for alarmist views, as India should be able to command large resources from the war with which to face the present lean times.

Cancer may lurk in pulses we eat

DEBAPRIYA MUKHERJEE



to pay damages of up to \$2bn to individuals with cancer; it faces many more lawsuits.

In 2015, the World Health Organization's cancer agency, the IARC, declared that glyphosate was "probably carcinogenic to humans". Research shows that the percentage of Americans with detectable levels of glyphosate in their bodies increased from 12 per cent in the mid-1970s to 70 per cent by 2014. This would suggest US regulations have not kept pace with the latest science. Almost three-quarters of the peer-reviewed papers looked at by IARC found evidence of genotoxicity in glyphosate, compared with just 1 per cent of industry analyses.

Researchers at a UK consultancy ADAS in 2014 concluded the loss of glyphosate would cause very severe impacts on UK agriculture and the environment with a 20 per cent fall in wheat and rapeseed production and a 25 per cent increase in greenhouse gas emissions – a rise of 12 m. tonnes a year – if glyphosate was banned. Because glyphosate weed killer allows

planting without ploughing, which helps stop carbon being released to the atmosphere. The ADAS research was used by the National Farmers Union in lobbying against an EU ban in 2017 when the renewal of the licence for glyphosate was being considered.

Bayer said farmers around the globe rely on glyphosate to provide enough food for the world's growing population. But a German transparency campaign group, Lobby Control revealed two pro-glyphosate German studies that were partly funded by Monsanto and published in 2011 and 2015 without the funding being declared and said, "This is an unacceptable form of opaque lobbying". Considering the ill-effects of glyphosate, 1.2 million citizens filed a petition calling for an EU ban but the pesticide licence was renewed for five years. However, this was far shorter than the 15 years that had been sought.

Despite its carcinogenic effect, use of the chemical has grown exponentially, with the chemical giant

Monsanto – purchased by Bayer in 2018 – dominating the market. The researchers, based on scientific evidence, have explored the dangers of glyphosate – harmful to both human health and the environment. Argentine scientists found that glyphosate causes birth defects in frogs and chickens. Doctors in Paraguay and Argentina have reported on serious ill-effects like infertility, stillbirths, miscarriage and cancer in GM Soy producing areas. The Chinese Army has reportedly banned all GM foods due to glyphosate residue. Epidemiological evidence supports strong temporal correlations between glyphosate usage on crops and a multitude of cancers that are reaching epidemic proportions, including breast cancer, pancreatic cancer, kidney cancer, thyroid cancer, liver cancer, bladder cancer and myeloid leukaemia. Glyphosate in lentils originated from Canada is suspected to enter the Indian stomach in ever increasing doses and probably it is one of the major contributing factors behind the apparent runaway increase of autoimmune diseases.

This glyphosate is a powerful antibiotic that kills a lot of beneficial gut bacteria.

US regulators set one "safe" level for all of us but they ignore the compounding effects of our daily exposures to combined pesticides and other industrial chemicals. They did not consider the higher risks at different times in our lives and in different conditions: a developing foetus, for instance, is particularly vulnerable to toxic exposures, as are children and the immunocompromised. New research also shows that chemicals called "endocrine disruptors" can increase risk of cancers, learning disabilities, birth defects, obesity, diabetes and reproductive disorders,

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CROSSWORD

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12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67
68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	



The overall economic scenario would determine the industry's (automobile) performance going forward

RAJESH MENON
DIRECTOR-GENERAL, SIAM

THUMBNAILS

Narrow band IoT: BSNL, in partnership with Skylon tech India, has announced a breakthrough in satellite-based NB-IoT (narrow band Internet of Things), in pursuance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a truly Digital India, starting with fishermen, farmers, construction, mining and logistics enterprises. With this solution, India will now have access to a ubiquitous fabric of connectivity for millions of yet unconnected machines, sensors and industrial IoT devices, according to a release. SNS

Samsung vision: Samsung has launched ~PoweringDigitalIndia, its brand new vision for the country that will be driven by an exciting new citizenship programme aimed at students across the nation, a refreshed local research and development (R&D) strategy with special focus on the local startup community and new initiatives in manufacturing, said a Press statement. The new vision is being unveiled as Samsung completes 25 successful years in the country, it said. SNS

BreezeERP: BreezeERP, a cloud-based enterprise resource planner, has added advanced features to facilitate SMEs & MSMEs to have better business intelligence, data access remotely without complex technical configuration or robust IT infrastructure, faster implementation, thus enabling businesses to focus on their core competencies, according to a release from Indus Net Technologies. SNS

PhonePe: Digital payments platform PhonePe on Friday announced some exciting offers that customers can avail this Christmas. The offer includes cashback of up to Rs 2,000 or up to 25 per cent off on partner brands' gift cards for apparel shopping, jewellery, groceries shopping, dining and others. These offers will be available till 31 December, said a Press release. SNS

Banks sanction ₹2.05 lakh crore to 81 lakh MSMEs under ECLGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

The finance ministry today said banks have sanctioned loans worth Rs 2,05,563 crore to about 81 lakh accounts under the Rs 3-lakh crore emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS) for the MSME sector that was impacted by disruptions caused due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Forty lakh MSME accounts have received Rs 1,58,626 crore till 4 December, the finance ministry said in a series of tweets.

"Rs 3 lakh cr collateral-free guaranteed loans, Budgetary provision of Rs 4,000 crore made for the scheme in first supplementary demand for grants for FY 2020-21," a tweet said.

Will continue to take steps to push growth: DEA secy

GDP numbers will further improve in the second half of current financial year, says Tarun Bajaj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

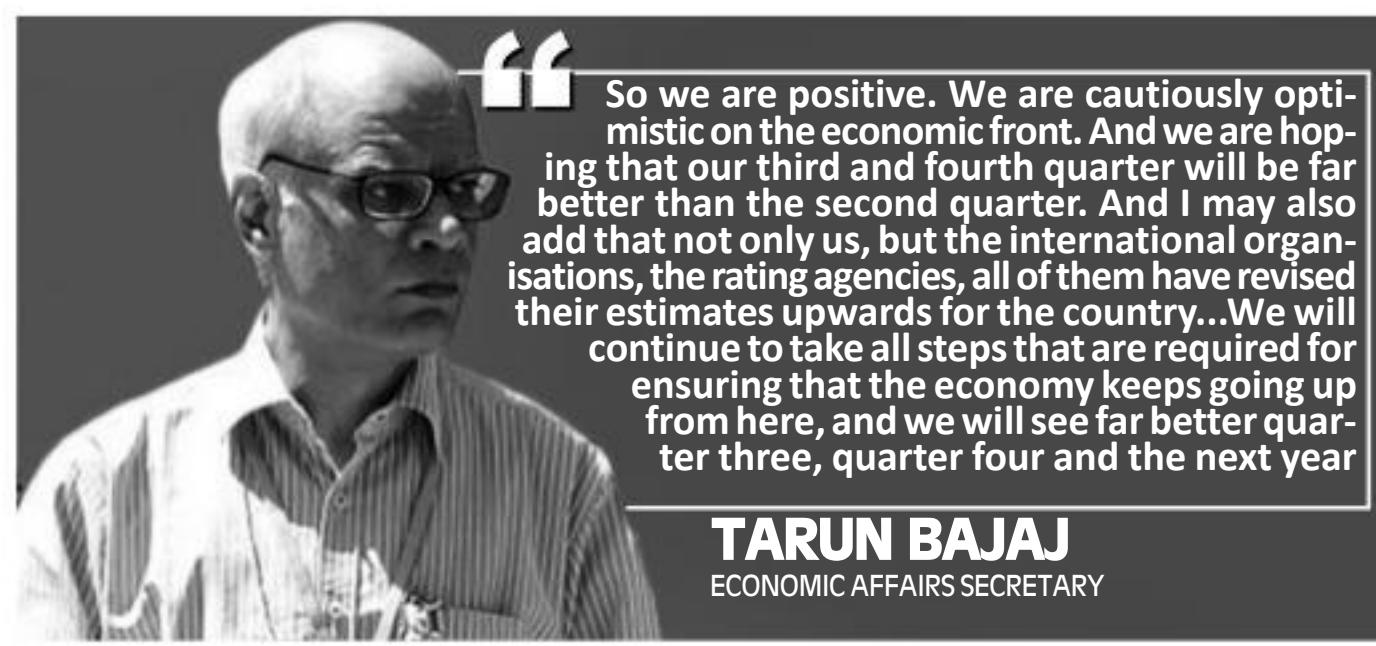
The government is cautiously optimistic on the economic front and will continue to take measures to push growth, economic affairs secretary Tarun Bajaj said today.

Addressing Ficci's annual convention, he said the second quarter GDP number was much better than market expectations and it will further improve in the second half of the current financial year.

The economy contracted by 7.5 per cent in the second quarter, against 23.9 per cent degrowth in the first quarter of this fiscal on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"So we are positive. We are cautiously optimistic on the economic front. And we are hoping that our third and fourth quarter will be far better than the second quarter.

"And I may also add that not only us, but the international organisations, the rating agencies, all of them have revised their estimates upwards for the country...We will continue to take all steps that are required for ensuring that the economy keeps going up from here, and we will see far better quarter three, quarter four and the next year



TARUN BAJAJ
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS SECRETARY

revised their estimates upwards for the country," he said.

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

Growth will return in fiscal 2021-22, at 7.2 per cent in South Asia and 8 per cent in India, ADB said in its latest

Asian Development Outlook Supplement.

Bajaj further said demand momentum continues even beyond the festive season which will push growth in the third and fourth quarters.

"We will continue to take all steps that are required for ensuring that the economy keeps going up from here, and we will see far better quarter three, quarter four and the next year," he emphasised.

On setting up a develop-

ment financial institution (DFI) for funding infrastructure projects, Bajaj said such an entity is needed.

In the months to come, there would be some good progress on that front, he said, adding the government has created debt platform in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) for which there was a Cabinet announcement.

"The Government of India is committed to give Rs 6,000 crore in the next two years...that would be leveraged with debt by NIIF and we will be putting in more than Rs 1 lakh crore into infrastructure sector on the debt side...other than the equity side.

years...that would be leveraged with debt by NIIF and we will be putting in more than Rs 1 lakh crore into infrastructure sector on the debt side...other than the equity side.

"While DFI is in the works,

we are also taking other steps

to ensure that infrastructure spend happens and both debt

and equity are taken care of," he said.

Bajaj also urged the industry to come forward and invest in the economy so that there is sustainable growth.

"While the government

will continue to emphasise on

infrastructure spend, but

unless and until we have the

private sector coming and

taking the burden of the

growth of the country, I don't

think we can have a sustain-

able growth.

"So we would like to know

from you (industry) as to

what is it that you want the

government to do so that

both of us can carry this for-

ward and in 2021 we start a new

decade, and that decade is the

decade for India," he said.

Industry production increases by 3.6%

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

India's industrial activity accelerated in October with a rise of over 3.6 per cent in factory output on a year-on-year basis, official data showed today.

As per the quick estimates of Index of Industrial Production (IIP), the factory output grew by 3.6 per cent in October 2020 from 0.49 per cent in September and (-) 6.6 per cent during the corresponding month of the previous year.

"For the month of October 2020, the quick estimates of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) with base 2011-12 stands at 128.5," the ministry of statistics and programme implementation said.

"The Indices of Industrial Production for the mining, manufacturing and electricity sectors for the month of October 2020 stand at 98, 130.7 and 162.2, respectively."

The IIP had been in the negative territory from April to August FY21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown to curb its spread.

Among major segments, manufacturing production

grew by 3.5 per cent from (-) 5.7 per cent reported for the corresponding month of last year.

Similarly, electricity generation grew by 11.2 per cent during October 2019.

However, mining output grew by (-) 1.5 per cent on a YoY basis.

Furthermore, the data on a YoY basis showed that manufacturing of primary goods de-grew by (-) 3.3 per cent, whereas capital goods production rose by 3.3 per cent, and intermediate goods inched higher by 0.8 per cent.

On the other hand, the production of infrastructure or construction goods grew by 7.8 per cent and consumer durables by 17.6 per cent.

The sub-segment of consumer non-durables showed a growth of 7.5 per cent.

Meanwhile, after touching its all-time intra-day high of 46,309.63, the 30-share BSE Sensex dipped into the negative zone in late-afternoon trade. However, it staged a comeback to end 139.13 points or 0.30 per cent higher at 46,099.01 points. The broader NSE Nifty rose 35.55 points or 0.26 per cent to 13,513.85 points.

India, Qatar set up task force to identify projects for investment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

India and its biggest LNG supplier Qatar today agreed to set up a task force to identify projects in India for investment by the gas-rich Gulf nation, oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan said.

India imports 8.5 million tons per annum of gas in its liquid form (LNG) from Qatar under a long-term contract.

It also buys LPG to meet the fast-expanding cooking gas requirements in the country.

"Had a telecall with HE Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, Qatar's minister of state for energy affairs and president & CEO Qatar Petroleum on promoting Qatari investments in the entire energy value chain in India," Pradhan tweeted.

The call, he said, was a

follow-up to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's discussion with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, on 8 December.

"Minister Al-Kaabi and I have agreed to set up a Task Force on Energy, represented by VP of Qatar Petroleum and a senior officer from @PetroleumMin to identify specific projects in India's energy sector for Qatari investments," he said.

Qatar Petroleum, the national oil company of the Gulf nation, will be represented by the vice-president (VP) in the task force, while the Indian side would be represented by a senior official from the ministry of petroleum and natural gas.

"I reiterated Qatar's role as a reliable supplier of LNG and LPG. We also agreed to fur-

ther strengthen cooperation in the energy sector and move beyond the buyer-seller relationship to a comprehensive one, including two-way investments," Pradhan said.

During the 8 December call between Modi and the Emir of Qatar, the two nations had agreed to create a special task force to explore and facilitate Qatari investments in India, including in the energy sector.

Cash-rich Qatar Investment Authority is looking to invest in India, particularly in the energy and infrastructure sector. India is the world's third largest oil and LNG importer.

At the beginning of this year, India asked Qatar for renegotiation of its long-term supply contract, but the Gulf state was not inclined to renegotiate the prices.

India wants to significantly

boost its gas consumption and expand its gas infrastructure. An investment of \$66 billion is lined up in developing gas infrastructure which includes pipelines, city gas distribution and LNG re-gasification terminals.

India is targeting to raise the share of natural gas in its energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030 from the current 6.3 per cent.

During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Doha in June 2016, India had sought Qatari investment in India's oil and gas exploration and production as well as its participation in the building of the second phase of strategic oil reserves.

Embassy REIT gets nod to raise up to ₹8K crore

NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

Embassy Office Parks REIT's unitholders have approved plans to raise up to Rs 8,000 crore through sale of units to institutional investors, mainly to fund its big-ticket acquisition of "Embassy TechVillage" in Bengaluru.

Embassy REIT is India's first publicly-listed REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) sponsored by Blackstone and Embassy group. It got listed on stock exchanges last year.

Last month, Embassy Office Parks REIT had announced that it has agreed to acquire a large business park "Embassy TechVillage" in Bengaluru from realty firm Embassy group, Blackstone and some other investors for Rs 9,782.4 crore.

In a regulatory filing, Embassy REIT said its unitholders have approved all the four resolutions with the requisite majority.

They have approved the acquisition of Embassy TechVillage for an enterprise value of Rs 9,782.4 crore and also granted authority to borrow up to 35 per cent of the gross asset value of the Embassy REIT.

Unitholders have approved "raising of funds through an institutional placement(s) of units of Embassy REIT not exceeding Rs 80,000 million to institutional investors in one or more placements." They gave green signal to a preferential issue of up to 65,579,400 units of Embassy REIT at a price of Rs 356.70 per unit.

Last month, Embassy REIT said it has "agreed to purchase Embassy TechVillage assets from affiliates of Embassy Sponsor, Blackstone Sponsor and other selling shareholders for a total consideration of Rs 97,824 million (\$1.3 billion)." PII

Passenger vehicle sales up 5% on festive demand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 11 DECEMBER

Passenger vehicle sales in India increased by 4.65 per cent to 2,64,898 units in November as against 2,53,139 units in the same month last year riding on the back of festive demand, auto industry body Siam said today.

The industry body, which is currently led by Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) managing director and chief executive officer Kenichi Ayukawa, had earlier projected an increase of around 13 per cent in passenger vehicle wholesales in the monthly data.

However, later in the day, it sent out revised data after correcting MSI passenger vehicle sales figures of last

REPORT CARD FOR NOV

► Passenger vehicle sales in India increased by 4.65 per cent to 2,64,898 units in November as against 2,53,139 units in the same month last year riding on the back of festive demand.

► Two-wheeler sales rose by 13.43 per cent to 16,00,379 units, compared with 14,10,939 units in the same month last year.

Three-wheeler sales, how-

during last month stood at 18,88,903 units, up 9.83 per cent from 17,19,874 units in November 2019.

"We have witnessed an increase in wholesale num-

bers in the month of November, where passenger vehicles grew by 4.65 per cent and two-wheelers by 13.43 per cent over the corresponding month of last year, primarily on account

of the festive season," Siam director-general Rajesh Menon said.

The retail sales of two-

wheelers lag behind the wholesale numbers but would even

out over a period, as original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) engage with their dealers, he added.

"While the festive season brought back some fervour in specific segments, the overall economic scenario would determine the industry's performance going forward," Menon noted.

The total production of passenger vehicles, three-wheeler, two-wheelers and quadricycles last month stood at 22,96,701 units, as against 22,58,290 units in November 2019, marking a growth of 1.7 per cent.

Last month, the country's largest car maker Maruti Suzuki India witnessed 2.41 per cent decline in its dispatches to dealers last month.

Hyundai Motor India on the other hand saw 9.42 per cent increase in wholesales at 48,800 units. Kia Motors' dis-

patches increased by 50.1 per cent to 21,022 units in November, while Mahindra & Mahindra saw 24.46 per cent rise in wholesales at 21,022 units last month.

In the two-wheeler segment, Hero MotoCorp wholesales increased by 13.83 per cent to 5,75,957 units, while Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India witnessed 10.54 per cent rise in dispatches to dealers last

Odisha Lokayukta orders vigilance to probe MLA Panigrahi's corrupt deals

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 11 DECEMBER:

The Odisha Lokayukta on Friday directed the State Vigilance Directorate to investigate the alleged corrupt practices perpetrated by Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi and submit a report within two months.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on 7 December had referred the corruption allegations against Panigrahi to the Odisha Lokayukta for investigation. It was the first instance of the government referring a corruption case to Lokayukta since its formation in the state in February last year.

"By exercising powers conferred under section 20(1) of the Odisha Lokayukta Act 2014, the Directorate of the Vigilance is directed to conduct a preliminary inquiry against Pradeep Panigrahi and submit report within two months," stated a notification issued by

the Lokayukta on Friday.

The Crime Branch of Odisha police on 3 December had arrested Pradeep Panigrahi on multiple charges of cheating, forgery and conspiracy.

Disgraced BJD MLA Pradeep Panigrahi had allegedly acted hand in glove with Akash Pathak, son of arrested Indian Forest Service officer Abhay Pathak in taking the gullible jobless youths for a ride in Ganjam district.

"Over 100 youths were offered jobs in Tata motors and they had to cough up Rs Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh for a job they never got. Initial investigation had found around 60 youths defrauded by engineering graduate Pathak. Now the number of jobseekers deceived by the false job placements has surpassed 100-mark with fresh complaints pouring in", confided the CID officials probing the Tata Motors job scam.

Akash had established close rapport with Panigrahi, an influential MLA of the ruling BJD. Under Panigrahi's patronage, the act of deceit by Akash had apparently flourished, said CID sources.

56-year-old former minister Panigrahi, once a close confidante of CM Naveen Patnaik, was earlier entrusted with overseeing his assembly constituency Hinjili in Ganjam district.

While the Pathak duo was arrested on November 27 under provisions of prevention of corruption act, the three-time MLA and former minister Panigrahi, once the blue-eyed boy of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, was expelled from the BJD on 29 November and later arrested on 4 December.

Akash Pathak posed as a top executive of Tata Motors' passenger division and deceived the jobseekers by forged joining letters. The credential of Pathak was cross checked and it was found to be fraudulent, said CID officials.

Cradle of hockey getting ready for World Cup

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
ROURKELA, 11 DECEMBER:

International Hockey Federation president Narinder Dhruv Batra,

Hockey India President Gyanendra Ningombam reviewed the preparations for the Men's Hockey World Cup 2023 scheduled to be hosted by Odisha at twin venues of Rourkela and Bhubaneswar.

Sundergarh district of which Rourkela is a part is known to be the cradle of Indian Hockey is getting ready to host the major event.

Both Batra and Ningombam were satisfied at the pace of progress in developing the requisite infrastructure.

Odisha Sports Minister Tusharkanti Behera, chief secretary Asit Tripathy, Sports secretary Vishal Dev and other officials were present here when Batra inspected the



ground and other facilities.

After the stupendous success of Odisha Men's Hockey World Cup in 2018 and the scale at which it was hosted, FIH had announced last year that the 2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup will be hosted in Odisha.

Minister Behera said "The FIH Odisha Men's Hockey World Cup India 2023 is expected to be even larger than

2018 and with matches to be hosted in two venues, it will be a challenge and an opportunity".

World class infrastructure at both the venues will enable Odisha to once again reaffirm its status as global sports, he said.

As a build-up to the event, the process of laying 16 synthetic turfs in 16 blocks of Sundergarh has been taken up.

Jajpur missing minor girl case

JAJPUR, 11 DECEMBER:

A two-year-old girl Subhalaxmi Nayak alias Pihu of Madhusudanpur village in Jajpur district has been missing for the last four months and the police has done precious little since August when the complaint was lodged by the parents.

The issue has gathered storm after the uproar across the state over the minor girl Pari murder case in Nayagarh district where the police had slept over the missing child and case for over three months. Now Pihu has become the talk of Jajpur district. She has been missing since 9 August. Her parents had reported to the police the very next day.

The lackadaisical attitude of the local police forced Monalisa Nayak, mother of the girl, to meet the SP on 12 October.

A team of the District Child Protection Officer led by DCPO Niranjan Kar visited the girl's village today and spoke with her parents.

Odisha records 387 new Covid cases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 11 DECEMBER:

Odisha on Friday reported 387 new Covid 19 cases while four fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 1,798.

The rate of virus positivity climbed down to 1 to 2 per cent in December with today's rate standing at 1.22 percent.

In the past 24 hours, Sundergarh reported the highest number of new cases at 58, followed by 51 at Khurda and Angul at 27 Khurda has

Woman Maoist gunned down



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 11 DECEMBER:

DISCOMs yet to submit ₹358 cr UC of cyclone power restoration grants

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 11 DECEMBER:

The energy department is yet to furnish utilization certificate of over 50 percent of funds sanctioned for restoration of power in cyclone Fani ravaged Odisha in 2019, according to the state government's reply to an RTI query.

The 2 May cyclone Fani had damaged power infrastructure in the coastal pockets of the State mainly in Bhubaneswar, Puri pilgrim town besides other areas in Khurda district.

The Special Operation Group (SOG) and District Voluntary Force (DVF), elite paramilitary units operating under the Odisha police, are engaged in the combing operation, police said.

cated grants, the Energy department had sanctioned Rs 701.47 crore to power distribution companies CESU (now christened as TPCODL) and NESCO.

Of the sanctioned funds, the DISCOMs have furnished UCs of Rs 343 crore while there is no official record of expenditure of a whopping Rs 358 crore till date, said Pradip Pradhan, RTI activist representing Odisha Soochana Adhikar Abhijna.

The Information regarding the details of purchase, work and project undertaken by CESU and NESCO has not yet been supplied by the Public Information Officers, though the statutory time limit is over, he said.

As UC has not been sub-

mitted, questions are being raised on the judicious and proper use of Rs 358 crore SRC grants for post-cyclone restoration projects, alleged Pradhan.

The damage assessment report of the government has stated that the cyclone had uprooted 1.50 lakh power-line poles, 5030 km of 33kv line, 38613km stretch of 11kv line, 79,485 km of LT (Low Tension) line damaged, 11,700 transformers, 27 of 400 KV towers were damaged.

Besides 4 numbers of 220 KV Grids were smashed up at Chadranki, Bidanashi, Samagra and Mendhasala. These apart, 4 numbers of 132 kv grid at puri, Nimapara, Mancheswar, and at Ranasighapur bore the brunt of the cyclone storm 'Fani'.

Odisha villagers stall water pipeline project

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAGATSINGHPUR, 11 DECEMBER:

Construction work of a Rs 1.73 crores drinking water pipeline project on Devi river has been stalled by activists of the Devi River Embankment Suraksha Committee.

The work has been forcibly stopped for the last 10 days and the activists have vowed to intensify their agitation from 17 December.

We are not against the project, our demand is for construction of a concrete embankment or spur to strengthen the river embankment which is already under tremendous stress, they said.

The project was approved in 2018. Water from Devi River after filtration is to be provided to 64 water scarce villages of Balikuda and Erasama blocks where people suffer acute drinking water scarcity every year. State government had awarded its construction work to Larsen and Toubro, Chennai.

Villagers of Gajarajpur, Rohia, Banso, Naugaon, Ghodansho, Jamagaon, Osakan, Sikhar, Tiru, Naugaon, Alana and other panchayats of Naugaon block said the construction work has led to cracks appearing on the

existing embankment. They feared flooding of the area due to weakening of the embankment.

"Usage of machinery is causing a change in the natural topography. Deep digging and drilling leads to formation of ponds. It has created soil erosion in which crack has developed near Devi Embankment near Tumbeswar. There is a danger to embankment and this can prove to be catastrophic for the rural areas" said the activists.

The Committee led by Arat-trana Das and village chiefs like Ashok Swain, Sarat Mallick, Banshidhar Behera, Ajit Patnaik, Subash Swain demanded a concrete embankment and spur on the river for flood protection.

Yesterday, local BJD MLA Prasant Muduli, collector Saroj Kumar Mishra along the block and district officials and engineers from the irrigation department tried to convince the villagers.

Executive Engineer, irrigation department Pratap Kumar Satpathy conceded that the ongoing construction work has led to cracks on the embankment but added that steps have been taken to repair it. There is no threat of floods during monsoon, he asserted.

Villagers resist displacement for port and petrochem project

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BALASORE, 11 DECEMBER:

The seaside residents of Baliapal block likely to be affected by the proposed Subarnarekha port and integrated petrochemical project staged a protest today opposing the projects.

The villagers formed a human chain from Dwarika to Kankadapal – a stretch of 25 km covering all six panchayats under the aegis of 'Bhita Mati Suraksha Committee' which was participated by the members of each family in various age

Setback to India's first ever wild-to-wild tiger translocation

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
ANGUL, 11 DECEMBER:

The proposed return of tigress Sundari from the environs of Satkosia in Odisha where she spent almost two years to her native forest in Madhya Pradesh comes as a major setback to India's first ever wild-to-wild translocation of tigers.

It was after a long drawn exercise involving study of prey base etc by tiger experts, Wildlife Institute of India, National Tiger Conservation Authority and Odisha forest department in 2018 that the tiger translocation experi-

ment was taken up. Since Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Angul district of Odisha was devoid of tigers (it had only one old female), it was decided to bring six pairs of tigers from the forests of Madhya Pradesh and release them in Satkosia.

Success of the experiment would have led to an increase in population of the endangered animal given the good prey base and the extent of dense forests.

In 2018, a male RBT 'Mahavir' was transported in a special lorry from MP to Satkosia, kept under observation in a special enclosure

adjacent to Satkosia forest and then released to the wild with the hope that it would find and mate with the aging female. Three months later tigress Sundari was brought and released in the same manner.

Forest dwellers and a few villages close to Satkosia protested alleging that the tigress was always moving close to the villages and preying on cattle. Forest officers said they had tracked the male in the deep forest area and that was 'doing well'.

The protests by villagers turned violent when one person was reportedly killed by Sundari. The forest beat house was burnt by villagers.

Meanwhile, the male 'Mahavir' was found dead in the core forest area. It was alleged that he had fallen prey to poachers while another version was that it had sustained injuries and had developed septicemia.

The government buckled to pressure and tranquilized Sundari to shift her to a special enclosure.

For over one year, the forest officers, NTCA and tiger experts were debating on the release of Sundari to the wild again – Simlipal in

Odisha or take her back to Madhya Pradesh.

Wildlife activists had also raised questions over keeping the wild animal in an enclosure for such a long period. Law courts were moved and finally, last week it was decided to shift Sundari back to MP signalling an end to the experiment.

Satkosia Tiger project will be without a tiger.

The field director of Satkosia Tiger Reserve (STR) Pradeep Raj Karat, is however hopeful of tiger reintroduction.

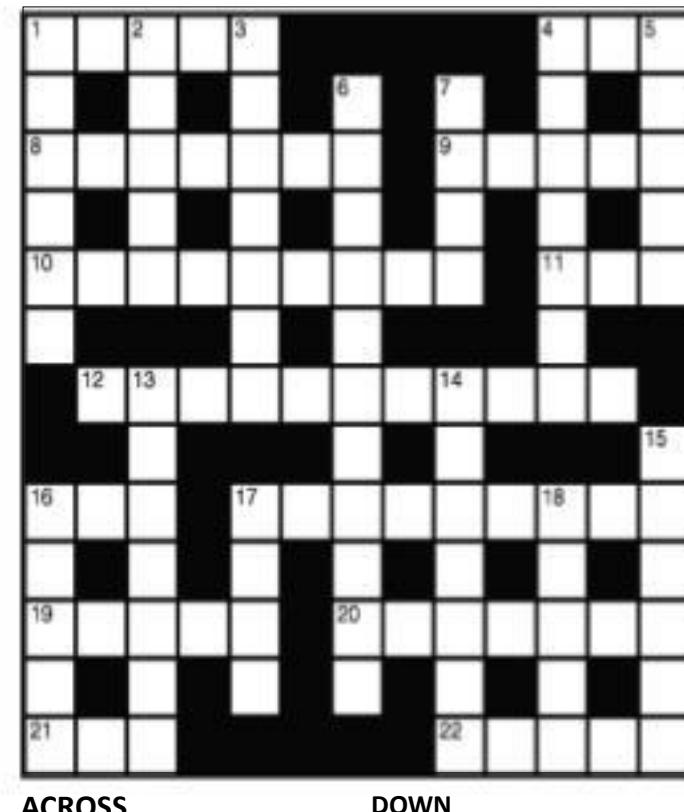
He said the tiger project has to be revived again with

the reintroduction of tigers. There is a sufficient favourable environment in STR area with adequate prey population and other to house tigers like any other good reserves in the country.

Prasanna Behera, an activist, feels it to be a serious setback to the tiger project. "There is a favourable habitat in Satkosia, it is one of 50 tiger reserves in the country. There was a time when there were 18 tigers residing in STR areas but due to several reasons there is one left now in the reserve which is old", he lamented.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Warble (5)
4 Flying insect (3)
8 "I hard (informal) (7)
9 Mammal (5)
10 At once (9)
11 Behave (3)
12 Loss of water (11)
16 Untruth (3)
17 Exceptional (9)
19 Happening (5)
20 Incident (7)
21 Small shelter (3)
22 Conjecture (5)

DOWN
1 Eat heartily (4,2)
2 Golf clubs (5)
3 Book collection (7)
4 Swagger (7)
5 Vote in (5)
6 Hobnobbed (11)
7 Not at home (4)
13 Component (7)
14 Repealing (7)
15 Emphasis (6)
16 Blood-sucking worm (5)
17 Large cask (4)
18 Higher than (5)

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

• AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
• Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 4200000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447

• Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro Sciences 26924300, 26924204

• Baroda Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747

• Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403

• Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

• SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747



Our target is that within 2021, free vaccines will be provided to Hong Kong residents so that our lives will return to normal

HONG KONG CHIEF EXECUTIVE CARRIE LAM

World

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	25 H
HONG KONG	23	19 H
TOKYO	16	8 H
LONDON	10	7 H
DUBAI	26	19 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	13	8 H
NEW YORK	12	1 S
MOSCOW	-5	-10 H

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

THUMBNAILS



People wear face masks to help curb the spread of coronavirus in Tokyo on Friday. ■ AGENCIES

UK to expand tests: The UK government is expanding its Covid-19 Test and Trace plan to cover all secondary school students aged between 11 and 18 in and around London, as the city registered a spike in coronavirus infections in recent days. ■ PTI

Kim Ki-Duk dies from Covid-19: South Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-Duk, known for films such as Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring, The Isle and Pieta, has died due to complications from coronavirus. He was 59. The filmmaker passed away at a hospital in Latvia, where he had arrived last month to buy a house, reported local outlet Delfi. ■ PTI

Cuba's president to drop its dual currency system: Cuba will unify its monetary system on New Year's Day, President Miguel Diaz-Canel announced Thursday, closing the door on more than 25 years with two national currencies in circulation. Diaz-Canel said the country will revert to using its peso. ■ AP

Biden fills Cabinet with former White House leaders

WASHINGTON, 11 DECEMBER

President-elect Joe Biden is getting the old gang back together.

Increasingly deep into the process of selecting Cabinet members and other senior staff, the incoming Biden administration has a distinctly Obama feel.

There's Denis McDonough, former President Barack Obama's chief of staff who Biden announced on Thursday would be nominated as the secretary of veterans affairs. Susan Rice, Obama's former national security adviser, was named the director of Biden's White House Domestic Policy Council. That's on top of Biden already tapping Obama's agriculture secretary, Tom Vilsack, to head the department once again, former Secretary of State John Kerry to serve as a special envoy on climate and Kerry's Obama-era deputy Antony Blinken to lead the State Department. Jeff Zients, who did stints as acting Office of Management and Budget director and a top economic adviser in the Obama White House, will return as Biden's coronavirus response coordinator.

Biden, who is assuming the presidency in the midst of the worst public health crisis and a flagging economy, is putting a greater premium on past experience and, as a result, has gone frequently back to the Obama as well as he fills out his government. Many of the folks who are returning are returning because they believe in public service and know that after four turbulent and destructive years and a brutal pandemic, this is a particularly important time to serve, said David Axelrod, who served as a senior adviser to Obama. ■ AP

FDA clears emergency use of Pfizer vaccine

An emergency use authorisation is short of a full approval, for which Pfizer would have to file a separate application

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 11 DECEMBER



A special US government advisory panel has recommended emergency use authorisation for Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine, in a major step towards its widespread use in the country, worst-hit by the pandemic.

After an eight-hour public hearing on Thursday, the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) voted 17 to 4 with 1 abstention to recommend the vaccine developed by American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech to combat the disease that has killed over 292,000 people in the US.

An emergency use authorisation (EUA) is short of a full approval. Pfizer would have to file a separate application for full FDA approval for its vaccine. Thursday's vote does not mean the vaccine will be

authorised immediately, US media reported.

There is a clear benefit, and all we have on the other side is theoretical risks, said committee member Paul Offit, a vaccine expert with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

The vaccine's potential benefits outweigh its risks, he said.

"It's a huge milestone," said another member Ofer Levy, a pediatric infectious disease expert and head of the precision vaccine programme at Boston Children's Hospital.

The Pfizer vaccine has already been approved for the public in the UK, Canada, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

The recommendation is

comes a day after the US recorded more than 3,000 deaths in the latest 24-hour period, the highest total in a single day anywhere in the world.

The drug still needs to be formally approved by the FDA's vaccine chief.

While the FDA is not necessarily mandated to accept the recommendations of the advisory body, it is expected to do so next week as the administration gears to ship and provide millions of doses of coronavirus vaccines to Americans across the country, with priority being given to the vulnerable population.

Several committee members expressed concern about reports of allergic reactions in two people who were vaccinated in Britain, which authorised Pfizer's vaccine ahead of the US.

FDA staff said that, as with any vaccines, paperwork would accompany the Pfizer vaccine to warn against administering it to anyone with a history of severe allergic reactions

to vaccines or allergies to any of the ingredients of the vaccine.

Today's approval by the Food & Drug Administration of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine is a bright light in a needlessly dark time. We are grateful to the scientists and researchers who developed this vaccine, President-elect Joe Biden said in a statement.

"And, we are grateful to the scientists and public health experts who evaluated the safety and efficacy of this vaccine free from political influence. The integrity of science led us to this point, he said.

The challenge now is to scale up manufacturing and distribution of the vaccine.

We are putting together an experienced team to do just that. Before I take office, we need the Trump administration to purchase the doses it has negotiated with Pfizer and Moderna and to work swiftly to scale manufacturing for the US population and the world. And, we will need Congress to fund our distribution efforts, Biden said.

In this time of great urgency, FDA staff feel the responsibility to move as quickly as possible through the review process. However, they know that they must carry out their mandate to protect the public health and to ensure that any authorised vaccine meets our rigorous standards for safety and effectiveness that the American people have come to expect, Hahn said in a statement.

Oz ends vaccine trials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MELBOURNE, 11 DECEMBER

Australia on Friday stopped the further development of a Covid-19 vaccine candidate as several participants in the early-stage trials generated antibodies for HIV after receiving the potential therapeutic.

There were no serious adverse events or safety concerns reported in the 216 participants of the phase 1 trial of the v451 Covid-19 vaccine candidate being developed by the University of Queensland (UQ) in collaboration with biotech company CSL, according to a statement.

However, data showed that some patients developed antibodies towards fragments of a HIV protein (gp41), which was used to stabilise the vaccine, it said.

Following consultation with the Australian Government, UQ and CSL decided not to progress the vaccine candidate to phase 2 and 3 clinical trials.

The vaccine was one of four candidates that Australia had committed to buy and accordingly agreements were made to secure 51 million doses of the experimental vaccine.

UQ said the trial participants were fully informed of the possibility of a partial immune response to this protein component, however, it was unexpected that the antibody levels induced would interfere with certain HIV tests.

The university said there is no possibility the vaccine causes infection, and routine follow-up tests confirmed there is no HIV virus present.

Biden's transition contends with probe into son's finances



ASSOCIATED PRESS
WILMINGTON (US), 11 DECEMBER

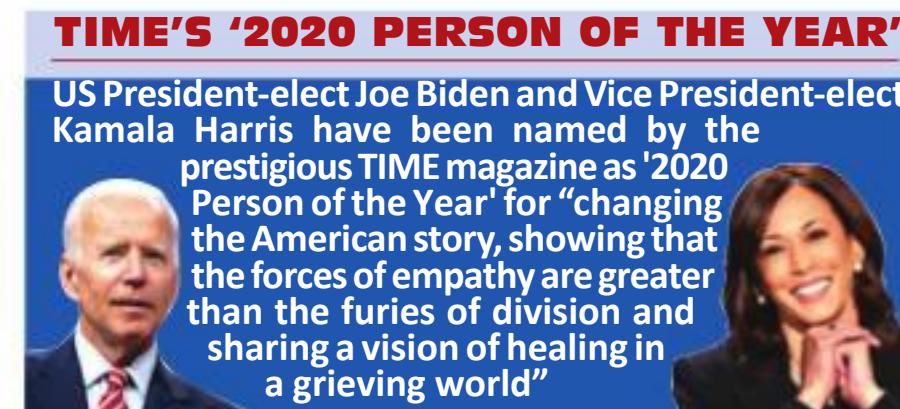
US President-elect Joe Biden's historically challenging transition to power is suddenly becoming even more complicated.

Federal investigation into the finances of Biden's son, Hunter, threatens to embolden congressional Republicans, who have already shown little willingness to work with the incoming president or even acknowledge his clear victory in last month's election. For sure, it will complicate Senate confirmation hearings for Biden's yet-to-be-named attorney general, who could ultimately have oversight of the investigation into the new president's son.

It all raises the prospect of even deeper dysfunction in a capital that is already struggling to address the nation's most pressing crises, including a surging pandemic whose daily death tolls are beginning to surpass the devastation of the September 11 attacks. Republicans, particularly those eyeing presidential runs in 2024, are making clear they will press Biden on the issue.

Hunter Biden has long been a source of worry for his father's campaign and was the subject of repeated unsupported accusations by President Donald Trump and his allies. But news of the probe, which was revealed on Wednesday and scrutinises some of Hunter's Chinese business dealings and other transactions, caught most of his father's staffers by surprise.

The president-elect had no public appearance Thursday as he moved forward with filling out his administration. But the investigation threatens to destabilise a transition that has prioritised a methodical



ASSOCIATED PRESS
WILMINGTON (US), 11 DECEMBER

US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have been named by the prestigious TIME magazine as '2020 Person of the Year' for "changing the American story, showing that the forces of empathy are greater than the furies of division and sharing a vision of healing in a grieving world".

If Donald Trump was a force for disruption and division over the past four years, Biden and Harris show where the nation is heading: a blend of ethnicities, lived experiences and worldviews that must find a way forward together if the American experiment is to survive, the publication said.

It is noteworthy that a year after Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg was named Person of the Year, the youngest person ever for the honour, it chose 78-year-old Biden, one of the oldest persons selected for the annual honour.

TIME named US immunologist Anthony Fauci, the front-line health workers and racial justice organisers 2020 Guardians of the Year, who put themselves on the line to defend the ideals sacred to democracy.

CEO of conferencing platform Zoom Eric Yuan has been named as TIME's Businessperson of the Year.

South Korean boy band BTS was named Entertainer of the Year and American basketball player LeBron James as Athlete of the Year.

rollout of Cabinet selections, White House hires and policy goals - all meant to guarantee momentum when Biden takes office and immediately has to grapple with a surging pandemic and shaky economy.

Most notably, the probe casts a spotlight on one of Biden's most important choices: his attorney general.

Alabama Senator Doug Jones and federal Appeals Court Judge Merrick Garland have emerged as the leading contenders, three people familiar with the matter said.

But dynamics could shift, as any Biden choice will be scrutinised for any perceived loyalty to the president-elect and bias in any probe of his son. Both Garland and especially Jones have long ties to Biden.

The president-elect himself is not a subject of the investigation. And Biden aides believe that because other

Hunter Biden stories have blown over, this will, too. They note that a tax fraud investigation pales in comparison to Trump's refusal to concede the election or to the pandemic that has killed more than 290,000 Americans.

Biden is expected to announce more Cabinet picks, but not attorney general, on Friday.

Some of Trump's children have also faced some legal questions.

Donald Trump Jr was scrutinised in special Robert Mueller's Russia probe for the 2016 meeting he had with a Kremlin-connected lawyer. And Ivanka Trump was recently deposed by investigators from the Washington, DC, district attorney's office as part of its lawsuit alleging the misuse of inaugural funds.

The Hunter Biden investigation is the latest in a series of politically charged inquiries.

GOP lawmakers sign onto Texas lawsuit

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON, 11 DECEMBER

The Texas lawsuit asking the US Supreme Court to invalidate President-elect Joe Biden's victory has quickly become a conservative litmus test, as 106 members of Congress and multiple state attorneys general signed onto the case even as some have predicted it will fail.

The last-gasp bid to overturn the results of the November 3 election is demonstrating President Donald Trump's enduring political power even as his term is set to end. And even though most of the signatories are far-right conservatives who come from deep red districts, the filing means that roughly one-quarter of the US House believes the Supreme Court should set aside election results.

Seventeen Republican attorneys general are backing the unprecedented case that Trump is calling "the big one" despite the fact that the president and his allies have lost dozens of times in courts across the country and have

The Supreme Court is not going to overturn the election in the Texas case, as the President has told them to do, tweeted Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California, Irvine. But we are in bad shape as a country that 17 states could support this shameful, anti-American filing by Texas and its attorney general, Ken Paxton, he said.

The lawsuit filed against Michigan, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin repeats false, disproven, and unsubstantiated accusations about the voting in four states that

went for Trump's Democratic challenger.

The case demands that the high court invalidate the states' 62 total Electoral College votes. That's an unprecedented remedy in American history: setting aside the votes of tens of millions of people, under the baseless claims, the Republican incumbent lost a chance at a second term due to widespread fraud.

Two days after Paxton sued, 17 states filed a motion supporting the lawsuit, and on Thursday six of those states asked to join the case themselves. Trump has acted to join the case, tweeting Thursday that "the Supreme Court has a chance to save our Country from the greatest Election abuse in the history of the United States."

Hours later, Trump held a meeting at the White House, scheduled before the suit was filed, with a dozen Republican attorneys general, including Paxton and several others who are backing the effort.

Still, some of the top state

US carries out rare execution during transition

TERRE HAUTE (US), 11 DECEMBER

The Trump administration Thursday carried out its ninth federal execution of the year in what has been a first series of executions during a presidential lame-duck period in 130 years, putting to death a Texas street-gang member in the slayings of a religious couple from Iowa more than two decades ago.

Four more federal executions, including one Friday, are planned in the weeks before President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration.

One was carried out in late November.

The case of Brandon Bernard, who received a lethal injection of phenobarbital at a US prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, was a rare execution of a person who was in his teens when his crime was committed.

Several high-profile figures, including reality TV star Kim Kardashian West, had appealed to President Donald Trump to commute Bernard's sentence to life in prison.

With witnesses looking on from behind a glass barrier separating them from a pale-green death chamber, the 40-year-old Bernard was pronounced dead at 9:27 pm Eastern time.

He directed his last words to the family of the couple he played a role in killing, speaking with striking calm for someone who knew he was about to die. "I'm sorry," he said, lifting his head and looking at witness-room windows. "That's the only words that I can say that completely capture how I feel now and how I felt that day." As he spoke, he showed no outward signs of fear or distress, speaking lucidly and naturally. ■ AP

Indian-American astronaut among 18 in NASA's manned Moon mission

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 11 DECEMBER



The Artemis moon-landing programme will land the first woman and next man on the Moon in 2024 and establish a sustainable human lunar presence by the end of the decade, the American space agency said.

for a mission assignment.

My fellow Americans, I give you the heroes of the future who will carry us back to the Moon and beyond: the Artemis Generation, Vice President Mike Pence said at NASA's Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on Wednesday.

It really is amazing to think

that the next man and the first woman on the Moon are among the names that



Europe is the leader in the fight against
climate change

EU COUNCIL PRESIDENT CHARLES MICHEL
AFTER EU LEADERS AGREE TO REDUCE EMISSIONS

The Statesman

11

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER 2020

Morocco to normalise ties with Israel

Trump reaffirms US's support to Morocco's 'realistic autonomy proposal' for sovereignty over the Western Sahara region

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 11 DECEMBER



Morocco has agreed to resume diplomatic relations with Israel, becoming the fourth Arab nation this year to recognise the Jewish state under a deal brokered by the US, according to the White House.

US President Donald Trump spoke to Morocco's King Mohammed VI on Thursday and reaffirmed his country's support to Morocco's "realistic autonomy proposal" for sovereignty over the Western Sahara region.

King Mohammed VI agreed to resume diplomatic ties between his kingdom and Israel to expand economic and cultural cooperation, which would advance regional stability, the White House said on Thursday.

The US-Morocco friendship is rooted in our shared belief in the promise of peace, stability and economic opportunity, and has endured since Morocco became the first country to recognise the Unit-

ed States in 1777, the White House said in a readout of the conversation between the two leaders.

"The President reaffirmed his support for Morocco's serious, credible and realistic autonomy proposal as the only basis for a just and lasting solution to the dispute over the Western Sahara territory and as such the President recognised Moroccan sovereignty over the entire Western Sahara territory, it said.

They also discussed cooperation in the fight against the

coronavirus pandemic, including ways to minimise its economic impact. They also spoke on critical regional issues of common interest, the White House said.

Morocco has now become the fourth Arab nation to resume ties with Israel. The development comes as the US is expanding the number of countries under the Abraham Accords, as part of which the United Arab Emirates and Israel resumed bilateral ties earlier in the year, with a series of trade and technology pacts.

Bahrain and Sudan have followed the UAE, becoming the second and third Arab countries respectively to resume ties with Israel.

Trump's Special Advisor and his son-in-law Jared Kushner, during a conference call with reporters on Thursday, said that this is the fourth peace agreement that Presi-

dent Trump and his administration have been able to broker in the last four months. This comes on the heels of four years of very hard work and very intense diplomacy that has occurred.

As part of this deal, Morocco will establish full diplomatic relations and resume official contacts with Israel. It will grant overflights and direct flights to and from Israel for all Israelis, he said.

The two countries will reopen the liaison offices in Rabat and Tel Aviv immediately, with the intention to open the embassies in the near future. They'll be promoting economic cooperation between Israeli and Moroccan companies.

Describing this as a great part of the President's efforts towards bringing peace and stability and understanding in the world, Kushner said that

this is a great success that the Abraham Accords have had so far.

People are seeing the non-stop visitation between Israelis and Arabs and Muslims throughout the world -- going to each other's countries, whether it's going to Dubai or Abu Dhabi or Tel Aviv, he said.

Kushner said that bringing Jews and Muslims and Christians together has been a core focus of the President's efforts.

That's why he did his first trip to Saudi Arabia, the custodian of the two Holy Mosques; and then Israel; and then Rome, to the Vatican. And that's been a real effort of his, he said.

If you look back at the last four years when the President came into power, Iran was greatly empowered. You know, they'd just done the terrible JCPOA deal, ISIS was running rampant, all of America's

allies in the region felt very alienated, and obviously there'd been a lot of issues that had to be dealt with.

Now we have peace sprouting in the Middle East. You know, President Trump took a contrarian approach -- one that was different than not just Democrat but also Republican administrations. Just a different approach than the experts had been taking in the region. And the fruits of these efforts have become very apparent, but we also believe that there is a lot more fruits to come in the short, medium and long term, he said.

Senator Lindsey Graham congratulated Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Moroccan Prime Minister Saad-Eddine El Othmani on the historic achievement.

"It is a win-win-win for Israel, Morocco, and the United States, Graham said.

HK media tycoon Jimmy Lai charged under security law

HONG KONG, 11 DECEMBER

Hong Kong pro-democracy activist and media tycoon Jimmy Lai has been charged under the city's national security law, amid a widening crackdown on dissent, according to local media reports.

Lai, who founded the Apple Daily tabloid, was charged on suspicion of colluding with foreign forces and endangering national security, local broadcaster TVB reported Friday.

He is the most high-profile person to be charged under the law since it was implemented in June.

Police said in a statement that they arrested a 73-year-old man under the national security law, but did not name him. Lai was arrested under the national security law in August.

AP

UN backs Afghan peace talks, Russia says 'no'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS, 11 DECEMBER



The UN General Assembly approved a resolution over Russian objections Thursday commanding progress in peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban while urging stepped-up efforts to tackle terrorist attacks by the Taliban, al-Qaida, the Islamic State extremist group and their affiliates.

The vote in the 193-member world body was 130 in favour, Russia against, and China, Pakistan and Belarus abstaining.

Fifty-nine countries did not vote.

The 15-page resolution titled The Situation in Afghanistan covers a wide range of issues including peace and reconciliation, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, human rights, counter-narcotics, social and economic development and regional cooperation.

ue to address the threat to the country's stability from violence committed by the Taliban, including the Haqqani Network, as well as al-Qaida, Islamic State, their affiliates and other terrorist and criminal groups.

Afghanistan's UN ambassador, Adela Raz, expressed regret that despite her government's strong support for the resolution it wasn't adopted by consensus, saying the measure reflects developments that are taking place on the ground and particularly the progress in the peace process.

Raz said the goal of the government, Afghanistan's neighbours and the General Assembly is to incorporate the Taliban as a political party.

It is our utmost aim to see the Taliban as a constructive political party in the country, without the relationship with al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, working for prosperity and peace in Afghanistan, she said.

The resolution reiterates the General Assembly's serious concern about the security situation in Afghanistan and stresses the need to continue

Noting that UN experts monitoring sanctions against the Taliban say it maintains ties to terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, Raz said the resolution is balanced regarding the Taliban's willingness to take firm steps towards peace and reconciliation and its continuing attacks and terrorist ties.

German Ambassador Christoph Heusgen, whose country led negotiations on the resolution, said that out of all the 'special years' for Afghanistan declared in the past two decades, 2020 was indeed singular.

Most important was the start of Afghan peace negotiations in September, he said after detailing all the events leading to the talks, starting with the US-Taliban agreement in February.

Heusgen also pointed to pledges of more than \$13 billion in foreign aid and stabilization for Afghanistan at a donors conference in Geneva just over two weeks ago.

INNOCENT SMILES



Tigray refugee children sing and dance inside a tent run by UNICEF for children's activities, in Umm Rakuba refugee camp in Qadarif, eastern Sudan. Ethiopia on Friday said it is returning thousands of refugees who ran from camps in its Tigray region as war swept through, putting them on buses back to the border area with Eritrea, the country the refugees originally fled. ■ AP

Imran Khan reshuffles Pak Cabinet on court's directive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, 11 DECEMBER

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday reshuffled his Cabinet, days after a top court barred un-elected advisers and special assistants from heading the Cabinet committees.

This is the fourth Cabinet reshuffle since Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) came to power in 2018. The reshuffle followed the December 7 verdict of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) barring un-elected advisers and special assistants from heading Cabinet committees.

The court ruled that special assistants and advisers to the prime minister were not members of the Cabinet and therefore, cannot be part of Cabinet proceedings.

On Friday, Khan elevated Sheikh Rashid Ahmed as interior minister and appointed Dr. Abdul Hafeez Sheikh as finance minister.

State-run Radio Pakistan reported that Ahmed was already a part of the Cabinet working as minister for railways, while Hafeez Sheikh was serving as advisor on finance and revenue.

Hafeez Sheikh is not an elected member and he could not lead several committees. He was appointed as minister under Article 91 (9) of the Constitution and can serve as a minister for six months. He must be elected as a member of the National Assembly or Senate to continue after that.

Brigadier (Retd) Ijaz Ahmad Shah who was serving the interior minister was appointed as minister for narcotics.

control, while Azam Khan Swati was appointed as minister for railways.

It is believed that Hafeez Sheikh would be made a senator in March when the election for the upper house is scheduled to be held.

The most notable elevation in the new Cabinet is that of Ahmed, who despite failing to improve the functioning of the railways, was given the charge of the interior ministry, a key portfolio.

The IHC judgment noted that Article 93 of the Constitution allows the prime minister to appoint up to five advisors and conferring of a federal minister status on an advisor is "only for the purpose of perks and privileges" and "does not make the advisor a federal minister as such".

'Strong possibility of no-deal Brexit'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 11 DECEMBER

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has issued the starker warning yet that the UK could be out of the EU on January 1, 2021, without a trade agreement in place as the two sides remain divided on key areas amidst last-ditch talks between the chief Brexit negotiators.

After Johnson's urgent talks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels failed to break the logjam over the European Union (EU) fishing rights in UK territorial waters as a non-member and competition rules for businesses, the Prime Minister admitted that a Sunday deadline for their next discussion does not hold out great promise.

"At the moment, I have to tell you in all candour, the treaty is not there yet and that was

the strong view of our Cabinet," Johnson said on Thursday night.

"There's a strong possibility that we will have a solution much more like Australian relationship with the EU than a Canadian relationship with the EU," he said.

An Australia-style agreement effectively means no trade agreement and the two sides would then be trading on World Trade Organisation (WTO) norms, with considerable barriers to movement of goods as well as people.

With the UK no longer

signed up to the EU rules, it would also mean travel restrictions for Britons travelling to and from the EU at the end of the Brexit transition period on December 31, given the coronavirus pandemic lockdown rules.

"I think it's perfectly reasonable to push back on those things," he said.

Both sides have been locked in intense negotiations over the last few weeks in an attempt to break through what have been labelled as significant divergences.

Johnson maintains that he "tried very hard to make progress" at his dinner with Von der Leyen in Brussels on Wednesday, but the EU was making things "unnecessarily difficult".

Von der Leyen accused the British side of not being able to agree on a balance of fairness and that a decision will be taken on Sunday, which UK Cabinet ministers have indicated will be the point of finality in the negotiations.

Turkey rejects EU decision to widen sanctions

ANKARA, 11 DECEMBER

Turkey on Friday called on the European Union to act as an 'honest mediator' in its dispute with EU members Greece and Cyprus over the exploration of gas reserves in the Mediterranean, after European leaders approved expanding sanctions against Ankara.

The leaders said early Friday that Turkey, which is a candidate to join although its membership talks are blocked, has engaged in unilateral actions and provocations and escalated its rhetoric against the EU. This was despite the fact that they had offered trade and other incentives to Turkey to halt its activities during their last summit in October, they said.

The leaders tasked EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell with drawing up a report on the state of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations and to suggest how to proceed, including on widening sanctions. Borrell was asked to submit the report to the leaders by the time they hold a summit in March.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry slammed the EU decision, saying Ankara rejects the 27-member group's biased and unlawful attitude. A ministry statement said the decision to expand sanctions against Turkey was approved out of solidarity with Greece and Cyprus. The two countries' alleged misuse of the solidarity and veto rights had thrust EU-Turkey ties into a vicious circle, it said.

The situation is harming the joint interests of Turkey and the EU as well as our region's peace, security and stability, the ministry said. The EU should take up the role of an honest mediator, it must act in a principled, strategic and sensible manner. Tensions between NATO allies Turkey and Greece escalated over the summer with a military build-up after Turkey sent its seismic survey vessel Oruc Reis. AP

Port blast: Hezbollah rejects charges against caretaker PM

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT, 11 DECEMBER

Lebanon's Hezbollah group on Friday said recently filed charges were politically targeting the caretaker prime minister and three allied former ministers over this summer's massive explosion in Beirut.

The group called on the investigating judge to reconsider his decision, saying it lacked a legal and constitutional basis and that the four were being selectively charged.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab, who is backed by Hezbollah, resigned in the wake of the August 4 explosion and remains in his post in a caretaker capacity, as Lebanese officials have failed to agree on a new Cabinet.

The four were the most senior officials to be charged in the investigation and are set to be questioned next week by investigating judge Fadi Sawwan. He was named by the government to the post a few days after the

EU leaders agree to reduce emissions after all-night talks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRUSSELS, 11 DECEMBER



European Union leaders reached a hard-fought deal Friday to cut the bloc's net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by the end of the decade compared with 1990 levels, avoiding a hugely embarrassing deadlock ahead of a UN climate meeting this weekend.

Following night-long discussions at their two-day summit in Brussels, the 27 member states approved the EU executive commission's proposal to toughen the bloc's intermediate target on the way to climate neutrality by mid-century, after a group of reluctant, coal-reliant countries finally agreed to support the improved goal.

"Europe is the leader in the fight against climate change," tweeted EU Council president Charles Michel as daylight broke over the EU capital city. "We decided to cut our greenhouse gas emissions of 55 per cent by 2030."

Five years after the Paris

agreement, the EU wants to be a leader in the fight against global warming. Yet the bloc's heads of state and government were unable to agree on the new target the last time they met in October, mainly because of financial concerns by eastern nations seeking more clarity about how to fund and handle the green transition.

Still, agreeing on common language was not an easy task. Negotiations were punctuated throughout the night by intense discussions in the plenary session and multiple chats in smaller groups on the sidelines.

Another delay in revising the EU's current 40 per cent emission cuts objective for 2030 would have been particularly embarrassing before the virtual Climate Ambition Summit marking five years since the Paris deal, and lead-

ers worked to the wire to seal a deal.

The event on Saturday will be co-hosted by the UK with the United Nations and France.

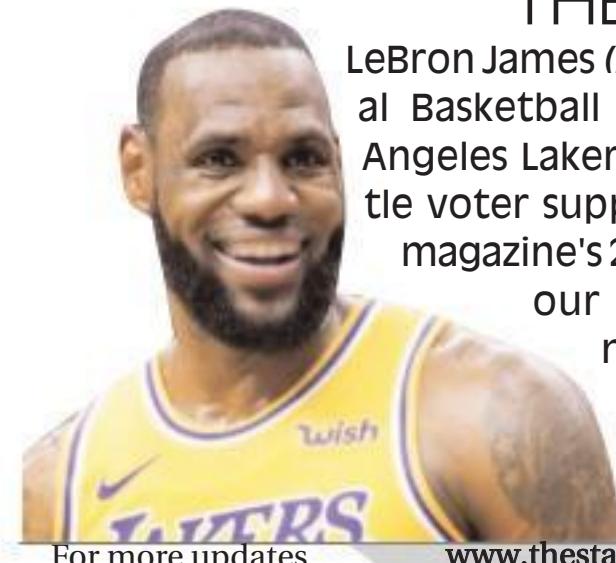
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced last week he wants the UK to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68 per cent from 1990 levels by 2030, a more ambitious goal than the EU's.

Poland, which last year didn't commit to the EU's 2050 climate neutrality goal, and other eastern countries, including the Czech Republic and Hungary, largely depend on coal for their energy needs. They considered it unfair that all member states should be submitted to the same ambition without considering their respective energy mixes.

To win their approval, member states agreed that the new target should be delivered collectively. According to the Belgian Prime Minister's office, "leaders agreed that the cuts will be first achieved in sectors and countries where there is still plenty of room for improvement."

In addition, the European Commission will take into account specific national situations when drawing up the measures. A progress report will be submitted to the European Council in the spring.

The accord also left the door



THE PICK OF THE LOT

LeBron James (*in photo, left*), who won a National Basketball Association title with the Los Angeles Lakers and formed a coalition to battle voter suppression, has been named Time magazine's 2020 Athlete of the Year. The honour comes days after James was named among Sport Illustrated & s Sportspersons of the Year.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Rape sentence: Robinho on Thursday had a nine-year sentence for the rape of a woman upheld by a Milan court. Judges confirmed the sentence for Robinho and one of his friends for group sexual violence dating from January 2013. Robinho was the playing for AC Milan.

Griezmann protests: Barcelona's World Cup-winning footballer Antoine Griezmann is ending his sponsorship contract with Huawei over reports the Chinese telecoms giant was involved in the surveillance of Uighur Muslims, the Frenchman said on Instagram.

Mazepin deplored: Formula One and the governing FIA joined the Haas team on Thursday in condemning Russian driver Nikita Mazepin for posting a video on social media of a young woman being groped in a car. The 21-year-old driver was said to have apologised.

Show postponed: The 2020 World Athletics Indoor Championships in Nanjing, China, have been postponed to March 2023, the governing body for athletics announced on Thursday. World Athletics decided this year to delay the 2020 World Indoor Championships.

New job: Former wicket-keeper-batsman Parthiv Patel, who recently announced his retirement from cricket, has joined five-time Indian Premier League champions Mumbai Indians as a talent scout, the franchise said in a statement on Thursday.

Practice session: The Pakistan team have finally started training in New Zealand after spending a long while in controlled isolation after a spate of coronavirus infections - now being probed by their cricket board - sent them back into a bio-secure bubble.

Latif discarded: Pakistan Television Corporation has let go of analyst Rashid Latif and seven others, the Dawn reported, a few days after a new chairman, Naeem Bokhari, took charge. Latif has regularly discussed cricket with host Nauman Niaz on PTV for years.

Sochi aftermath: Urine samples collected at the Sochi Winter Olympic Games in 2014 are to be re-analysed in a bid to crack down on dope cheats, the international testing agency - ITA - announced. Its aim is to complete a Sochi re-analysis programme.

De Kock named SA captain: Wicket-keeper-batsman Quinton de Kock was named South African Test team captain for the upcoming two-match series against Sri Lanka. The 16-member squad includes rookie opener Sarel Erwee, wicket-keeper-batsman Kyle Verreyne and medium-pacer Glenton Stuurman, the trio receiving their maiden call-ups. South Africa will miss the services of top seamer Kagiso Rabada and all-rounder Dwayne Pretorius.

A double knockout by Rajiv & Mathana: It's a dream return for Honda racing at the much awaited 2020 season of MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship (INMRC) kicked-off today at Madras Motor Sports Club, Chennai. The sunny Friday saw ENEOS Honda Erula Racing Team impressive trio of Rajiv Sethu, Mathana Kumar and Senthil Kumar set the tone in Pro-stock 165cc national class for the weekend ahead. While the morning qualifier put Rajiv firmly at the start of the grid, the afternoon race saw him make further headway. Making the most of his strong start, Rajiv stopped the clock at 12:08:653 with a crushing 4.757 seconds lead.

Repeat triumph hard to achieve

AGENCIES

MELBOURNE, 11 DECEMBER

Facing a stronger Australia and with only fleeting involvement from talisman Virat Kohli (***in photo****), India need everything to go right for them over four taxing Tests if they are to deliver another series win Down Under two years after their breakthrough tour.

Kohli led India to a 2-1 triumph in 2018-9 but the soon-to-be dad will hand over the reins to deputy Ajinkya Rahane after next week's series-opener in Adelaide.

Even in cricket-mad India would begrudge Kohli's baby joy, but covering for the loss of his leadership, batting and chutzpah will require a huge collective effort from the players that remain.

Kohli's paternity leave is just one of a number of twists in the build-up to a series that has been on a knife-edge for months due to the Covid-19 pandemic and government health protocols. A cluster of infections in South Australia a month ago threatened to scupper the opening Test but with the outbreak contained a crowd of up to 27,000 will be allowed to file into Adelaide Oval for day one on 17 December.

The series also comes as a much-needed diversion for Covid-weary fans, who can expect a beguiling match-up between Tim Paine's top-ranked Test team and Kohli's third-ranked side. India's 2018-9 win over Australia was the first ever scored by an Asian side Down Under, a psychological breakthrough in a land where spin is a side dish to pace's main course. Conjur-



ing another series victory against the hosts would be an arguably greater triumph.

Australia were at their lowest ebb two years ago, with batsmen Steve Smith and David Warner suspended and the team scarred by the humiliations of the 2018 ball-tampering scandal. They are a stern outlier this time around, even with Warner to miss at least Adelaide after tearing an adductor muscle during the one-day series.

Smith back-to-back centuries, Smith was in marauding form during the One-Day Internationals and will be desperate to make amends for his absence two years ago.

Smith and Warner no longer have to shoulder the burden of scoring alone, with Marnus Labuschagne now a bolted-on number three following his glorious 2019/20 season.

Questions remain at the top of the order, however, with opener Joe Burns struggling and Warner's prospective replacement Will Pucovski a doubt after

suffering concussion from a head-knock in the tour match against India A.

Factbox on the Test series between Australia and India, which begins in Adelaide on 17 December:

AUSTRALIA

World ranking: 1
Captain: Tim Paine
Coach: Justin Langer
Top ranked batsman: Steve Smith (1)
Top ranked bowler: Pat Cummins (1)
Squad: Tim Paine, Sean Abbott, Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Will Pucovski, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, Matthew Wade, David Warner.

INDIA

World ranking: 3
Captain: Virat Kohli
Coach: Ravi Shastri
Top ranked batsman: Virat Kohli (2)
Top ranked bowler: Jasprit Bumrah (9)
Squad: Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, KL Rahul, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Shubman Gill, Wriddhiman Saha, Rishabh Pant, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Navdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, R Ashwin, Mohammed Siraj.

Matches: 98

Australia wins: 42
India wins: 28
Draws: 27
Tied: 1
LAST THREE SERIES
2014-15: Australia beat India 2-0 in Australia
2016-17: India beat Australia 2-1 in India
2018-19: India beat Australia 2-1 in Australia

Verstappen leads in 1st practice

AGENCIES

ABU DHABI, 11 DECEMBER

Red Bull's Max Verstappen pipped Valterri Bottas to top the timesheets in Friday's opening Formula 1 practice session for the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix as Lewis Hamilton made a quiet return to action.

The Dutchman set a time of one minute, 37.378 seconds to go 0.034 seconds quicker than Bottas with Hamilton 1.3 seconds slower in fifth. The 35-year-old Hamilton, who missed last week's Sakhir Grand Prix after testing positive for COVID-19, suffered brake problems that sent him back to the garage just three laps after he hit the track. The Briton was back out with half the 90-minute session still to run.

Yet Hamilton, who has already wrapped up a record-equalling seventh world title, set his best time on the slowest tyres compared to the quickest softs used by Verstappen and Bottas.

Italy's WC triumph was 'redemption' for Rossi

AGENCIES

LONDON, 11 DECEMBER

Paolo Rossi (*in photo*) once described his performance at the 1982 World Cup, where he etched his name into football folklore, as "personal redemption" from a match-fixing scandal, even though he always said he had nothing to atone for.

Rossi, who died at the age of 64 early on Thursday, had been handed a three-year ban in the fallout from the Totonero scandal in 1980, but when the sanction was reduced to two years it gave him the opportunity to rebuild his reputation.

The Juventus striker's six goals, including an astonishing hat-trick against Brazil, helped him to the Golden Boot as the tournament's highest scorer while he was also awarded the Golden Ball as the best player of the tournament.

Rossi had returned to the field just months before the World Cup in Spain and was

considered unfit. He was ineffective in Italy's three pool matches, failing to score in three draws, prompting Italian journalist Gianni Brera to describe him as "an ectoplasm of himself."

But just when it seemed Italy did not have a ghost of a chance of winning the World Cup, Rossi came alive, scoring all three goals in their pulsating 3-2 win over Brazil in the second stage group match in Barcelona.

He continued his run with both goals in the 2-0 defeat of Poland in the semi-finals before snaring the opener in a 3-1 victory over West Germany in the final in Madrid.

"That goal, more than any other goal I've ever scored, completely defined my characteristics," Rossi told a Fifa documentary in 2018.

"It was mine because I stole that precious tenth of a second from the defender and I knew he would never reach me." The victory sparked off an outpouring of emotion in Italy and gave rise to hope that the extreme violence, political and social unrest that swept the country in the "Years of Lead" might also be washed away.

Rossi had mixed feelings about the World Cup.

"On one hand I felt fulfilled. I said to myself, 'you've made it,'" he said in the 2018 documentary. "On the other hand, I was disappointed that all of this just ended. The World Cup was over. (But) when you win something important it's not just about the trophy. It's about the group you win it with, it's about your entire career that took you there. It's about your personal redemption."

Italy did not have a ghost of a chance of winning the World Cup, Rossi came alive, scoring all three goals in their pulsating 3-2 win over Brazil in the second stage group match in Barcelona.

He continued his run with both goals in the 2-0 defeat of Poland in the semi-finals before snaring the opener in a 3-1 victory over West Germany in the final in Madrid.

Antonio Habas made two changes to the ATKMB XI that lost to Jamshedpur FC with Sumit Rathi and Man-

Hyderabad maintain unbeaten streak as set-piece woes continue for Mariners

AGENCIES

GOA, 11 DECEMBER

Hyderabad FC remained unbeaten in the Hero Indian Super League Season 7 following their 1-1 draw against ATK Mohun Bagan on Friday.

Manvir Singh (54') had put ATKMB in the driving seat before they succumbed to yet another set-piece as Joao Victor (65') made it all square from the spot. All three goals ATKMB have conceded so far in the league are from set-pieces.

With coach Manuel Marquez suspended following a red against Jamshedpur FC, assistant coach Thangboi Singto made three changes. Subrata Paul was back in goal. Souvik Chakrabarti and Nikhil Poojary were the other two faces to start.

Minutes later, the Fijian almost put his side ahead when he leapt highest to meet a Pratim Kotal cross, but his glancing header was kept out of the frame by Paul.

Antonio Habas made two changes to the ATKMB XI that lost to Jamshedpur FC with Sumit Rathi and Man-

vir Singh starting the game.

ATKMB's Roy Krishna and the Nizams' Subrata Paul were outstanding in the first half with the duo at their best in their respective departments.

While Krishna created chances and nearly scored his fifth goal of the season, former India keeper Paul displayed his class and made his experience count, keeping his side in the game with some brilliant saves.

ATKMB had their first shot on target as early as in the 7th minute, but Krishna's low effort didn't trouble Hyderabad's keeper.

Minutes later, the Fijian almost put his side ahead when he leapt highest to meet a Pratim Kotal cross, but his glancing header was kept out of the frame by Paul.

Yet another chance went begging for ATKMB when Manvir went from hero to villain when he brought down Poojary in the box, forcing the referee to point towards the spot. Joao Victor kept his cool to score the equaliser.

Arindam Bhattacharya nearly gifted HFC the equaliser when he fumbled in dealing with Liston Colaco's cross but recovered well to keep the ball from entering the goal.

However, ATKMB's lead lasted just over ten minutes. Manvir went from hero to villain when he brought down Poojary in the box, forcing the referee to point towards the spot. Joao Victor kept his cool to score the equaliser.

Manvir Singh took on the entire Hyderabad FC defence and smashed the ball into the roof of the net, less than ten minutes after the restart.

Arindam Bhattacharya nearly gifted HFC the equaliser when he fumbled in dealing with Liston Colaco's cross but recovered well to keep the ball from entering the goal.

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Sociedad squeeze into Europa League last 32

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS, 11 DECEMBER



Real Sociedad snatched qualification for the last 32 of the Europa League in the final seconds on Thursday after Willian Jose's (*in photo*) late leveller in a 1-1 draw at Napoli and AZ Alkmaar's shock 2-1 defeat at Rijeka allowed the Spanish side to progress.

Young Boys, Molde, Wolfsberg and Maccabi Tel-Aviv rounded off the group stage by making Monday's draw in Nyon, where they join the 18 already-qualified teams and will be met by eight drop-outs from the Champions League.

La Liga high-fliers Sociedad were heading out of Europe as the final two matches of Group F headed into stoppage time, with Alkmaar set to go through in second place as the Dutch side were drawing at bottom side Rijeka and Napoli led in Naples thanks to Piotr Zielinski's fine first half strike.

However Jose's thumping finish to level the scores at a soaking Stadio Diego Armando Maradona put the Basque outfit back into second place, and Ivan Tomicak's 93rd-minute winner for Rijeka in Croatia confirmed Alkmaar's elimination. Napoli finish top of the group on 11 points, two ahead of Sociedad in second who end the group stage a fur-

ther point ahead of Alkmaar.

"I am happy, but the result was more important than who scored tonight. We achieved qualification and that is why we are all happy," said Zielinski.

Gennaro Gattuso's side knew that despite racking up 10 points in their previous five matches a defeat could cost them qualification and he started a strong team that was still missing injured forward Victor Osimhen.

Sociedad needed to match Alkmaar with the pair level on eight points and in the absence of attacker Mikel Oyarzabal missed a host of chances early on. Zielinski punished Sociedad for these misses when he opened the scoring against the run of play in the 35th minute when he classily brought down a clearance from a corner and lashed home a powerful finish.

However, Jose sparked off wild celebrations when he swivelled and hit his shot into the roof of Ospina's net with seconds remaining, sending his team into Monday's last-32 draw. Young Boys also qualified in dramatic fashion in the last round of group matches, on a night when iconic Italian striker Paolo Rossi was remembered across Europe after his death late on Wednesday night.

A 93rd-minute penalty from Jean-Pierre Nsame and Gianluca Gaudino's strike three minutes later sent the Swiss side through alongside Group A winners Roma with a 2-1 win over Cluj that also featured three red cards.

Cluj are out of Europe thanks to the two stoppage-time strikes, which came after Gabriel Debeljuk had put the Romanians provisionally second in the group with just six minutes remaining in Bern.

Wolfsberg are through to the knockouts thanks to a 1-0 win over Feyenoord which also knocks out the Dutch giants.

Former European champions Feyenoord needed a win in Austria to leapfrog their opponents into second place but were disappointing all night and never bounced back from Dejan Joveljic's 31st minute opener.

Maccabi went through behind Group I winners Villarreal thanks to a 1-0 win over Turkey's Sivasspor, who are eliminated.

Molde's 2-2 draw with Rapid Vienna was enough to see them through from Group B in second place behind Arsenal. The Gunners finished the group stage with a perfect six wins from six after easing past bottom side Dundalk 4-2, while Rangers finished top of Group D thanks to their 2-0 win at Lech Poznan.

Premier League sides Leicester City and Tottenham Hotspur also topped their groups thanks to respective wins over Royal Antwerp and AEK Athens. AC Milan continued to show that they don't rely on injured Zlatan Ibrahimovic after a 1-0 win at Sparta Prague that allowed them to snatch first place in Group H. Jen Petter Hauge's fine individual goal midway through the first half took the Serie A leaders to 13 points, two ahead of Lille who lost 3-2 at bottom team Celtic.

Bumrah puts India ahead after batting collapse

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

SYDNEY, 11 DECEMBER



Jasprit Bumrah (*in photo*) turned up with the bat, scoring his maiden first class half-century, before helmed the