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NEARBY



In phase 1, vaccination at 89 centres in Delhi

NEW DELHI
The COVID-19 vaccination drive, which will start across the country on January 16, will be done at 89 centres in the Capital in the first phase, a Delhi government spokesperson said. This will be gradually scaled up in a phased manner. The city witnessed 519 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Akhil Gogoi named chief of new party in Assam

GUWAHATI
Rajor Dal, a three-month-old political party formed by about 70 organisations, has named jailed peasants' rights activist Akhil Gogoi as its president. He will lead the party from the Central Jail in Guwahati. Rajor Dal leaders said during their three-day conference in Moranhat.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 5

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Vaccination drive to start on January 16

Prime Minister Modi reviews readiness of Centre, States; health, frontline workers to get priority

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 vaccination drive in India will begin on January 16, with priority being given to an estimated three crore healthcare workers and frontline workers, the Health Ministry said on Saturday.

The Ministry said this would be followed by the voluntary vaccination of people above 50 and those below 50 with co-morbidities, numbering around 27 crore.

The announcement followed a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to review the status of the pandemic in the country along with the preparedness

Mammoth drive The first phase of the vaccination programme in numbers

FIRST SHOTS

3 crore
healthcare workers and
frontline workers will
get the vaccine first

27 crore
people above 50 and
those below 50 with
co-morbidities will
get it next

SOURCE: HEALTH MINISTRY



TECHNOLOGY DRIVE

79 lakh
beneficiaries have already
registered on Co-WIN, a digital
platform that will provide real-time
information on the inoculation drive

TRAINED AND READY

61,000
programme managers
3.7 lakh
other vaccination
team members have
been trained so far
at State, district
and block levels

2 lakh
vaccinators

of the States and the Union Territories for the vaccination programme.

The Ministry, in a release, said the Drugs Controller

General of India had granted Emergency Use Authorisation to two vaccines – Covishield and Covaxin.

Mr. Modi was briefed

about the preparedness of the Centre in close collaboration with the State/UT governments, the Ministry said.

"The vaccination exercise will use the principles of people's participation (*Jan Bhagidari*), experience of elections (booth strategy) and Universal Immunisation Programme. There will be no compromise of existing healthcare services, especially national programmes and primary healthcare. We aim for it to be an orderly and smooth implementation driven by technology," the statement added.

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SAVE HUMANITY: PM ▶ PAGE 8
BOLSONARO SEEKS FAST VACCINE
SUPPLY ▶ PAGE 8
DEATH NOT DUE TO JAB ▶ PAGE 8

10 babies killed in fire at Maharashtra hospital

CM orders fire audit of govt. hospitals

RAINA ASSAINAR
ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Ten infants were killed in a fire that swept through the Sick Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) at the Bhandara District General Hospital of Maharashtra early on Saturday. Seven other infants in the unit were rescued.

Terming the tragedy as mind-numbing, Chief Minis-

ter Uddhav Thackeray ordered a probe into the incident and called for a fire audit of all government hospitals in the State.

According to Pramod Khadate, chief surgeon at the hospital, around 1.30 a.m. the staff nurse found smoke coming from the ward treating babies.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

terming the tragedy as mind-numbing, Chief Minis-

Chinese soldier who crossed LAC held

India should return the soldier immediately, says Beijing

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

A Chinese soldier was apprehended early on January 8 on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control in the area south of Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh, the Army said on Saturday.

"The People's Liberation Army soldier had transgressed across the LAC and was taken into custody by troops deployed in this area. The soldier is being dealt with as per laid down proce-

dures and circumstances under which he had crossed the LAC are being investigated," a statement said.

State media in Beijing confirmed that China had lost a soldier and "called for an immediate return".

Two hours of searching
"Due to darkness and complicated geography, a Chinese soldier went missing on the China-India border early Friday morning. China informed India as soon as the

incident occurred, and sought help from the Indian side. After two hours of searching, the soldier was found," the official People's Liberation Army Daily quoted frontier force officials as saying, reported the Global Times.

"India should return the soldier immediately, to help de-escalating of the border tension, and uphold regional stability," a statement said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Issue of proxy candidates rocks Gupkar Alliance

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Just three months after its formation, J&K's regional amalgam, the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) that was stitched together to fight for the return of the pre-August 5, 2019 status, has been rocked by opposition within, with several leaders pitching against its continuation.

Imran Ansari, a senior Peoples Conference (PC) leader, wrote to his chief Sajad Lone, who is the spokesperson of the alliance, on Saturday and expressed his reservation over the continuation of the amalgam.

'Deceitful behaviour'
"I am in no way against the stated objectives of the PAGD. But it is difficult to convince the people about the sincerity of intentions when they are themselves witness to deceitful behaviour during the elections. People ask me that if the PAGD leaders cannot be trusted not to cheat each other during the DDC elections, how can they trust with the bigger objectives," Mr. Ansari's letter read.

Mr. Ansari accused the National Conference, whose president Farooq Abdullah heads the Gupkar alliance, of fielding proxy candidates during the recent District Development Council polls, despite a joint list of candidates drawn by all the constituents of the amalgam.

Two senior leaders of the NC and the Peoples Democratic Party have also questioned the alliance. NC's Basharat Bukhari asked the top leaders of the PAGD "to share their road map with the people". PDP leader Fayaz Ahmad Mir also accused the NC of fielding proxy candidates and said the leadership has failed to "act against violators".

Indonesia jet carrying 62 goes missing

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JAKARTA

A jet carrying 62 people lost contact with air traffic controllers minutes after taking off from Indonesia's capital Jakarta on a domestic flight on Saturday.

Officials were examining debris found by fishermen

to see if it was from the missing plane.

Transportation Minister Budi Karya Sumadi said Sriwijaya Air's Flight SJ182 was delayed for an hour before it took off at 2:36 p.m. The Boeing 737-500 disappeared from radar four minutes later, after the pilot

contacted air traffic control to ascend to an altitude of 29,000 feet (8,839 meters), he said.

The plane was carrying 50 passengers and 12 crew members, all Indonesian nationals.

PLANE DEBRIS ▶ PAGE 9

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Listen to us: Children and women shouting slogans against the new farm laws at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in Ghazipur on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA (RELATED REPORTS ON PAGES 2 & 7)

Kejriwal announces ban on import of live birds

CM orders shutting down of Ghazipur poultry market in wake of avian flu outbreak



Hard hit: Workers loading chickens in a van at the Ghazipur Murga Mandi on Saturday. ■ PTI

They will function under the District Magistrates," he said.

According to Mr. Kejriwal, veterinary officers are conducting surveys in all bird markets, wildlife establishments and waterbodies across Delhi. The teams are specially focusing on the poultry market in Ghazipur, Shakti Sthal Lake, Bhalswa Lake, Sanjay Lake, Delhi Zoo, DDA parks situated at Hauz Khas Village, Pashchim Vihar and Dwarka.

Ten ducks were reported dead at Sanjay Lake, the Delhi Development Authority said, adding that their samples had been sent to ascertain the cause of death. Also, 24 crows died in the last four days at the District Park, Jasola, and the DDA said it was monitoring the situation closely while remaining in touch with other government agencies.

Minister said during a digital briefing. "The Delhi government is following all guidelines and directions issued by the Central government with regard to the bird flu. Rapid response teams have been formed in every district to contain the spread and conduct proper surveillance.

He said a 24-hour helpline – 23890318 – has been set up for the assistance of people and the Delhi government has collected 104 samples till now which have been sent to a laboratory in Jalandhar. In the last few days, there have been several cases of bird flu across various parts of the country, which is a cause for worry. Cases of bird flu have been registered in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. No confirmed case has been registered in Delhi until now," the Chief

After handling farm and home, women reinforce stir

Some have been taking turns to participate in the ongoing protest so that work on the fields, household chores continue unabated back home

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI
Forty-two-year-old Kavita Singh reached the Singhu border on Saturday after holding down the fort back home in Haryana for over a month while her husband protested in Delhi for the repeal of the three controversial farm laws.

A resident of Bhiwani district, Ms. Singh said: "All these days we were back home. This is the first time that I have been able to come to the Singhu border for the protest. All our relatives, especially the men, have been at the protest since the first day. Now that they have gone back for a few days to water the fields, we have got the chance to come here."

Ms. Singh is among several women protesters who have been working on the fields – while managing household chores – for over a month, and taking part in the agitation whenever their relatives returned to the village.

Several women explained how they have been attend-

ing the protest in a rotational manner so that work on the fields continued unabated ahead of the harvest season.

Sarabjit Kaur, 68, who reached the Singhu border from Punjab's Anandpur Sahib two days ago, said: "There was a lot to do at home over the last few weeks. While most of the farmers are here protesting, several others are also required to stay back to take care of the fields. There are household chores to be done as well. This week, some of the people who had been here since the beginning have gone back and so, I decided to join the protest in their absence."

The farmers who have remained at the Capital's borders for over a month now have been demanding a legal guarantee of the Minimum Support Price system and have reiterated that they will not move an inch till their demands are met.

Residents of Punjab's Patiala, Sukhwinder Kaur and Balwinder Kaur said that



Women protesters during the ongoing demonstration against the Centres' farm laws at the Singhu border in Delhi on Saturday. ■ PTI

"unity" among relatives and neighbours ensured that all the fields were equally tended to when the people concerned were away to participate in the protest.

Unity and trust
"We come here quite often and are usually alternating

with other members of the family. There is enough unity between neighbours and we follow a rotational basis. This ensures that when we are here they can look after our fields and when we go back we do the same for their fields. There is trust among all," said Sukhwinder.

Meanwhile, coming to the Singhu border with langar is a weekly affair for Rajwant Kaur Bassi and a group of 16 others.

"We come to the border every weekend and bring langar with us. Apart from the trolleys that have already come from our villages, we are a group of 15-20 people

Our forefathers told us to fight for our rights and that is what we are doing. There is a possibility that we will not get the returns that we usually get from our farms, but this year there's a larger battle that we are fighting. We will not move till the laws are repealed

MAMTA KADYAN
Resident of Haryana's Jhajjar district

of manpower back home.

"While I own two acres of land, who will work on it? Both my son and husband have passed away and I have a granddaughter to take care of. Despite a lot of losses, I will continue to stay here till the laws are repealed. If the laws are not repealed, I will have nothing to go back to as it is going to affect us adversely," said Jasmeet, a resident of Ludhiana.

Mamta Kadyan, a resident of Haryana's Jhajjar district, said that this year there was a "no profit, no loss scenario".

"Our forefathers have always told us to fight for our rights and that is exactly what we are doing. There is a huge possibility that we will not get the returns that we usually get from our farms, but this year there's a larger battle that we are fighting. We will not move till the laws are repealed," said Ms. Kadyan.

While several of the farmers are attending the protest on a rotational basis, for some like 55-year-old Jasmeet Kaur, participating in the protest has meant losses on the farm as there is a lack

of manpower back home. Have helped farmers send defamation notices: AAP

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday said that as promised, the party has helped farmers send defamation notices to actress Kangana Ranaut, BJP MPs Ramesh Bidhuri, Ravi Kishan, Manoj Tiwari, and others for their alleged "libelous and malicious" remarks.

"As per the defamation notices, the accused have launched a vicious and malicious campaign against the farmers' protests at Delhi's borders, with a view to spitefully obliterate the farmers' honest cause by attempting to corrode and harm their reputation," AAP national spokesperson Raghu Chavda said in a tweet.

The AAP also said that it has held 267 "mohalla sabhas" in 60 constituency Assemblies of Delhi to expose the BJP's alleged corruption in the three municipal corporations.

On Monday, the AAP had announced that they will hold 2,500 mohalla-level meetings to tell people about an alleged ₹2,500-crore corruption done by the BJP-ruled civic bodies from January 7 to 15.

"People are coming to the sabhas and revealing the past incidents with them in the public. Every day, hundreds of such incidents of corruption are being disclosed by the people in different mohalla sabhas," said Durgesh Pathak, AAP leader and party in-charge for municipal corporations.

Delhi Congress workers stage protest over demolition of Hanuman temple

IN BRIEF

Delhi govt. launches programme for teachers

NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday launched the TESOL Core Certificate Program for English teachers of Delhi government schools. The programme will be conducted by the Regional English Language Office of the U.S. Embassy. The programme is aimed at enhancing the English language-teaching competency of the participant teachers. The current batch is of 50 teachers. ■ PTI

NDMC starts removing posters at public places

NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council's enforcement department has initiated an intensive drive to remove posters, banners and illegal hoardings or advertisements installed at public places and busy markets in areas falling under the civic body. ■ PTI

Nominations for women scribe award

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Media Foundation has begun accepting nominations for the Chamel Devi Jain Award 2020 for outstanding woman media person.

The nominations are to be sent latest by January 30 either via email or by post.

Journalists in the print, digital, broadcast and current affairs documentary film media are eligible for the award, including photographers, cartoonists and newspaper designers.

"Names and addresses of sponsors or references should be clearly mentioned with email ids and contact numbers. Self-nominated entries are also accepted," they said.

It was first awarded in 1982 to an outstanding woman media person, who had made a difference through writing with "depth, dedication, courage and compassion".

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they were moving towards the demolition site. The Congress workers raised slogans against the BJP and the AAP. The Hanuman temple was demolished by the BJP-ruled North Delhi Municipal Corporation on court orders. It was demolished as an "encroachment" to pave way for the Chandni Chowk facelift project of the Delhi govern-

ment. "We wanted to hold the protest at the demolition site, but the police put up barricades to prevent the Congress workers from reaching there... so we recited Hanuman Chalisa in front of the Gauri Shankar Mandir," Mr. Kumar said.

The party has sought time to meet L-G Anil Baijal on Monday to talk about the issue, he said.

Eleven people have been arrested for allegedly defacing two Aurangzeb Lane signboards in Lutyens' Delhi on Saturday, the police said. A senior police officer said that police received information at 5.40 a.m. that a few people have gathered at Aurangzeb Lane at Tughlaq Road.

The 11 persons were detained and taken to Tughlaq Road police station where they were formally arrested after a case was registered under relevant sections.

During probe, the accused allegedly told the police that they're inspired by "Hind Di Chadar" – which is also used to refer Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur.

Two minors held for killing 10-yr-old boy

The accused wanted to extort money

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Two minors have been apprehended for allegedly killing a 10-year-old boy whose body was recovered from a mosque in northeast Delhi's Khajuri Khas, the police said on Saturday.

During interrogation, the accused allegedly told the police they wanted to extort money from the deceased's father by kidnapping him.

Earlier, a few ago, the accused had given the victim water infused with sleeping pills. However, nothing happened to him and their plan flopped. On Friday, the 17-year-old boy gave money to the other accused and asked him to bring momos from a nearby vendor. On the pretext of eating momos, they took the victim to the first floor of the masjid where they enjoyed the snack and thereafter, took the deceased to the roof of the mosque and strangulated him before hiding his body under the debris.

Body was found buried
During investigation, a joint search was conducted by the police and the parents of child in the nearby areas of their house. The boy's body was found buried under the debris in a corner on the second floor of the Madina Masjid. Shamim identified him as his son, the police said.

The police analysed CCTV footage of the area and all persons present at the masjid at 7.15 p.m. were examined. It was found that

the victim was last seen with his two minor friends.

"Both the juveniles were examined separately and contradictions were found in their versions. Later, they confessed to killing their friend and were apprehended," Mr. Surya said.

During interrogation, the accused allegedly told the police they wanted to extort money from the deceased's father by kidnapping him.

Earlier, a few ago, the accused had given the victim water infused with sleeping pills. However, nothing happened to him and their plan flopped. On Friday, the 17-year-old boy gave money to the other accused and asked him to bring momos from a nearby vendor. On the pretext of eating momos, they took the victim to the first floor of the masjid where they enjoyed the snack and thereafter, took the deceased to the roof of the mosque and strangulated him before hiding his body under the debris.

Decomposed body
In another incident, a decomposed body of a woman was found in a drain in east Delhi's New Ashok Nagar on Friday. No physical injuries are apparent. Teams are looking to identify the body, the police said.

Infrastructure projects hit COVID bump

Several works scheduled to be finished in 2020 have been delayed in Gurugram primarily due to restrictions on construction activities and non-availability of labour due to the ongoing pandemic

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Hit adversely by the COVID-19 outbreak last year, projects for improvement of various junctions in the Millennium City, including Atul Kataria Chowk and HUDA City Centre Chowk, widening of a section of the Gurugram-Alwar Highway (NH-248A) and Pataudi Road, have been delayed for several months now.

Scheduled to be finished in 2020, the projects of Atul Kataria Chowk and HUDA City Centre Chowk, involving the construction of a flyover and an underpass each, have now been delayed primarily on account of the restrictions on construction activities and non-availability of labour due to the pandemic since March last year.

Initially, scheduled to be completed by December 4, 2019, refurbishment project of Atul Kataria Chowk junction, a project announced by the Chief Minister Manohar Lal, was expected to be completed by 2020-end.

The tender for the project was allotted on May 5, 2018, at a cost of ₹47.70 crore and involves construction of 715-metre-long flyover along Old Delhi Road and 620-metre-long underpass along the Mata Road, besides a service road.

Similarly, the project for the improvement of the HUDA City Centre Chowk involves construction of 270-metre-long flyover and 735-metre-long underpass passing from Signature Road to Subhash Chowk. More than 80% work for the flyover has been completed, but the progress of civil works achieved is only 41%.

The completion date of work has now been extended up to March 2021. The work for the project was allotted on February 25, 2019, at a cost of ₹52.52 crore and the scheduled date of completion was April 15, 2020.

Running far behind the sche-

dule, the project for the improvement of junction at Mahabir Chowk and Aggarwal Chowk near city bus stand was awarded on February 15, 2019, and as per the contract, the work was scheduled to be completed by May 31 last year. But the project has now been delayed past its September 2020 deadline, as per the contract, due to the COVID-induced lockdown and scarcity of funds.

However, the project has achieved progress of only 12% and is slated to be delayed. The work is being undertaken by the Public Works Department (Buildings and Roads) with funds being provided by the GMDA.

Past deadline
Slated to be completed by May 11, 2020, as per the contract, the project for six-laning of road from Umang Bhardwaj Chowk to Dwarak Expressway has seen an overall progress of 36% and the completion date has now been extended till March this year.

It involves 820-metre-long flyover at Basai Chowk and 910-metre-long railway over bridge (ROB) on the Delhi-Rewari railway line. The permission for construction of the ROB has been received and the most of the issues related to shifting of utilities and land litigations have been addressed.

Running ahead of schedule, the four-lane underground U-turn near Ambience Mall, a National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) project, was likely to be completed by May 31 last year. But the project has now been delayed past its September 2020 deadline, as per the contract, due to the COVID-induced lockdown and scarcity of funds.

The NHAI was to bear half of the cost for the ₹102.94-crore project, and the rest was to be equally shared by the DLF and the Ambience Mall owners. But the DLF and the Ambience Mall owners delayed the payments. "The DLF has now paid its share and the project is likely to be completed by March this year," said a senior NHAI official.

Travel time

The motorists coming from Jaipur and going towards Ambience Mall and DLF Cyber Hub are now forced to travel all the way to Rajokri flyover in Delhi to take a U-turn. After completion, the 377-metre-long underground U-turn will not just reduce the travel time, but also help reduce traffic congestion under the Rajokri flyover during the rush hours.

For the six-laning and strengthening of 22-km-long stretch of National Highway-248A, locally known as "Sohna Road", starting from Rajiv Chowk, the NHAI has awarded two separate tenders. The first package of the project involves six laning and strengthening of the road from 0.340 km to 9.282 km starting from Rajiv Chowk and 4.752 km-long elevated road. The stipulated date for the completion of this package, as per the contract, is July 31, 2021. The second package, with the stipulated completion date of July 29, 2021, covers the remaining distance.

Three-lane service road will also be constructed on both sides of the road.

"Both the packages of the project are under progress. The first package, with 32% progress, is likely to be completed by June next year. However, the second package has finished around 70% works and we hope to wrap it up by this year end," said the NHAI official, not willing to be named.

Besides the pandemic, the first package of the project was also delayed due to collapse of a section of an elevated corridor in August last year.



Work in progress for improvement of Mahabir Chowk in Old Gurugram. ■ MANOJ KUMAR

Timings
DELHI

SUNDAY, JAN. 10	
RISE 07:16	SET 17:43
RISE 04:10	SET 14:58
MONDAY, JAN. 11	
RISE 07:16	SET 17:44
RISE 05:18	SET 15:51
TUESDAY, JAN. 12	
RISE 07:16	SET 17:45
RISE 06:23	SET 16:51

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	18	10
Safdarjung	18	10
Palam	17	11

Delhi Palam Today
19°C Shallow to moderate fog would prevail at many places. A pleasant sunny day with light to moderate winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
18°C A cold morning with shallow to moderate fog. A mainly sunny sky & cool winds likely. A cold day condition may develop at few areas.

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	301	Gurugram	230
Ghazipur	348	Faridabad	311
Noida	346	Greater Noida	360
Good	■	Satisfactory	■ Moderate
0-50	■	51-100	■ 101-200
Poor	■	Very poor	■ Severe
201-300	■	301-400	■ >401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]			

IN BRIEF

Air quality 'very poor', likely to improve today

NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi and Noida deteriorated to 'very poor' category on Saturday and Gurugram's to 'poor' level, according to CPCB data. The national capital's air quality is expected to improve in the next few days.

In phase 1, vaccination to be done at 89 centres in Delhi

Capital reports less than 1,000 COVID-19 cases for 16th day in a row

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 vaccination drive, which will start across the country on January 16, will be done at 89 centres in Delhi in the first phase, Delhi government spokesperson said. This will be gradually scaled up in a phased manner.

Meanwhile, the health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Saturday stated that the Capital had witnessed 519 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,29,801.

This is the 16th day in a row that the number of new cases has been less than 1,000.

Also, 12 more deaths have been reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,666.

Also, a total of 80,275 tests were done in a single day.

3,683 active cases

Of the total cases, 6,15,452 people have recovered and there are 3,683 active cases at present. The



People in line for COVID-19 test at Northern Railway Hospital in Delhi on Saturday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

active cases, which have been on a downward trend, had fallen below 4,000 mark on Friday.

The positivity rate of COVID-19 cases was 0.65% on Saturday and the overall positivity till now was 6.76%, as per the bulletin. There were 2,951 containment zones in the city as of Saturday.

Out of the total 12,166 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the city, 10,709 were vacant.

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
6,29,801	10,666
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
519	12

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

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Admissions 2021-2023

National Institute of Bank Management (NIBM) was established in 1969 by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in consultation with the Government of India. It is an autonomous Institute guided by a Board of eminent bankers and academicians. The Governor of Reserve Bank of India is the Chairman of the Governing Board.

Admission Process
Candidates short-listed on the basis of CAT 2020/ XAT (2021)/CMAT (2021) scores will be called for Writing Ability Test and Interview during April 2021 in select centers.

Highlights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apex Institution in Banking Set up by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Reservations of seats as per Govt Policy Highly specialized/focused in Banking 100% Placement since inception Top Recruiters: Foreign & Private Banks, MNCs, Consulting Firms, Credit Rating Agencies, IT Companies, FinTech Cos. & NBFCs. 	Fully Residential Programme with 100% secured and safe 62 acre sylvan campus 
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The last date for filling online application forms is March 20, 2021
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AAP govt. looking for students to play role of 'wetland mitras'

They will take part in conservation of wetlands

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

and in connection with this, the Union Environment Ministry had sent a letter to all States to identify wetlands in the States.

In the letter, it was mentioned that the World Wildlife Fund had floated the idea of assigning "wetland mitras" to increase public participation in conservation.

A person selected by the government can work for two years and will get a certificate from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government.

The Delhi government has issued a notice inviting interested people to apply to be "wetland mitras". "Wetlands play an important role in groundwater recharge, biodiversity, climate change and flood control. They are critical habitat for domestic and migratory birds. They fulfill livelihood needs of nearby residents too. But due to regular anthropogenic activities and misuse they are in a stage of degradation," the notice stated.

"Any individual who can provide their time and services for the protection, management and beautification of their nearby wetland/s can apply to become wetland mitras," the notice read.

Interested students and others

should visit the website of Delhi Parks and Gardens Society.

BJP distributes dry ration kits at SDMC school

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

BJP State president Adesh Gupta distributed dry ration kits under the Mid-Day Meal Scheme at South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) Primary Girls School in Chawala here on Saturday, and also took on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for forcing civic bodies to contend with financial constraints.

The three corporations, he said, were demanding constitutionally allocated funds so that they could pay salaries to the corporation employees on time and their work was not affected, and not for their own expenses.

"Everybody is well aware that the Corporation is struggling with financial constraints as the Kejriwal government is not releasing due funds," he alleged.

MOTIVATING YOUNG MINDS TO EMBRACE CHANGE
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MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS / Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA / CA / ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

COSMOPOLITAN

GROOM NEEDED, Caste no bar. Girl's details are: DOB: 20 Mar 1990, Birthplace: Sultanpur (UP), Caste - kori, Height 5'2", Working in MNC in Hyderabad as SW Engg. To know more, please call at 7887976659

BE(CS)-PILANI, MS(CS)-USA, Reddy, Reddiar girl, unmarried, Nov 90.5'8", ITB, Full time software professional, > 1.5 LPA, San Jose, CA, USA. Well settled Parents seek family oriented, qualified US settled bridegroom. Email: ksnr.usa@gmail.com Ph: +91 99855 84916

DOCTOR

PRIYANKA MBBS 25/178CM Fair Kannai Uthiram Works@Hospital,Seeks Doctor Chettiar/Any Other Caste:8056941767

HINDU PADMAHALI , Doctor , M S (OBG) ongoing , smart Girl, Age 25 , H 5'6", seeks handsome , smart groom from doctors/ civil service & other equal cadres. Boy should be below 29 yrs/ Height 5'10"- 6'1" preferably Padmahalai community from Hyderabad , Telangana & Andhra Pradesh state strictly well settled Rich family. Caste: 9515849420

VISWAKARMA GIRL 28/MS seeks MDMS Groom well settled from same/other equal caste. Whatsapp BHP 9445638380

WANTED GROOM (Doctor) Hindu Vanniyar/BC/FC, MS/MD Clinical students/IIT, IIM, IIT, IIS, Group I officers, age 32+, for my daughter DNB Plastic Surgeon. Ph: 9543815803

MALAYALAM

DIVORCEE

HINDU/EZUTHACHAN girl 31/152cm, BTech, PGDM(IIM), works in Chennai, seeks Alliance from well Employed professionals, Caste no bar 7356997126

MBA/CA/ICWA

PQM4 BE DCE-MBA IMC Manglik Rajak Rajput Girl, 32+ LPA; 5'6"-8' Oct 90; 7.39 am, Delhi: 9810476472

NRI

REQ USA Settled Godly Man for USA Employed boy again fair Slim&Good Looking Girl 34yrs 161cm.9448852772

TAMIL

TAMIL CHRISTIAN Vellala BE/MA fine Arts 24/158 Wheatish Slim,seeks well settled boy from Chn/ Blore/ abroad; 984078455 id: wmm8482@gmail.com

TAMIL

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

GROOM WANTED MD-PAEDIATRICIAN at Chennai 30yrs. 165cm Elite & Affluent family Hindu. Tamil, MUKULATHOOR, Expecting PG Doctor Caste No Bar Mob: 86109 10890

GAVARA NAIDU 42/153cms (Divorce). No Issues, Fair, Profsl, 60+km month. Seeks Employed Groom. 9791031911

PARENTS Of Good looking Doctor, MS (AD), 29 yrs, Naidu, Vegetarian, looking for a good natured, well placed groom. Please send BHP to balasaraj@gmail.com

CHRISTIAN 45, 57", Slim, BE, MS, US, Citizen, Seeking Alliance Ct : 9488718041

CSI CHRISTIAN Nadar Girl, Fair, Good Looking, 03-04-1988, born 152cm / M Sc. M.Phil , working as Assistant Professor in a Reputed Women's College, Mount Road, Chennai. Both Parents Doctors (Private) . Suitable Alliance, Employed / Settled in Chennai / With Clean Habits from Same Community. Contact: 9841182514

RC-CHRISTIAN/ 29/168 cm/ MDS Dentist/ Mudaliar Seeks Doctor, Engineers with PG, only from RC Christians. Contact No 9566743039, 9940507923

NDAU 400 Cr, 25/V.Fair, MBA (UK), Business, Chennai, Seeks Groom - Business / Doctor - 9825019776

HYDERABAD BASED well Educated and educated Telugu Brahmin Parents seeking alliance for Divorced Daughter MS Civil USA passed and Pursing Ph D at IIT T. Good looking 27 years, 5'. 4. Height seeking Groom from well educated and decent family working in US / Canada Green Card / H1B visa 63010586045

LINGAYATH 1981 MSc, Hyd, never Married. Seeks well Settled Hindu Veg Families Ct: 737229956/9642983979

SC-AD 24 YRS 5.3 F1 BDS seeks BDS/ MBBS groom, Chennai based. contact:944301934

ALLIANCE FOR 41yrs, Star Hastham, Kannai Rasi, M.E.(PhD) Fair,Honey, Thuluvu Vellarai Mudaliar Girl. Seeks Qualified & Employed Groom from same Caste. 9840477890/ 044-4267373

HINDU NADAR Poosam Kadagam 23/ B.Tech (IT) 153cm, Honey, Well to do family. Seeks Suitable educated Chennai based Groom. Ct: 9444203011

HINDU SC PR Kongu 36, MBBS DCH Doctor, working in Govt Hospital seeks suitable group. CT: 94436-80937

DKV 29/164/56 fair BTech (NIT) MBA (IIT), MNC Chennai seeks bridegroom from educated family. 9940507235

MUDALIAR 32/158 MS Dr. seeks well settled PG Doctor/Engr/ Reputed Business groom. Caste Nobar. 7338843003

VANNIA KULA SHAKTHIRIYAR Fair, Slim, 27165, Revathi Star, BDS Doctor working at Chennai middle class, seeks Groom B.D.S / M.D.S/ B.E / M.E from samecaste, Ct 9840412651, Email: ravi_42192@rediffmail.com

TULUVI VELLAI MUDALIAR Good looking Girl 33, (Uthirattathy, M.Sc, Ph.D(Physics), Employed, Parents Seeks Alliance from First and Unmarried Bachelor Bridegroom Aged 33 - 36 Years, Employed, Casto No Bar. Contact: After evening 7 PM : 994084706, 7550245659

IRS(DEPUTY COMMISSIONER) 32/54", Hindu,Caste no bar. Seeks suitable groom. Contact-7708633581

HINDU SC AD 35 Ph.D Asst.Prof (Govt) Only married (separated in day) seek bridgegroom with Degree good Job (unmarried/ married without child) age below 35- 39, 944301766

HINDU ADIDRAVIDAR Kongu Parayar 29 BE, M.Tech, Ph.D seeks Educated Prof Groom. CT:7558146647/ 8973345370

Pretty ARCHITECT, US-based, 25, 54", teetotaler, affluent family, seeks handsome, well-settled south Indian man. jdspot@gmail.com. 9345634365

MUDALIAR 30/160, Uthirattathy/ Meenam, Divorce, No issue, seeks Bridegroom, Caste no Bar. Ct 9444565580

MARUTHUVAR 47 MSc MPhil, PhD Un-married Matri Jov Rs 20 PM Seeks Educated Groom Ct:8300867757/ 8939490941

AGE 25, Qual: ME, SC-AD, Place: Coimbatore. Seeks Educated Groom. Ct: 996586364, 9788789450

MUDALIAR 23/162 V.Fair, Graduate UK, Father Business, Elite Family. Only daughter, Seeks groom - Abroad/Business – 7305810258

MUDALIAR (CNB) 30 / Fair, Masters (UK), Elite Business Family, Chennai. Seeks groom - well placed in/di/ Abroad - 8939012419

ADIV DRavidar, 33/172, BE, MBA, 20Lac PA, Divorcee, within a month, well educated family, seeks suitable Groom. Willing to work in Canada also invited Ct: 63800 99184

HINDU SC AD (cast no bar) MBBS, working in Tamil Nadu Government Doctor, Fair, 26 years seek Doctor from well Educated family. Contact: 947491365, Email: muraleedharanayar@gmail.com

MUDALIAR 26, B.Tech, MBA, 162 cm, Good Looking Seeks Suitable Groom, CNB, Contact: 7200866346/ 8775154465

EDUCATED BRIDE for (30/ 58') Non wkr wkg at MNC in chennai, 17 LPA salary. Sudhakaraghadam, Ph. no. 9941309727, 7418490520. No demands

PALAKKAD NAIR boy 32/180 slim handsome white B.Tech, MBA IT Mecan in a Big 4 working in Bangalore 15 PA require qualified employed bride from good family background. Contact: 9877897766

MARATHI

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HINDU DV 35/175. IT. 25 Lakh PA. Chennai. Father Doctor. Seeks well educated bride. WhatsApp: 9629012248

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KARTHIK AGE 33 Tech, Private, Suthirth Jathagam Chithirai Nakshatra, Contact: 94462 63104

NAIR/PILLAI 29/98 T.Bech, MBA Reputed Concern-Chennai Seeks Good looking, well Educated Bride.

KARTHIK AGE 33 Tech, Private, Suthirth Jathagam Chithirai Nakshatra, Contact: 94462 63104

YENGAR GIRL Age 48, MA, Govt Job, Divorcee, No Issue. Seeks well employed around 66. Veg Ok.

VELLAJ, KARKATHA, 36/51", B.Sc, (BC/CA), doing M.Com, PGDH, non-vegetarian, Fair, Divorcee seeks Groom from affluent family from Madurai preferably Teaching / Banking professionals / Govt. 6383658612

NRI

KAMMA NAIDU 27/ 168, Kadai, Agiyam, Ayila, Fair, BE., (Petroleum) employed and settled at Singapore seeks Groom from affluent family from Madurai preferably Teaching / Banking professionals / Govt. 6383658612

MUDALIAR 25/163, Beautiful, B.Tech, SWE, MNC, Chennai, 7Lac, PA, Business, CNB, 729576644, 729597666

MUDALIAR 26, B.Tech, MBA, 162 cm, Good Looking Seeks Suitable Groom, CNB, Contact: 9364649862

Match For Handsome unmarried Non Manglik vegetarian Employee Mehta Boy 1976/57" Sr. Supervisor Ludhiana

MUDALIAR 25/163, Beautiful, B.Tech, SWE, MNC, Chennai, 7Lac, PA, Business, CNB, 729576644, 729597666

MUDALIAR 26, B.Tech, MNC, Chennai, 7Lac, PA, Business, CNB, 729576644, 729597666

MUDALIAR/PILLAI CNB 45/163 Kettil M.com, MBA, Seeks Qualified & Employed Unmarried Below 48, Clean habits - IT, Chennai, Native: Perambalur.

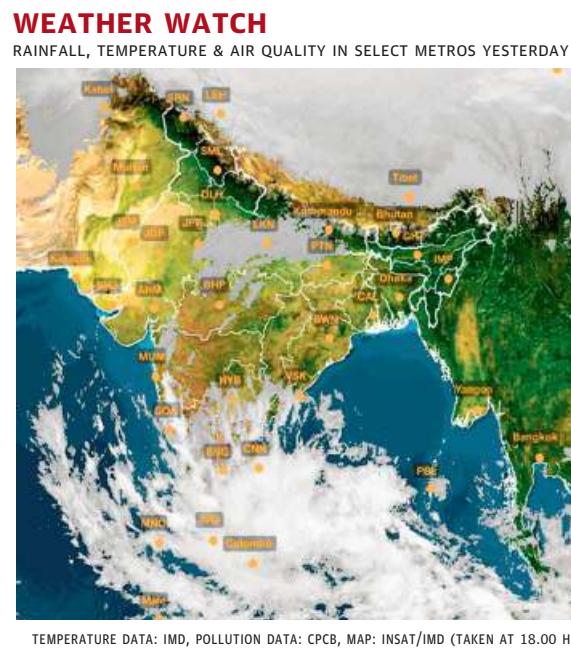
CHARTED ACCOUNTANT Age 48 Roman Catholic, Divorcee, Seeks bride graduate from any caste

NADAR CHRISTIAN 24/175/M.Com working in Chennai. Seeking Bride working in chennai. Parents only

SEEKING ALLIANCE for My Son (Age 25 / 175cm / BE / Technical Engineer / Bangalore from Inter Cast (AD – BC) Inter Religion (Christian – Hindu) family Similar Moderate. Mobile No: 9486490009

BRAHMIN INTERCASTE (Casto no bar)

TAMIL</



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep. Dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Odisha and West Bengal.

CITY **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala 27.8 14.0 Kozhikode 3.5 20.6 24.3
Ahmedabad 28.1 14.5 Kurnool 30.6 22.0 24.3
Aizawl 26.0 11.5 Lucknow 22.9 12.4
Allahabad 22.5 15.4 Madurai 0.5 28.8 23.0
Bengaluru 24.8 20.1 Mangalore 1.6 32.3 23.4
Bhopal 20.9 19.2 Mumbai 32.3 22.6
Bhubaneswar 33.0 16.8 Mysuru 32.3 22.6
Chandigarh 20.3 10.7 New Delhi 19.7 10.8
Chennai 29.5 23.9 Patna 25.4 14.0
Coimbatore 1.27.8 22.4 Port Blair 30.3 26.6
Dehradoon 27.1 7.4 Puducherry 29.4 22.3
Gangtok 14.2 7.7 Pune 33.2 29.3 19.3
Goa 0.3 33.0 24.0 Raipur 33.0 10.6
Guwahati 26.4 13.9 Ranchi 30.0 17.0
Hubballi 28.0 21.0 Shillong 26.5 7.5
Hyderabad 0.2 29.2 20.4 Shimla 20.7 9.1
Imphal 25.0 5.5 Srinagar 1.8 12.3 3.5
Jaipur 19.7 12.8 Thiruvananthapuram 5.2 32.1 23.3
Kochi 39 30.0 22.6 Tiruchi 0.7 31.3 23.5
Kohima 15.0 3.8 Vijayawada 30.0 20.4
Kolkata 29.1 18.5 Visakhapatnam 30.0 22.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)
Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 360 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution in contrast Ramanagara, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 29

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Probe ordered into embankment case

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Lokayukta directed the State Vigilance Directorate to investigate if a road embankment was blown up at the instance of a Biju Janata Dal MLA and an engineer to cover up corruption. The Lokayukta directed while hearing a petition filed by RTI activist Sarbeswar Beura. Mr. Beura had alleged that

some people, who were involved in substandard construction of an irrigation embankment in Jajpur district, had deliberately blown it up using dynamites during flood on August 28 last year. They had carried out the alleged act in order to give an impression that the swirling floodwaters had caused the breach. The embankment from Gokarneswar to Majhi-

pada on National Highway-5 was widened and improved at a cost of ₹21.99 crore through a private contractor.

"Dharmasala MLA Pranab Balabantray and JE Naren Jeena took money from the contractor, who used substandard material. To cover up, the MLA and JE hired miscreants to blow up the embankment," the complainant said.

He said discussions on the project were underway and now "some minor issues are left for which there is need for clarifications".

On the instructions of

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, the administration will disburse agricultural grants to the farmers whose 33% or more crops have been damaged.

Principal Secretary (Revenue & Disaster Management) Anand Kumar said here on Saturday that light to moderate rain and hailstorm were expected at isolated places in Kota and Bharatpur districts and in Jaipur division during the next couple of days. He asked the farmers to take necessary precautions to protect their rabi crops.

The minimum temperature in Rajasthan is likely to decrease by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius from Sunday.

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SREE MAHALAKSHMYAI NAMAH SREE CHANDRASEKARA GURUBHYO NAMAH APPEAL

The MAHASWAMI OF KANCHI ordained this Public Charitable Trust in 1986 for providing financial aid to Archakas who live in poor conditions, upholding our religious and cultural heritage in ancient temples in rural areas. Many of these Archakas do not have any means of sustenance and we should deem it our duty to provide them with minimal financial aid to ensure that they continue to perform their important role in the rural communities.

MAHA PERIYAVA had instructed that the Trust should seek donations primarily from individual devotees, and provide financial assistance from the income derived from investing the donations. He had further desired that those with gross income of over Rs. 4,000/- per month could contribute their one month's gross income, in easy instalments or in a lumpsum according to their convenience.

The Trust currently provides a monthly honorarium to 468 poor Archakas, (147 Poojaries, 154 Bhattacharyas and 167 Sivacharyas) spread over rural Tamil Nadu. The Trust also has a Group Life Insurance Policy for the benefit of eligible Archakas.

The monthly honorarium to each Archaka was fixed as Rs. 100/- when the Trust was founded. By the Grace of MAHA PERIYAVA and the generous contribution from its devotees, it has been possible to enhance the monthly honorarium progressively in the subsequent years. It is now Rs. 2,300/- (Rupees Two Thousand Three Hundred only) per month. However, with the increasing number of beneficiaries and the reduction in the rate of interest, it has become necessary to enhance the corpus fund significantly to maintain the current level of financial aid to poor Archakas.

We earnestly request all the devotees to donate liberally for this noble cause, keeping in mind MAHA PERIYAVA's desire. Online Donations to Corpus Fund can be made through our website: www.kmawt.org. Also, Crossed Cheque or Demand Draft payable at Chennai drawn in favour of 'KACHCHI MOODOOR ARCHAKAS WELFARE TRUST' can be sent to the Trust office. Please do mention that the donation is towards CORPUS FUND in the covering letter.

Donations to the Trust are exempted under Section 80 (G) of Income Tax Act.

10.01.2021

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S. RAGHUNATHAN
Advocate, Chennai
Chairman

Akhil Gogoi named chief of new party in Assam

Raijor Dal says he will lead election campaign from jail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Raijor Dal, a three-month-old political party formed by about 70 organisations, has named jailed peasants' rights activist Akhil Gogoi as its president.

He will lead the party from the Central Jail in Guwahati, party leaders said during the three-day conference of the Raijor Dal that concluded in eastern Assam's Moranhat on Saturday.

'BJP leaders afraid'

"The government is keeping Akhil Gogoi in jail because the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders are afraid to face him in the electoral battlefield," said the Dal's working president Bhasco de Saikia.

The Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), a peasants' rights organisation founded by Mr. Gogoi two decades ago, had taken the initiative of forming the Raijor Dal in October 2020.

There are speculations about the Raijor Dal tying up



Akhil Gogoi. ■ FILE PHOTO

with another new regional party, the Assam Jatiya Parishad, for the election. But the Dal leaders said the decision has been kept in abeyance.

Mr. Gogoi's anointment as the Raijor Dal president followed the rejection of his bail plea by the Gauhati High Court on January 7. He was arrested by the police in December 2019 when the protests in Assam against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) had turned violent, claiming at least five lives.

He was later handed over to the National Investigation

Agency in an earlier case registered against him for alleged links with the CPI (Maoist). The NIA had charged him with sedition, intention to cause riot against national integration, punishment for criminal conspiracy and unlawful association under the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the State government did not have any role in Mr. Gogoi's arrest. He also clarified that NIA arrested him for his alleged links with the Maoists and not for fomenting violence during the anti-CAA protests.

"NIA mentioned in its chargesheet that he (Mr. Gogoi) had attempted to carry out activities in Assam at the behest of the CPI(Maoist) after getting some KMSS members trained at its camps," Dr. Sarma said.

The elections to the 126-member Assam Assembly are expected by May.

Rajasthan to conduct

crop assessment survey

Gehlot govt. to give grants to farmers for damage due to hailstorm, frost

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

A special crop assessment survey is being taken up in Rajasthan to check the extent of damage caused during the recent hailstorm, frost and cold wave.

The Revenue Department has received reports of rabi crops being destroyed in Kota, Alwar, Bundi and Nagaur districts between January 2 and 4.

On the instructions of

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, the administration will disburse agricultural grants to the farmers whose 33% or more crops have been damaged.

Principal Secretary (Revenue & Disaster Management) Anand Kumar said here on Saturday that light to moderate rain and hailstorm were expected at isolated places in Kota and Bharatpur districts and in Jaipur division during the next couple of days. He asked the farmers to take necessary precautions to protect their rabi crops.

The minimum temperature in Rajasthan is likely to decrease by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius from Sunday.

**READ
SPORTSTAR
EVERY
FORTNIGHT**

Phone No / Fax No: 0194-2443031 / 2443032 (Sgr) website: www.jkpolice.gov.in

0191-2459029 / 2459255 (Jmu) email: phqjk@jkpolice.gov.in

JAMMU AND KASHMIR POLICE HEADQUARTERS

Tender Extension Notice

Due to administrative reasons, last date and online opening dates of NJT No. 54 of 2020 dated 14.12.2020 floated by Police Hqrs J&K for supply/installation and commissioning of EPABX System is extended as follows:

1. Last Date for online tender submission = 12.01.2021

2. Online opening of technical bids = 14.01.2021

However, other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain un-changed. Detailed tender documents with terms and conditions are available on J&K State e-Procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in.

Sd/-
(Rayees Mohammad Bhat)-IPS
AIG of Police (Provision / Tp)
For Director General of Police, JK-Srinagar

DIP/J-9780/20

WESTERN RAILWAY

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No.S/01/2021 Date 08.01.2021

S.N. Short Description of Item Quantity T.O.D.

S.N.	Short Description of Item	Quantity	T.O.D.
1	Hanger for Bogie Pull Rod Roller	400 Nos.	15.01.2021
2	Complete Ladder Asly.	360 Nos.	15.01.2021
3	Stainless Steel Mug with One Mtr.Length	1467 Set	20.01.2021
4	Brake Disc for Wheel Set	20 Nos.	21.01.2021
5	H. S. Steam Sterilizer	1 No.	21.01.2021
6	Hearing AID	300 Nos.	22.01.2021
7	Safety Bracket for BOXN & BCN Wagon	7787 Nos.	22.01.2021
8	Linagliptin 5mg Tab	92444 Nos.	22.01.2021
9	Single Phase to Three Phase Static Converter	35 Nos.	25.01.2021
10	Internal Combustion Crank Case Diesel Engine Oil SAE30	10345 Ltr.	25.01.2021
11	Suction Machine with Food Pedal	1 No.	25.01.2021
12	Coronary Tray 13 Items	13 Items	25.01.2021
13	Element Filter	2800 Nos.	25.01.2021
14	Inhibited Mineral Insulating Oil	109537 Ltr.	27.01.2021
15	I.R. Gloves Un-Sterile	90000 Nos.	27.01.2021

FROM PAGE ONE

Vaccination drive to start on January 16

The Prime Minister was also apprised about the Co-WIN Vaccine Delivery Management System, noted the release.

It added that the platform would assist the programme managers across all levels through automated session allocation for pre-registered beneficiaries, their verification and for generating a digital certificate upon successful completion of the

vaccine schedule. More than 79 lakh beneficiaries have been already registered on the platform.

The Prime Minister was also apprised on the three phases of dry runs held across the country.

"After the detailed review, it was decided that in view of the forthcoming festivals the vaccination will start following the festivals," the Ministry noted.

White winter raises hope for J&K tourism

According to the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries, around 65,000 people lost jobs in the tourism sector post August 5, with the industry suffering a loss of ₹2,615 crore.

The latest footfall figures from the J&K Tourism Department show that the popular destination has retained its hold over visitors from the country and abroad. "Out of the 34,025 tourists who visited Kashmir this year, 3,808 were foreign tourists. December recorded the highest number of 13,237 tourists, which is 39% of the total footfall in the entire year," said Ahsan Chisti, Deputy Director of the publicity wing of the Tourism Department.

From just 186 tourists arriving in July and 284 in August, the number rose to 6,327 in November. The Valley saw around 2,100 tourists arriving just on December 23 and 24. "Around 700 to 1,000 tourists are arriving per day," Mr. Chisti said.

It's for the first time since

10 babies killed in fire at Maharashtra hospital

When she went into the room, she could not see anything because of thick smoke. "She informed the higher authorities and all of us reached there. As far as possible, we personally took the babies outside and in the next five minutes, fire brigade reached," Dr. Khandate said. Seven babies from another ICU for children born in the hospital were rescued, he added.

The 10 dead infants have been identified by their families and the further procedures have been initiated, he said.

The accident triggered an uproar in government and the State government has announced financial aid of ₹5 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to each bereaved family.

Chinese soldier who crossed LAC held

The Indian Army added that troops from either side are deployed along the LAC since a stand-off erupted in May last year due to "unprecedented mobilisation and forward concentration by Chinese troops".

In a similar incident last October, a Chinese soldier, identified as Corporal Wang Ya Long, was apprehended

(With inputs from Ananth Krishnan)

M.P.'s anti-conversion ordinance gets Govt. nod

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHOJPAL

Madhya Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Saturday gave assent to an ordinance which penalises religious conversions through fraudulent means, including those for the sake of marriage. The Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Ordinance, 2020, provides for 10 years in jail in some cases.

The ordinance has been promulgated and published in the gazette notification after the assent of the Governor.

nor, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajesh Rajora said. With this notification, the ordinance has become a law. "No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any other person by use of misrepresentation, allurement, use of threat of force, undue influence, coercion or marriage or by any other fraudulent means," it says. Any conversion in contravention of this provision shall be deemed null and void, it adds.

Experts want strict vigil on bird flu in Kerala

Central team directs Alappuzha district authorities to remain on alert for three months in affected areas

STAFF REPORTER
ALAPPUZHA

A Central team of experts on Saturday visited Alappuzha in Kerala and took stock of the situation following the bird flu outbreak. The team also reviewed the Health Department's COVID-19 preventive measures in the district.

The team comprising Min-haj Alam, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, and S.K. Singh, Director, National Centre for Disease Control, held discussions with the Alappuzha District Collector A. Alexander and other district administration officials at the collectorate here.

Three other experts from the Centre – Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's public health expert Ruchi Jain; National Institute of Virology, Pune scientist Shailash Pawar; and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, Delhi physician Dr. Anith Jindal,

who visited the district on Thursday to study the bird flu (H5N8) outbreak and COVID-19 situation, also joined the discussions.

The Central team directed the district authorities to maintain strict vigil for three months in the bird flu affected areas. Later, they together visited bird flu-hit areas of Karuvatta and Thakazhi, and collected details from duck farmers. In Thakazhi, avian influenza has been reported from the same area where the disease was reported in 2016. The team directed Forest Department officials to collect samples from migratory birds and send them for testing.

49,000 birds culled

District authorities informed experts that in a bid to check the spread of the outbreak, a total of 49,958 birds, mostly ducks, were culled in the district. Moreover, 32,550 eggs



Combat mode: Members of the Central team at bird flu-hit Karuvatta in Alappuzha on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and 5,070 kg of feed were destroyed. District Collector Alexander said culling and sanitisation of the infected areas had been completed.

Bird flu was detected from five places in Kuttanad at Nedumudi; Thakazhi, Pallippad and Karuvatta in Alappuzha district; and Neendoor in Kottayam district. Earlier, authorities collected sam-

ples from eight places, following the mass death of ducks in December, and sent it to the National Institute of High-Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal, for analysis. Five samples tested positive for bird flu. Following this, authorities decided to cull birds, including domestic birds, within a 1-km radius of the infected areas.

Drop in visitors at Bannerghatta park

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Amid the bird flu scare, the Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP) is seeing a drop in the number of visitors.

According to official numbers, on Friday (January 8), the park saw 1,268 visitors, and the total revenue was ₹2,97,560.

On January 7, there were 999 visitors and the revenue generated was ₹2,27,140, while on January 6, 1,715 people visited the park and the revenue generated was ₹4,35,860. Compare this with the numbers during the Christmas-New Year holiday: on December 16, there were 1,959 visitors while December 23 saw 2,183 visitors.

Vanashree Vipin Singh, executive director, BBP, told *The Hindu* that though the avian influenza scare was definitely a factor, there were other causes too. "Whenever it rains, the numbers go down. Also, schools also started for class 10 and class 12 students," she said.

The park – which is home to 378 birds from 45 species – recently announced a slew of protective measures, including extensive cleaning of bird and animal enclosures, to prevent an outbreak.

Meanwhile, the authorities at the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary said there was no drop in the number of visitors to the sanctuary.

IN BRIEF



Achuthanandan to step down as panel chairman

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM CPI(M) veteran and former Kerala Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan has decided to step down as chairman of the Administrative Reforms Commission citing health reasons. The 97-year-old legislator also vacated his official residence on Friday.

TTD cancels Arjitha seva rituals on January 15

TIRUMALA The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has cancelled all day-time Arjitha seva rituals performed inside the Lord Venkateswara temple on January 15 in connection with the mock hunting festival of Parveta Utsavam, generally celebrated on the succeeding day of Makara Sankranti.

A.P. govt. moves court against panchayat polls

VIJAYAWADA Citing the pandemic and the vaccination drive, the Andhra Pradesh government on Saturday moved the High Court against the State Election Commission's decision to conduct elections to the gram panchayats in February. The petition will be heard on January 11.

Two Kochi flyovers opened for traffic

KOCHI Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan opened the flyovers at Vyttila and Kundannur on the Edapally-Aroor NH Bypass for public here on Saturday. Mr. Vijayan said both structures were completed at less than the estimated amount, using State government funds.

Toy making cluster to be set up in Koppal

KALABURAGI India's first integrated manufacturing cluster of toys will be set up at Koppal in Karnataka. The ground-breaking ceremony for the cluster that will largely make plastic toys, was performed on Saturday by Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

Jose K. Mani resigns from Rajya Sabha

He is set to fight Kerala Assembly poll

STAFF REPORTER
KOTTAYAM

Signalling his return to State politics, Kerala Congress (M) chairman Jose K. Mani has resigned from the Rajya Sabha.

Mr. Mani had announced his decision to resign from the upper House as early as October last year while declaring the party's decision to join the Left Democratic Front (LDF). He, however, delayed the move in view of a legal battle with the KC(M) rival faction led by P.J. Joseph over the party's 'two leaves' symbol.

"Though I had made up my mind to step down as Rajya Sabha member much earlier, legal battles over the party's recognition and its symbol posed some technical delays. Now, with the Central Election Commission and the Kerala High Court ruling in favour of us, I have tendered my resignation to the Vice-President,"



Mr. Mani said. Party sources said Mr. Mani would be contesting to the Assembly either from Pala or Kaduthuruthy as an LDF candidate. They also hinted that the Rajya Sabha seat vacated by Mr. Mani would again be allotted to the KC(M) by the LDF.

The Congress-led UDF had allotted the Rajya Sabha seat to Mr. Mani two years ago as a condition for the return of KC(M) to the coalition, triggering protests within the Congress.

ED court summons Jagan, others

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

A special court for Enforcement Directorate (ED) cases has issued summons to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and 17 others to appear before it here on Monday in connection with the chargesheet filed against them by the agency over money laundering in "quid pro quo cases" involving several companies and individuals.

The summons related to a chargesheet against Aurobindo Pharma was filed by the Directorate in a metropolitan sessions judge-cum-special court under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act at Nampally in 2016.

The ED had filed five other chargesheets against Mr. Jagan and other accused in the Principal Court for CBI cases, but launched proceedings against Aurobindo Pharma in the sessions court.

Proceedings against Snapdeal quashed

Intermediary not liable, rules HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has quashed criminal proceedings initiated against e-commerce website snapdeal.com and its chief executive officer Kunal Bahl and chief operative officer Rohit Kumar Bansal during June 2020, for enabling sale and supply of a drug in contravention of the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

"An intermediary as defined under Section 2(w) of the Information Technology Act or its directors/officers would not be liable for any action or inaction on part of a vendor/seller making use of the facilities provided by the intermediary in terms of a website or a market place," the High Court held, relying on a verdict by the Supreme Court.

Justice Suraj Govindaraj passed the order while allowing the petitions filed by the drugs authorities.

the company and its chief executives challenging the cognisance of offence taken against them by a court in Mysuru in June 2020.

The Drugs Inspector (Intelligence), Mysuru, had complained that snapdeal.com allowed sale of Suagra-100 tablets (sildenafil citrate 100 mg) during 2014 by a manufacturer based in Hyderabad, and the tablet was delivered to a person in Karnataka in November 2014 through snapdeal.com.

Apart from holding that the intermediary is not liable for prosecution for lapses by vendors/sellers, the court found no justification for the delay of six years in lodging the complaint by the drugs authorities. The court also found that Snapdeal had done due diligence of vendor as per the law and had initiated action on the vendor of the drug as per law, acting on initiation by the drugs authorities.

AI starts flight from San Francisco to Bengaluru

is 13,993 km, with a time zone change of around 13.5 hours, an Air India official said.

'Woman power'

"Air India's woman power flies high around the world," Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri said on Twitter.

All women cockpit crew consisting of Capt Zoya Aggarwal, Capt Papagari Thanmai, Capt Akansha Sonaware & Capt Shivani Manhas will operate the historic inaugural flight between Bengaluru & San Francisco," he said.

Flight AI 176 will depart from San Francisco in the U.S. at 8.30 p.m. (local time) on Saturday, and land at the Kempegowda International Airport at 3.45 a.m. (local time) on Monday. "Captain Zoya Aggarwal is an accom-



Soaring high: Captain Zoya Aggarwal is commanding Air India's first non-stop San Francisco-Bengaluru service. ■ ANI

plished pilot with a flying experience of more than 8000 hrs and command experience in a B-777 aircraft of more than 10 years and more than 2500 flying hours," the national carrier said.

The flight will operate

with a Boeing 777-200LR aircraft VT ALG with a seating capacity of 238 passenger seats – eight first class, 35 business class and 195 economy class – and four cockpit and 12 cabin crew, Air India said.

jayan will release the syllabus of the Kalaripayattu Academy on January 16 during the inauguration of the renovated Crafts Village.

Children can join

The academy will admit 100 students initially. The training will be in two batches, from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. and from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Both children and adults will be trained.

There are also plans to link the academy with the Dance Training College that is also part of the Crafts Village.

Classes will be organised in such a way that training in Kalaripayattu will help those learning dance.

Kalaripayattu academy braces for action



The right move: The academy in Thiruvananthapuram plans to initially train 100 students in two batches.

The 3,500 sq ft academy in the village is scheduled to be completed in two months.

Classes will be conducted here by gurus led by Padmashti Meenakshiamma. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vi-

One dead, 200 ill after drinking spurious toddy

12 villages in Telangana affected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

One person died and over 200 villagers fell ill after allegedly consuming adulterated toddy in Nawabpet and Vikarabad mandals of Telangana on Saturday.

Officials sealed the toddy depot which supplied the drink and sent samples for investigation.

The police said 79 persons were admitted to the government hospital at Vikarabad while others were treated as outpatients for giddiness and frothing at the mouth. After a few villagers

who consumed the toddy on Friday evening started visiting the hospital in the morning, health workers went door-to-door and shifted the victims in ambulances from the villages.

The deceased was identified as Billapati Krishna Reddy, 55, of Pendlimadugu village in Vikarabad.

The toddy depot near the Chittigadda railway station, which is owned by one Narayana Goud, was supplying toddy to 17 villages in the two mandals. Those who consumed the drink in 12 villages have been affected.

Amarinder,
Mann trade
barbs over
farm laws

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday hit out at Aam Aadmi Party's Punjab president unit Bhagwant Mann over the latter's claim of a collusion between the former and the Governor on farm laws. Capt. Amarinder accused Mr. Mann of making "illogical statements with the sole motive of misleading the people".

The Chief Minister said the State government has already finalised the requisite petitions for challenging the Central farm Acts and would do so at an opportune time on the advice of legal experts. "Just like his bosses, Mann too has mastered the art of lying and deception but while doing so he has exposed his incompetence as a parliamentarian by making frivolous statements on matters pertaining to the Constitution and legislative procedures," he said.

PDP leader gets bail, party says 'held' by police

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday granted bail to Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) youth president Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra in a case related to his alleged connections with an arrested militant.

However, the PDP claimed that Mr. Parra was detained by the J&K Police's special wing, Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK), immediately after his release. The NIA court, Jammu, granted bail to Mr. Parra, considered a very close confidante of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, in the case, an official said. He remained in NIA custody for over a month.

Ms. Mufti in a tweet claimed Mr. Parra was arrested again.

Dhankhar meets Shah, calls for peaceful polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi.

"I firmly believe that governance has no meaning in West Bengal, unless elections are through pure mechanism, elections are held in accordance with the law," Mr. Dhankhar told reporters

Centre delaying a solution by leaving it to SC: farmer groups

Unions in Punjab rejected suggestion that the court should decide on farm laws

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Farmer outfits from Punjab, including the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan), on Saturday said the Centre's hint of getting the farm laws issue resolved by the Supreme Court was a ploy to prolong the issue in a bid to derail the ongoing agitation.

The BKU (Ugrahan), one of the largest outfits in Punjab, and the Kisan Mazdoor Sangarsh Committee, the one outfit which is still continuing with a 'rail roko' agitation in Amritsar, have asserted that the Centre's suggestion during the meeting with farmers on January 8 that it would be best to leave the issue surrounding farm laws to the Supreme Court, clearly indicated that it wanted to delay finding a solution.

"The suggestion to leave the issue to the Supreme Court indicates that the government wants to delay



Deadlock continues: Trade unions and farmer groups at the Singhu border on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

finding a solution to ongoing dispute. Their intention is only to prolong the issue and not fulfil our demands. The government wants to suppress people's movement. We have already dismissed the government's suggestion," Shingara Singh Mann, State secretary BKU (Ugrahan) told *The Hindu*.

"The government's intention is very clear. They want to dislodge the ongoing farmers movement by in-

volving the courts," he said. Mr. Mann said the BKU(U) along with other outfits would stand firm for the complete repeal of the farm laws, besides government procurement of all crops and in all the States at Minimum Support Price as a legal right.

Sarvan Singh Pandher, general secretary of the Punjab unit of Kisan Mazdoor Sangarsh Committee, said all the unions, which participat-

ed in the meeting, had rejected the government's indication of leaving the matter to the Supreme Court.

"The government wants to take the matter in the court to prolong the way out. They don't want to resolve the issue," he said.

Mr. Pandher said farmer outfits were all set to intensify their agitation and had appealed to farmers and farm labourers across the country to step up their efforts to make the proposed 'tractor parade' on January 26 in New Delhi a success.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Lakhawal) general secretary Harinder Singh said the Centre had enacted the laws and it could repeal them easily.

"There is no need of going to the Supreme Court. The government should listen to farmers demand and immediately repeal the laws," he said.

Modi should resign if govt. can't break impasse: Cong.

Party to hold protests against farm laws on Jan. 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Stepping up its attack on the Narendra Modi government over the three farm laws, the Congress on Saturday said the Prime Minister should resign if he can't repeal the laws and has to depend on the Supreme Court to break the deadlock with farmers.

Addressing a press conference to announce a series of protest events on January 15, Congress communication chief Randeep Surjewala said the top court should also "introspect" on why farmers don't want to approach the court while the government wants everything – the Rafale deal, the Citizenship Amendment Act, the National Register of Citizens, the farm laws – cleared by it.

Mr. Surjewala, however, qualified that his comment on "introspection for the court" was made as an "ordinary citizen". To coincide with the next

C The Supreme Court needs to look within why the country's *annadataas* don't find it acceptable to go to the court

RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA
Congress spokesperson

youth wing, the Indian Youth Congress, launched 'Ek Muthi Mitti Shaheed ke Naam' programme that seeks to collect a fistful of soil from the homes of the farmers who lost their lives during the agitation.

Mr. Surjewala told reporters, "This is the first government in the past 73 years history of the country that is grossly abdicating its responsibility and telling the farmers to approach the Supreme Court."

Responding to a question that the farmers were not keen on approaching the courts, Mr. Surjewala said, "The Supreme Court needs to look within why the country's *annadataas* [food-givers] don't find it acceptable to go to the court. And why it is that this government repeatedly – be it CAA or NRC or habeas corpus or these laws whose solution need to be found in Parliament – wants a solution from the court."

Nadda kicks off farmers' outreach in West Bengal

'CAA will be implemented'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Starting a major farmers' outreach programme in West Bengal, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J. P. Nadda on Saturday defended the farm laws brought in by the Centre saying that they were aimed to provide "freedom to farmers".

Speaking at a public rally at Katwa in Purba Bardhaman, Mr. Nadda said that during the outreach programme, titled "Krishak Bhaj", BJP workers would visit farmers' houses, ask for a handful of foodgrains, and take a pledge to protect their interests. Mr. Nadda visited five households at Katwa as part of the programme.

"The programme will continue till January 24 and BJP workers will visit 40,000 villages in the State. After

and spirit. "The rules are being framed. We are committed to the CAA. As far as the timeline for its implementation is concerned, the Ministry will be in a better position to respond," Mr. Nadda said.

this, BJP workers will observe 'krishak bhaj' (lunch with farmers) till January 31 and tell them what injustice is being done to farmers in West Bengal," Mr. Nadda said.

The BJP president had lunch at the house of a farmer, Mathura Mondal, at Katwa, with other State BJP leaders. Later, Mr. Nadda visited a party office in Burdwan town and participated in a roadshow.

Mr. Nadda's visit to Bardhaman Purba, an agrarian belt, is an attempt by the party to reach out to farmers in West Bengal.

Trinamool leader and State Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya reacted to the visit saying, "For those who have come here in West Bengal today, look at what is happening in Delhi. It takes only 40 to 50 minutes in Delhi to speak to the protesting farmers."

The letter, dated January 5, notes that many constituents, especially those with links to Punjab or India,

"were horrified to see footage of water cannon, tear gas and brute force being used against hundreds of thousands of peacefully protesting farmers". The Indian diaspora and others have also joined in global protests in support of the farmers.

Mr. Johnson has cancelled his plans to visit India as the

chief guest for Republic Day because of the COVID-19 crisis in his country.

British MPs flag farmers' protest

They request Boris Johnson to discuss the issue with Narendra Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

More than a hundred members of the British Parliament have signed a letter to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson asking him to raise the concerns of protesting farmers outside Delhi, and the "brute force" employed against them, in his discussion with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The letter, dated January 5, notes that many constituents, especially those with links to Punjab or India, "were horrified to see footage of water cannon, tear gas and brute force being used against hundreds of thousands of peacefully protesting farmers". The Indian diaspora and others have also joined in global protests in support of the farmers.

Echo in U.K.: Protesters gather outside the Indian High Commission in London on December 6, 2020. ■ AFP

chief guest for Republic Day because of the COVID-19 crisis in his country.

However, the British MPs said that the two Prime Ministers had plans to meet soon.

"Given the urgency of this matter, could you please confirm that you will definitely convey to the Indian Prime Minister the heart-felt

anxieties of our constituents, our hopes for a speedy resolution, and also for the democratic human right of citizens to peacefully protest?" read the letter to Mr. Johnson.

They also asked Mr. Johnson to clarify his own understanding of the issue, given that he seemed to confuse it with an India-Pakistan matter.

ter when an MP raised it in Parliament last month.

Last month, a similar letter was written to British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who was in Delhi in December. He said he raised the issue with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, but not with Mr. Modi. At that time, India termed the remarks on farmer protests by foreign leaders and politicians as "ill-informed" and "unwarranted" as the matter pertained to the internal affairs of a democratic country.

The signatories to the letter included members of multiple parties, including those with roots in the sub-continent and others whose constituencies include large Indian-origin populations. Apart from MPs, a handful of peers from the House of Lords also signed the letter.

Sailors stuck in Chinese port to return by Jan. 14: Minister

Only one set of 23 seafarers has been cleared to leave

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Twenty-three seafarers stranded aboard Indian vessel *m.v. Jag Anand* off the Chinese coast for the past 10 months are likely to return to India by January 14, Minister of State for Shipping Mansukh Mandaviya tweeted on Saturday.

However, there is yet no breakthrough for 35 other Indian seamen stranded aboard Italian ship *m.v. Anastasia*, Greek vessel *m.v.*

Skopelos and Hong Kong-owned *m.v. Declan Duff* for over six months. *Declan Duff* is barely 3.5 nautical miles from *Jag Anand* at the Jingtang port.

"Ship *MV Jag Anand*, having 23 Indian crew, stuck in China, is set to sail toward Chiba, Japan, to carry out crew change, will reach India on 14th January," Mr. Mandaviya tweeted.

He added that once the crew members reach Chiba, they will undergo COVID-19

related protocols and then fly to India.

However, as of Saturday evening, the ship was yet to leave the port because of a technical issue with the anchor though it was cleared by the Vessel Traffic Service.

The Indian bulk cargo vessel, carrying coal from Australia, has been stuck near the Jingtang port in Hebei province of China since June 13 as it was not allowed to dock by port authorities.

Is Adityanath govt. above the law, asks Chidambaram

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Saturday asked if the Yogi Adityanath-led government in Uttar Pradesh is "above the law" after the Allahabad High Court made an observation with regard to interfaith marriage by consenting adults.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Chidambaram, a noted lawyer himself, said it was "not for the first time that the High Court had come to the rescue of interfaith couples and said no one may interfere in their personal lives". "Is UP government

above the law? Do not the CM and the DGP believe in the 'rule of law'? It is a disgrace that despite repeated judgements in the so-called 'love jihad' cases, the UP government and police continue to slap cases on couples under the unconstitutional law," he tweeted.

Hearing a writ petition filed by an interfaith couple, Justice Saral Srivastava of the Allahabad HC had observed, "The court has repeatedly held that where two individuals having attained the age of majority, are living together, nobody is entitled to interfere in their peaceful life."

No pact with AIUDF yet, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A month after contesting the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) election together, the Congress has denied any tie-up with the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) for the upcoming Assembly election.

Election to the 126-member Assam Assembly is due by May.

"We have neither finalized any alliance with the AIUDF nor with the Left Front for the Assam polls," Congress general secretary in charge of the State Jitendra Singh said after a party meeting in Hajo near Guwahati on Friday.

AIUDF president and Lok Sabha member Maulana Badruddin Ajmal had stated that the two parties had decided to contest the Assembly election together after their tie-up for the BTC poll.

The Congress and the AIUDF contested 20 of the 40 BTC seats together. The Congress bagged one of the 13 it had contested, while the AIUDF drew a blank in the remaining seven. The Congress candidate joined the BJP after emerging as the winner.

"We have also not had any talks for a pre-poll understanding with any regional party," Mr. Singh said, adding that the party's leadership would take a call after feedback from the grassroots Congress workers.

The BJP said the seat-sharing arrangement with the Assam Gana Parishad will be finalised in March.

Free Rajoana, Akali Dal urges Centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

A day after the Supreme Court pushed the government to take a decision on a mercy petition filed by Balwant Singh Rajoana – facing capital punishment for the assassination of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh – before Republic Day, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Saturday urged the Centre to set him free.

Mr. Badal urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind to expedite it as "a fulfilment of a national commitment made to Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular by the Government of India".

Former Union Minister and Gujarat CM dominated State politics for decades

MAHESH LANGA
AHMEDABAD

Veteran Congress leader Madhavsinh Solanki, 93, who served as the Chief Minister of Gujarat four times and also as a Union Minister, passed away in Gandhinagar on Saturday morning.

Mr. Solanki, soft-spoken and mild-mannered, was a Congress stalwart in Gujarat. The party last won the Assembly election in the State under his leadership in 1985, winning 149 of the 182 seats, which remains a record.

He served as a Union Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi and the P.V. Narasimha Rao governments at the Centre. He was External Affairs Minister from June 1991 to March 1992, but had to resign following a controversy

over his meeting with the Foreign Minister of Switzerland in Davos. He had reportedly delivered a letter to his Swiss counterpart to scuttle the investigation into alleged kickbacks in the Bofors deal.

In 1985, he had to resign as Chief Minister following the anti-reservation riots in the State. Separately, he had to resign following a controversy over his meeting with the Foreign Minister of Switzerland in Davos. He had reportedly delivered a letter to his Swiss counterpart to scuttle the investigation into alleged kickbacks in the Bofors deal.

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INTERVIEW | SHAHID JAMEEL

'A vaccine is a vaccine ... regulators never approve a back-up'

The virologist says there is no experimental evidence so far that Covaxin will neutralise newly emerging mutants any better

JACOB KOSHY

Virologist and Director, Trivedi School of Biosciences, Ashoka University, Shahid Jameel said different concerns exist regarding both approved vaccines in India, adding that it was premature to assume they would be useful against the 'U.K. strain'.

We have seen two Indian vaccines approved. Covishield by the Serum Institute of India has submitted – but not published – any data on its Indian trial. Bharat Biotech has published safety and immunogenicity data (pre-print) for Covaxin but has not generated the all-important efficacy data. Do you think the regulator has made a judicious call in approving both?

■ As more details trickle out, it appears that the fear of a second wave, propelled by more contagious viruses of the B.1.1.7 lineage (popularly called U.K. variant), weighed heavily on the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) and the regulatory committees. Since what was presented by the companies to them is not available in the public domain, it is hard to second-guess.

But it is clear that the process, initially laid out by the DCGI, was compromised. Vaccines are a product of science, and there is a methodology and process to science. It is based not on beliefs but on data and evidence, which is found to be lacking in this case.

The relative confidence in Covishield rests on efficacy studies in the U.K. and Brazil. However there were multiple problems pointed in these trials. Some vials of vaccine had less than intended dosage leading to varying efficacy estimates. The U.S. FDA too hasn't cleared the vaccine in their country. Are these matters of concern?

■ Yes, these should be matters of concern. You cannot combine Oxford/AstraZeneca efficacy data from Brazil and U.K. together – 62% and

90% as a weighted average of 70.4% – just to cross the threshold. The doses were different. The concern is indeed highlighted by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) not clearing this vaccine as yet. In India if two full doses of Covishield are to be used, the efficacy would be 62% not 70.4%.

The reasons cited by the Indian government for approving vaccines, in spite of incomplete evidence, is the threat by "mutant strains" and having "a back-up". Is there evidence that an inactivated whole virus might perform better than sub-unit recombinant ones? What does the history of virology suggest?

■ Firstly, there is no "back-up" vaccine. A vaccine is a vaccine. Regulators never approve something as a back-up. Every product must be safe and efficacious for everyone to take. And that data is still lacking for Covaxin.

While it is a theoretical possibility, there is thus far no experimental evidence that Covaxin will neutralise the newly emerging mutants



India is on a continuous declining curve since mid-September ...what was the tearing hurry?

any better. As opposed to Covishield that makes only the spike (S) protein, Covaxin contains all viral particle proteins, including the nucleocapsid (NC) protein. Antibodies are mainly generated against the S and NC proteins, and neutralising antibodies only against the 'S'.

The Covaxin Phase 2 data shows a rising antibody titre against both S and NC proteins after the first and second dose. The point to understand is that only the S protein is displayed on the virus surface and therefore, only anti-S antibodies will neutralise the virus; the an-

ti-N antibodies would have no role.

Where the NC protein would help is to generate better cytotoxic T cell responses that would efficiently eliminate virus-infected cells. Being a killed vaccine, Covaxin is unlikely to raise good cytotoxic T cell immunity; live/relicating viral vaccines do that much better. While cell-mediated immunity data is shown for Covaxin, it is not clear how much is being contributed by the NC protein. Thus, while it is a theoretical possibility, the jury is still out on whether the NC protein is providing added benefit to Covaxin over other vaccines based only on the S protein.

Bharat Biotech has expressed difficulties in recruiting people for trials. Does such apprehension exist globally or are there unique challenges in India?

■ Indian companies, Bharat Biotech included, are very good vaccine companies. These challenges are not on account of perceived quality. I feel this is because Phase 3 trials in India came at a time when the outbreak had de-

clined significantly. Had the Covaxin Phase 3 trial started in August or September instead of November, there would have been no recruitment problems. It is both a matter of perception (reducing danger) as well as exclusion criteria. The latter require volunteers who have no exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (antibody negative) and who also don't share living quarters with someone who tested positive for the virus. Increasing exposure of the population makes the trial increasingly difficult.

Could you explain the relative merits of a DNA vaccine, RNA vaccine vs the tried and tested inactivated virus-platforms? Are the latter vestigial technology like typewriters? Are the new kinds of vaccines inherently easier to make or more effective?

■ I would not call inactivated viral vaccines as vestigial. Most effective vaccines in use today belong to that category. The inherent difficulty with this platform is that it requires viruses to be grown to high titres. That is often

difficult and sometimes not possible. Take for example the hepatitis E virus on which I worked for three decades. It grows very poorly in culture and thus no inactivated vaccine has been possible.

Nucleic acid vaccines are a new platform and would be used for the first time with COVID vaccines. So far the results for mRNA vaccines look good and DNA vaccines are yet to be tested. But the long-term safety for both is yet to be established. These would be platforms for the future simply because it is much easier to manufacture RNA and DNA than proteins.

Viral protein antigens are best made by the body to ensure proper conformation and structure, which is often not possible in vitro. DNA, RNA and viral vectors (for instance, adenoviruses) use the cell's machinery to make viral protein antigens.

Do you think the nature of vaccine and drug trials has now irrevocably changed forever?

■ Yes absolutely. This is a real positive outcome of COVID – it has revealed to us the power of science.

(For full interview, visit <http://bit.ly/Shahidjameel>)

'Indian vaccines ready to save humanity'

Our nation is self-reliant today, Prime Minister Modi remarks in Pravasi Bharatiya Divas address

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

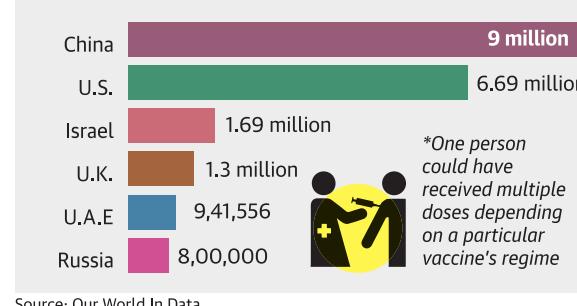
Amid the global pursuit of coronavirus vaccines, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India was ready to save humanity by providing to the rest of the world two Indian-manufactured vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin, cleared for emergency use.

"India used to import PPE kits, masks, ventilators and testing kits from outside but today our nation is self-reliant. Today, India is ready to save humanity with two 'Made in India' coronavirus vaccines," Mr. Modi told the Indian diaspora, inaugurating the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas over videoconference, in which Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi was chief guest.

Mr. Modi lauded Indian-origin citizens around the world, who he said were at the forefront of the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. He also said that Indian-origin leaders were trusted in their countries for

Counting the doses

Close to 23.26 million COVID-19 vaccination doses have been administered worldwide as of January 9. The graph shows the top five nations in terms of the number of doses* administered



Source: Our World In Data

Atmanirbhar Bharat will make world order just'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind said the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan would make the world order just and fair and promote greater cooperation and peace.

Addressing the valedictory session of the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

Convention, the President said Atmanirbhar Bharat did not seek to turn the country inwards. "It is about self-belief, leading to self-sufficiency. We intend to contribute towards mitigating disruptions in global supply chains by enhancing the availability of goods and services."

after a meeting with Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who had asked India for supplies.

Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi said in a New Year's address to her nation that the contract for Indian vaccines had been signed.

Next week, Nepal Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali is expected to discuss procurement of the Indian vaccines and possibly sign a contract for them.

Bolsonaro seeks fast vaccine supply

Brazil President writes to Modi

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Under considerable pressure to begin a vaccine rollout, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting the Indian government to "expedite" the export of two million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, "Covidshield", being manufactured at the Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune, which are expected to be delivered next week.

"To [ensure] the immediate implementation of the Brazilian National Programme of Immunisation, I would highly appreciate your good offices in expediting the shipment of two million doses of the vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India to Brazil urgently, but as long as it does not impact the Indian vaccination programme," Mr. Bolsonaro wrote to Mr. Modi on Friday, according to a translated version of the letter received by *The Hindu*.

Government officials said a reply had not yet been sent to Mr. Bolsonaro. When contacted, SII representatives declined to comment on the Brazilian request.

With more than 8 million cases of COVID-19, Brazil is



second only to the U.S. (22.4 million cases) and India (10.4 million cases), but in terms of number of deaths due to the virus, Brazil with more than 200,000 fatalities, is second only to the U.S. (378,000-plus deaths), and much higher than India's 150,000-plus deaths.

Sources said the request was also sparked by some alarm over SII CEO Adar Poonawalla's suggestion in an interview on January 3 that the Indian government had curtailed exports of the vaccines until domestic needs had been fulfilled.

New Delhi subsequently clarified that it does not plan to restrict the supply of coronavirus vaccines to other countries, and a joint press statement was issued by SII and Bharat Biotech confirming it on January 5.

Office of the Project Director, Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project, Directorate of Skill Development, Madhya Pradesh
Invitation for Bid No.: MPSPD/1/02/2021
Loan No. and Title: Loan No.: 3710-IND/ Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project, Contract Package No., and Title: MPSPD/ITI/Equipment/10: Procurement of Computer Peripherals for 6 ITIs; Deadline of Submission of Bids: 15.02.2021 at 13:30 hrs. (IST)

Date: 14.01.2021

1.The Government of India has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) towards the cost of 'Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project' and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this financing to the payment under the Contract Package named above. Bidding is open to Bidders from eligible source countries of ADB.

2.The Project Director, Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project, Directorate of Skill Development represented by The Director ("The Purchaser") invites sealed bids from eligible Bidders for the Procurement of Computer Peripherals for 6 ITIs including the following components:

3.National Competitive Bidding will be conducted in accordance with ADB's Single-stage: Two- envelope bidding procedure and is open to all Bidders from eligible countries as described in the Bidding Document.

4.To obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents, Bidders should contact: The Project Director, Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project (MPSPD), Directorate of Skill Development, 1st Floor, Global Skills Park-City Campus, ITI Campus Govindpura, Chhatarpur, New Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, India, Telephone & Fax: 0752-3986606, Email: mpspd@mpspd.maha.nic.in

5.To purchase the bidding documents in English, eligible Bidders should write or visit at the office of the Purchaser, at address stated above and pay a non-refundable fee of INR 5,000 in the form of Bank Demand Draft. In case of written request, the document will be sent by post and no liability will be accepted for loss or delay.

6.The eligible bidders may otherwise purchase the bidding document in English language by downloading the document from the website <http://mpspd.maha.nic.in>. Such bidders shall be required to submit INR 5,000 with their bid form of Bank demand draft in the name of The Project Director, Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project, Directorate of Skill Development, 1st Floor, Global Skills Park-City Campus, ITI Campus Govindpura, Chhatarpur, New Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, India, Telephone & Fax: 0752-3986606, Email: mpspd@mpspd.maha.nic.in

7.Deliver your bid to the address above on or before the deadline: 15.02.2021 at 13:30 hrs. (IST) together with a Bid Security as described in the Bidding Document.

8.Bids will be opened on 15.02.2021 at 14:00 hrs. (IST) in the presence of Bidders representatives who choose to attend.

9.The Purchaser will not be responsible for any cost or expenses incurred by the bidder in connection with the preparation or delivery of bids.

-sd-

Directorate of Skill Development

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), BHUBANESWAR
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Sijua, Post : Dumuduma, Bhubaneswar - 751019
Dated : 07th January 2021
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All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar an Autonomous Institute of National Importance is one of the new AIIMS and apex healthcare Institute being established by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana(PMSSY) with the aim of correcting regional imbalance in quality tertiary level healthcare in the country, and attaining self-sufficiency in graduate, post graduate and higher medical education and training.
Applications in prescribed proforma (**hard copy only**) from Indian citizens are invited for the following post on **CONTRACTUAL BASIS** for All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar (Odisha).

Sl. No.	Department	Name of Post	Monthly Remuneration (Consolidated)	Age Limit	No. of Post & Category
01	Cardiothoracic Surgery	Perfusion Technician	Rs.43,900/-	35 years	01 (UR)

- ◆ Contractual engagement for the above post will be only for a period of 11(eleven) months.
- ◆ For details of advertisement including educational qualifications, age and eligibility criteria etc., kindly visit the Institute's website <https://aiimsbhubaneswar.nic.in>. The last date for submission of application is 30.01.2021 (up to 5:00 PM).

Sd/-
निदेशक/Director
एम्स, भुवनेश्वर/AIIMS, Bhubaneswar

'Death of volunteer not due to vaccine'

All protocols followed: Bharat Biotech

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech said on Saturday that the death of 42-year-old volunteer from Bhopal, who took part in the Phase 3 clinical trial of its COVID vaccine, Covaxin, was "not related" to the vaccine or placebo administered to him.

In a statement, the company noted that "with regard to reports of a death in Phase III trials, we would like to state that a volunteer passed away on December 21, 2020 and the death was reported to the People's College of Medical Sciences & Research Centre by the son of the deceased.

The volunteer, at the time of enrolment, had fulfilled all the inclusion and exclu-

sion criteria to be accepted as a participant in the Phase 3 trial and was reported to be healthy in all the site follow up calls post seven days of his dosing and no adverse events were observed or reported.

It added that India has recorded 228 COVID-19 fatalities in the past 24 hours. Kerala reported 5,142 cases in the last 24 hours.

'90 cases of U.K. strain'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The total number of persons in the country infected with the U.K. mutant strain of COVID-19 is 90, said a release issued by the Health Ministry on Saturday.

It added that India has recorded 228 COVID-19 fatalities in the past 24 hours. Kerala reported 5,142 cases in the last 24 hours.

26 teachers test positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

In a blow to the Odisha government's move to reopen schools, 26 teachers have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus in Gajapati district.



MINISTRY OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Government of India

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INTERVIEW | IBRAHIM MOHAMED SOLIH

'Malé makes no apology for ties with India'

We appreciate India's role in providing financial aid to the Maldives: President

MEERA SRINIVASAN

Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, rose to power in 2018, promising democratic governance and justice to citizens. While the two years he has completed in office have seen major policy changes, his incumbent government faces many challenges, only heightened by the pandemic. In an email interview, President Solih speaks on economic revival plans, regional cooperation, and responds to criticism over his government's "over-reliance" on India. Excerpt:

Mr. President, you have completed over two years in office. How would you evaluate your performance?

■ This administration has accomplished much in the past two years across every major policy sphere. We have made education free up to the first undergraduate degree; initiated a health sector reform programme which has seen the upgrading of medical centres; we've strengthened our decentralisation legislation to empower local communities and reverse decades of over-centralisation.

We have also demonstrated our commitment to gender equality by legally mandating that 1/3rd of our local councils be comprised of women and by appointing the first ever women justices to the Maldives' Supreme Court. We have repealed regressive legislation such as a defamation act that criminalised speech critical of the government.

On the international front we have reinvigorated our relationships with our global partners, re-entered the Maldives into important organisations such as the Commonwealth of Nations, and reiterated our ambitions towards mitigation and adaptation against the climate emergency.

Like the rest of the world, the Maldives too is reeling under the impact of the pandemic. How do you plan to revive your economy?

■ Our economy has long been reliant on tourism. The

pandemic and the consequent restrictions on global air travel have adversely affected this industry and the overall economy. With the reopening of our borders, and stringent health measures in place at our resorts in accordance with guidelines developed by our health authorities and Tourism Ministry, the tourism industry is now slowly recovering, as is our economy. However, the pandemic has also made clear the danger of our economy being overly reliant on a single sector.

We will also need international assistance and support for our recovery efforts, to shore up our depleted foreign currency reserves, and reduce our debt burden.

The Maldivian Auditor-General recently voiced concern over your government's "heavy reliance" on a single country for grants, alluding to India. Given that Male-New Delhi bilateral relations improved drastically after your election, how do you respond to that?

■ We appreciate the proactive role that India has taken in economic relief efforts and providing financial assistance to the Maldives, as well as for its continued development assistance. We are also very happy that bilateral relations have improved with India, as it has between the Maldives and many of our partners across the globe. The Maldives is keen to engage with all our partners.

It is significant, because the political opposition and critics of your government have accused your administration of "selling off Maldives" to India, taking out rallies on Male's streets and leading 'India out' campaigns on social media.

■ Moving away from an isolationist foreign policy and engaging with our neighbours strengthen our national security and increase respect for us as a sovereign country. The Maldives makes no apologies for our positive engagement with our largest neighbour, and one of our closest international partners.

Your government recently signed a defence deal with the U.S., and another agreement with Japan to strengthen your Coast Guard. Last month, the Indian Foreign Secretary visited your capital. Is Male leaning towards the 'Quad' bloc?

■ The Maldives' priorities lie in a peaceful Indian Ocean



Moving away from an isolationist foreign policy and engaging with our neighbours strengthen our national security

ers, India.

We welcome constructive criticism of our foreign policy, as well as other aspects of our governance. Undermining relationships that are in the interest of the Maldives for the sake of demagoguery and cheap political points is irresponsible.

One of your key election promises was that your government will revisit the deals signed by the Yameen administration with China - loans and infrastructure projects - if elected. Have you been able to restructure the debt - over \$1.4 billion - Male owes Beijing?

■ China is a close and valued partner to the Maldives. We welcome their participating in the G20's DSSI [Debt Service Suspension Initiative], and appreciate that we have been able to positively engage with them to renegotiate the terms of ongoing development assistance and economic projects, in a manner mutually beneficial to both countries, and consistent with our friendly relations.

Your government recently signed a defence deal with the U.S., and another agreement with Japan to strengthen your Coast Guard. Last month, the Indian Foreign Secretary visited your capital. Is Male leaning towards the 'Quad' bloc?

■ The Maldives' priorities lie in a peaceful Indian Ocean

region. Our international engagements are to enhance our commercial cooperation, strengthen regional peace and security, facilitate economic prosperity for our country, and voice out on issues important to us on the international fora, such as climate change and environmental preservation. We will pursue our goals alongside our partners who share our mutual priorities.

The geopolitical contest in the region has escalated this year, especially after the border tensions between India and China. How does this impact the Maldives and your foreign policy choices?

■ Not at all. The Maldives believes that differences between international partners can be settled peacefully through dialogue and mediation. While this is ongoing, it does not hinder our ability to constructively engage with our partners on issues of mutual interest.

What, in your view, are the prospects for regional cooperation, including through SAARC, in the Indian Ocean Region in this difficult climate of the pandemic and persisting bilateral tensions between India and Pakistan?

■ I reiterate that regional differences should be settled amicably through means and solutions agreeable to all concerned. While it is not in the Maldives' policy to comment on disagreements between two sovereign countries, we also believe that such disputes are best resolved through strengthening multilateral and regional cooperation mechanisms, and using such channels for frequent dialogue and mediation. While the pandemic may be a challenge towards realising such ends in the immediate future I believe it has made especially evident that major global issues and crises cannot be contained to borders, and will thus help galvanise efforts to strengthen regional cooperation frameworks in the long-term. The Maldives is happy to be part of such efforts.

Kim says U.S. is North Korea's 'biggest enemy'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said the U.S. is his nuclear-armed nation's "biggest enemy", state media reported on Saturday, as he threw down the diplomatic gauntlet to the incoming administration of Joe Biden.

The declaration comes less than two weeks ahead of the new U.S. President's inauguration and after a tumultuous relationship between Mr. Kim and the outgoing leader Donald Trump.

Mr. Kim and Mr. Trump first engaged in a war of words and mutual threats, before an extraordinary diplomatic bromance that featured headline-grabbing summits.

But little substantive progress was made, with the process deadlocked after their February 2019 meeting in Hanoi broke down over sanctions relief and what Pyongyang would be willing to give up in return.

The North "should focus and be developed on subverting the U.S., the biggest obstacle for our revolution and our biggest enemy", Mr. Kim told the five-yearly Congress of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, the official KCNA news agency reported.

"No matter who is in power, the true nature of its policy against North Korea will never change," it quoted him as saying, without mentioning Mr. Biden by name.



A view of the University of Jaffna, in this file photo.

■ [HTTP://WWW.JFN.AC.LK/](http://WWW.JFN.AC.LK/)

vilians in the country.

When contacted, S.W.M. Senarathne, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, Jaffna, said: "The decision to demolish the unauthorised structure was taken by the university administration. Our personnel were deployed there only after we heard students were gathering outside the campus last night. In this pandemic period, it is our responsibility to prevent such gatherings."

Pressure from the State

The memorial, local media reports said, was erected in 2019, to mark the 10th anniversary of the civil war. "Since then, authorities have been asking the university administration to remove the unauthorised structure. I received multiple instructions from higher authorities, and this was discussed at several meetings with the university's capital works, engineering and maintenance departments," said University Vice-Chancellor S. Srisatkunarajah, who assumed charge in August 2020.

Removal of war victims' memorial at Jaffna University sparks tension

The sculpture was erected in memory of those killed in civil war

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

A tense situation continued at the Jaffna University on Saturday, as dozens of locals, students, and politicians gathered overnight, protesting the removal of a war memorial on campus.

According to students and eyewitnesses, on Friday night university authorities bulldozed a sculpture, of hands held out of water, erected in memory of several thousand civilians brutally killed in the final phase of the civil war in 2009, in Mullivaikkal in Sri Lanka's northern Mullaitivu district.

"We heard about this move to destroy the memorial and I rushed from my home in Vavuniya and got here at 2 a.m. Students and some local politicians had gathered here, and there was a heavy police presence," said Pakianathan Ujanthan, President of the Jaffna Students' Union. "Despite the police and the army in and around our premises, we continued the protests outside. Later, when police told us they would subject us to PCR tests, we decided to suspend our agitation," he said.

'Erasing' history
Following early reports of the development, social media users expressed shock, terming it an attack on Tamils' attempt to memorialise, and an attempt by the Sri Lankan state "to erase" the troubling history around the massacre of scores of ci-

Twitter bans Donald Trump, citing risk of violent incitement

The social network said his recent tweets amounted to glorification of violence

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Twitter banned President Donald Trump's account on Friday, citing "the risk of further incitement of violence" following the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday.

Twitter has long given Mr. Trump and other world leaders broad exemptions from its rules against personal attacks, hate speech and other behaviours. But in a detailed explanation posted on its blog on Friday, the company said recent Trump tweets amounted to glorification of violence when read in the context of the Capitol riot and plans circulating online for future armed protests around the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

The social platform has been under growing pressure to take further action against Mr. Trump following the Wednesday violence.

On Thursday, Facebook suspended Mr. Trump's account through January 20



Hitting back: Donald Trump denounced Twitter as an enemy of free speech, saying he might build his own "platform". ■ AFP

and possibly indefinitely. Twitter merely suspended Mr. Trump's account for 12 hours after he posted a video that repeated false claims about election fraud and praised the rioters who stormed the Capitol.

Mr. Trump's Twitter persona has long functioned as a mix of policy announcements, often out of the blue; complaints about the media; disparagement of women, minorities and his perceived enemies; and praise for his supporters, replete with exclamation marks, all-caps,

Democrats push for swift impeachment

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump faces a renewed drive by Democrats to remove him from office after he incited his supporters to storm the U.S. Capitol.

"We must take action," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared on Friday.

President-elect Joe Biden, meanwhile, said he is focused on his job as he prepares to take office. On impeachment, he said, "That's a decision for the Congress to make."

The Democrats are considering lightning-quick action. The Articles of Impeachment are expected to be introduced on Monday, with a House vote as soon as Wednesday.

Fishermen find plane debris in sea

The Boeing aeroplane was carrying 50 passengers and 12 crew members

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JAKARTA

The Sriwijaya aeroplane that went missing on Saturday with 62 people on board lost contact minutes after taking off from the Indonesian capital Jakarta.

Transportation Minister Budi Karya Sumadi said Flight SJ182 took off at 2:36 p.m. The Boeing 737-500 disappeared from radar four minutes later, after the pilot contacted air traffic control to ascend to an altitude of 29,000 feet, he said.



Tragic incident: A rescue personnel holding suspected debris of the plane found in the sea. ■ @HUMASJAKFIRE/REUTERS

The airline said that the plane was on an estimated 90-minute flight from Jakarta to Pontianak. The plane was carrying 50 passengers and 12 crew members.

Mr. Sumadi said a dozen vessels, including four Navy warships, were deployed in a search-and-rescue operation north of Jakarta.

Bambang Suryo Aji, a senior official with the search and rescue agency, said rescuers collected plane debris and clothes that were found by fishermen. They handed the items over to the National Transportation Safety Committee for further investigation to determine whether they were from the missing plane.

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202123 002087	Bleached Chemi Thermo Mechanical Pulp-Hardwood 80	27.01.2021
202123 002088	Stoneground Softwood Pulp	29.01.2021
202123 002089	Bleached Softwood Sulphate Pulp	02.02.2021
Detailed Terms & conditions, Qty. Tender Fee, EMD, etc. are available in tender document at our websites: www.tnpl.com / www.tenders.tn.gov.in		
DIPR/156/Tender/2021		

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Dec. fuel demand rises to 11-month high

Diesel sales slip from year-earlier period for a second straight month dampening overall consumption

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
India's fuel demand rose sequentially for the fourth straight month in December as the resumption of economic activity took consumption to a 11-month high. Still, demand was about 2% lower than pre-COVID levels.

Total demand for petroleum products in December fell to 18.59 million tonnes, from 18.94 million tonnes a year earlier, provisional data published by the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell show.

Fuel consumption, however, posted a month-on-month increase for the fourth straight month, helped by reviving transportation and business activity.

India had consumed 17.86 million tonnes in November.

The consumption in De-



Driving demand: While petrol reached pre-COVID levels in September, diesel returned to normal in October. ■ A.M.FARUQUI

cember was the highest since January 2020.

While petrol had reached pre-COVID levels in September, diesel consumption returned to normal in October. However, demand for the main transportation fuel de-

clined again in November and December.

Diesel slips again

Diesel demand, which had soared 7.4% year-on-year in October, dropped 6.9% in November and by 2.7% in De-

cember to 7.18 million tonnes. Month-on-month, the demand slightly improved from 7.04 million tonnes.

Fuel demand had slumped by 49% in April after a nationwide lockdown, imposed to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, shut industries and took most vehicles off-road.

The 69-day nationwide lockdown was followed by local and State-level restrictions. The curbs have eased only slowly and in phases, while localised restrictions in containment zones remain.

The onset of the festive season had fuelled a rise in consumption, but public transport is not back to normal levels yet, as schools and educational institutions continue to remain shut in most

parts of the country.

Demand for naphtha, which is used as an industrial fuel for generating electricity and producing petrochemicals, fell 2.67% to 1.23 million tonnes in December.

Bitumen, LPG

But, consumption of bitumen, used in road construction, jumped by 20% to 7,61,000 tonnes.

LPG – the only fuel that showed growth even during the lockdown period on the back of the government giving free cooking gas to the poor – was 7.4% higher at 2.53 million tonnes.

Air aviation turbine fuel or ATF sales fell 41% to 4,28,000 tonnes as most airlines are yet to resume full operations. However, on a month-on-month basis, it improved by 13.5%.

Deutsche Bank settles at \$100 mn fine

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK
Deutsche Bank has agreed to pay a fine of more than \$100 million to avoid a criminal prosecution on charges it participated in a foreign bribery scheme.

Lawyers for the bank waived its right to face an indictment on conspiracy charges on Friday during a teleconference with a federal judge in New York City.

Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn didn't reveal at the hearing which nations were involved. Previously, the bank has agreed to a Securities and Exchange Commission fine of \$16 million to resolve separate allegations of corrupt dealings in Russia and China.

Deutsche Bank said it would have no immediate comment.



Governance goal: The move is aimed at raising effectiveness and value-for-money in public procurement. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

FinMin drafts model tender to ease purchases

Document standardises language

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI
The Finance Ministry has drafted a model tender document for public procurement by all central government departments, in a bid to standardise the language and clauses included, and avoid contractual disputes.

become common," the department pointed out in an introduction to the 130-odd page document for inviting bids for official supplies.

As an instance, it pointed that a 'Tender' is taken to mean 'Tender document' or 'Tender Process' as well as the 'Bid' submitted by the prospective suppliers.

Similarly, participants in the Tender are called tenderers and bidders. This duality is reflected in 'Notices inviting Tenders' and 'Instructions to Bidders, and so on,' the note reviewed by *The Hindu* points out.

The standard bidding document developed now, seeks to ease out this duality by mooting that the 'Tender' should refer to the tender document and process,

while the term 'Bid' shall refer to the bidders' pitches. 'Bidder' is to be used instead of 'Tenderer' to refer to potential suppliers and the usage 'Bid document' be done away with, as per the proposed model.

While the generic bidding document has been made for domestic open tenders for procurement of general goods, the department has said it can be tweaked by adding suitable clauses to call for global bids, annual running supply contracts, and other types of procurement.

D-Mart parent's Q3 net rises 16.4% to ₹447 crore

Festive sales pushed metrics, says CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Avenue Supermarts Ltd., which owns and operates retail chain D-Mart, on Saturday reported an increase of 16.4% in consolidated net profit to ₹446.95 crore for the third quarter ended December 2020.

The company had posted a net profit of ₹384.01 crore in the October-December quarter a year earlier, Avenue Supermarts said in a BSE filing.

Revenue from operations was up 10.8% at ₹7,542 crore during the quarter under review as against ₹6,808.93 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal.

Avenue Supermarts' total expenses were at ₹6,977.88



crore as against ₹6,325.03 crore, an increase of 10.3%.

"Our overall sales and sales mix are now trending very close to our usual times except for specific customer consumption changes post COVID-19," said CEO & MD Neville Noronha. "Apparel, footwear... out of home usage categories are taking more time to recover."

Eyes 12-15% growth in FY22, ₹400-₹500 cr. additional revenue from SME lending

N. ANAND

CHENNAI

Shriram City Union Finance Ltd., which has reached pre-COVID-19 levels in disbursements, will focus on its core business of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and gold loans in FY22, a top official said.

"During December, we reached the pre-COVID-19 levels in disbursements against the corresponding year-earlier period and also for Q3," said MD & CEO Y.S. Chakravarti. "The first quarter was a washout. In the first half, we disbursed ₹4,387 crore against ₹1,475 crore," he added.

"The disbursement in Q3 is about ₹6,000 crore, and we hope to be able to keep up the momentum in Q4," the CEO said. "The Pongal

season will drive two-wheeler sales in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Out of the total portfolio, SMEs accounted for 55%, personal loans 20%, and gold loans 7%-8%", he added.

On an average, the non-banking finance company had been disbursing loans worth about ₹6,000 crore per quarter. It is targeting a growth of 12% to 15% during

FY22 by prioritising lending to SMEs and for gold loans.

12%-15% growth over FY20," Mr. Chakravarti said.

Plans new forays

While no new branches were being planned, Mr. Chakravarti said as far as SME loans were concerned, they would be entering new territories that could bring in additional revenue of ₹400 crore to ₹500 crore in the first 12 months of operations.

Currently, the company disburses SMEs loans of ₹12 lakh-₹15 lakh in five States, including Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. This accounted for ₹1,000 crore revenue during Q2 of FY21. The NBFC also distributes small ticket business loans of ₹1 lakh.

This is expected to increase in coming quarters due to business revival and festivals.

"In retail lending, we can't go beyond 18% and that's why we are looking at

RInfra sells full stake in PKTCL for ₹900 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Reliance Infrastructure on Saturday said it had completed the sale of its entire 74% stake in PKTCL to India Grid Trust for ₹900 crore.

The proceeds will be utilised for debt reduction, and the company's dues will come down by 6% to ₹13,100 crore from ₹14,000 crore.

"Reliance Infrastructure Limited (RInfra) announces the successful completion of the sale of its entire 74% equity stake in Parbat Koldam Transmission Company Limited (PKTCL) to India Grid Trust (India Grid) for an enterprise value of ₹900 crore," the company said in a statement.

Lifestyle CEO Rishi Vasudev to leave firm

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Lifestyle International Pvt. Ltd. has announced that Rishi Vasudev, CEO of Lifestyle and Home Centre, has decided to move out from the company for personal reasons.

"The company will announce his successor in due course. In the interim, Kabir Lumba, CEO, Designate and Group Director, Landmark Group, will be managing the responsibilities, in addition to his current role within the Landmark Group," the company said in a statement.

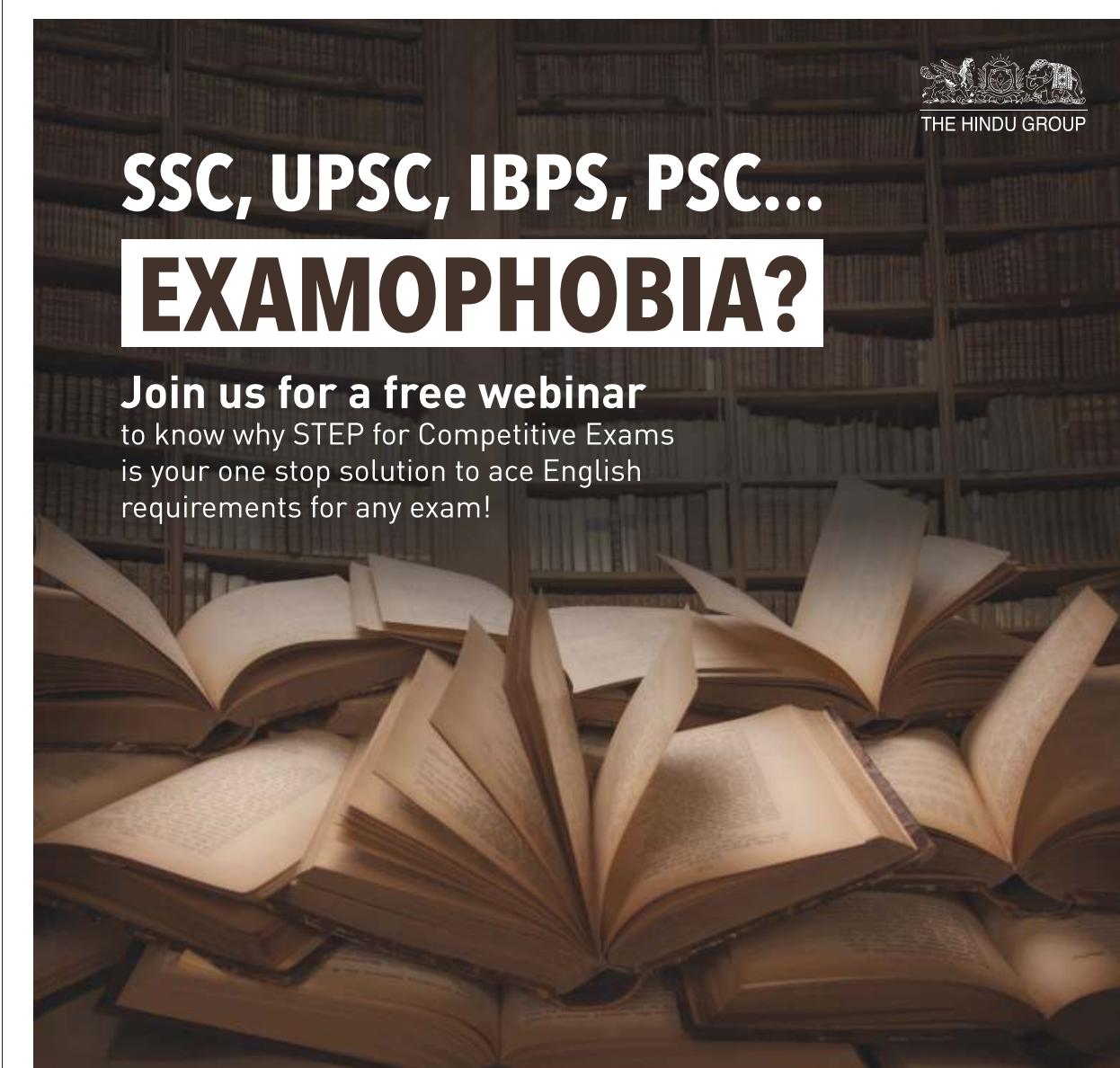
The company, which started with its first Lifestyle store in Chennai in 1999, has 400 stores today under the Lifestyle, Home Centre, Max & Easybuy brands in more than 130 cities, employing more than 17,000 people.

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What is the change in strategy?

■ Going forward, our strategy is changing a mix of businesses, that is our target.

What is the change in strategy?

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CM YK

AN-ND-E

SNAPSHOTS

**Bacterial haute couture**

Cobalt, used in batteries, is toxic to living things. The metal seeps into the cells of most bacteria and kills them. Researchers investigated what happened when *Geobacter*, a bacterium found in soil and sediment, encounters cobalt. They found that the bacteria can extract the metal from rust and coat themselves with it. The microbe's ability can be used to extract cobalt from batteries and recycle it.

**How old is the universe?**

A new study calculates that the cosmos is 13.77 billion years old, give or take 40 million years, which agrees with earlier estimates made using the Planck satellite. The astronomers used the Chilean Atacama Cosmology Telescope (ACT). In 2019, others showed that the universe is hundreds of millions of years younger than this estimate, by measuring the movements of galaxies, sparking off a debate.

New challenges for COVID-19 vaccine trials in India

With the daily cases coming down, many people who would have volunteered would not see the urgency now as earlier

R. PRASAD

On January 1, Pune-based Serum Institute's Covishield vaccine was granted permission for restricted use, while Bharat Biotech's Covaxin got a similar approval the next day with certain other riders. With two vaccines now being greenlighted for restricted use, the four high-risk priority groups, beginning with frontline health-care workers, will soon begin getting vaccinated. Nearly 300 million people belonging to the four priority groups are to be vaccinated with either of the two vaccines for free.

The Ahmedabad-based Zydus Cadila only recently got the regulatory permission to carry out phase-3 trial and has to begin the recruitment, while the Hyderabad-based Biological E is yet to reach that stage. It is unclear if Dr. Reddy's Laboratory has completed enrolment for phase-3.

Challenges in recruiting
In a webinar hosted by DBT on December 31, Krishna Mohan, Executive Director of Bharat Biotech, had mentioned about the challenges in recruiting participants for phase-3 trial, as many felt they had only a 50% chance of getting the candidate vac-

cine. The news about vaccines soon becoming available made the recruitment even more challenging.

Pankaj Patel, Chairman of Zydus Cadila said during the webinar that he anticipates difficulties in quick recruitment of volunteers but not with recruitment *per se*. "There are enough people committed to helping clinical studies. It might take longer but there won't be a challenge with recruitment," he said.

Effects of approval

Now, with two vaccines approved for restricted use, how much more challenging will it be to enrol participants for clinical trials, particularly phase-3 trials that need 25,000-30,000 people? "I think it would be more challenging than earlier for this reason," says virologist Dr. Shahid Jameel, Director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University. Neurovirologist Dr. V. Ravi, formerly with NIMHANS, too, agrees that it would be challenging to recruit participants now. But says that DBT is addressing this through a call for research proposals for enhancing capacity for conduct of clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccine candidates.

Issues with slow spread
With the number of daily fresh cases slowing down



The alternative: Vaccine manufacturers can carry out phase-3 trials outside India and efficacy results from such trials would be accepted by the Indian regulator for vaccine approval.

• GETTY IMAGES

Dr. Jameel also points out other challenges in recruiting participants now. "With the daily cases coming down, many people who would have volunteered would not see the urgency now as earlier. Also, with increasing numbers of infected people, there would be a reduced pool of susceptible people. Prior infection is an exclusion criterion," he says.

Issues with slow spread
With the number of daily fresh cases slowing down

since mid-September despite the winter and festival season, the spread of the virus appears to be slowing down. This raises an altogether different challenge in carrying out phase-3 trials where the efficacy of the vaccine is measured by comparing the number of COVID-19 cases and the kind of protection offered in participants in the vaccine arm *vis-à-vis* the placebo arm. China had to rely on other countries to carry out phase-3 trials of its vaccines as the virus spread had slowed sharply.

"It is going to be a challenge, mostly because of the requirement of certain cases to develop in the trial after vaccine administration to understand efficacy," says Dr. Giridhara Babu, epidemiologist at the Public Health Foundation of India, Bengaluru. "It is best to recruit participants based on an antibody test, and have two distinct groups of people to participate (both infected and susceptible) in trials to understand the efficacy in

both groups. This will ensure reaching the sample size efficiently."

Professor of Microbiology at CMC Vellore, Dr. Gagandeep Kang says vaccine manufacturers can carry out phase-3 trials outside India and efficacy results from such trials would be accepted by the Indian regulator for vaccine approval.

Health-care workers are relatively better informed of clinical trials and are more likely to participate in trials. However, with the government vaccinating them on priority, this section of potential participants will now hesitate to take part in COVID-19 trials. Dr. Jameel sees another reason why health-care workers would hesitate to participate in trials when they have been prioritised to get the vaccine. He says:

"Why would health-care workers participate if they are at high risk of infection, in line of vaccination, but have only a 50% chance of getting a vaccine?"

Testing younger people
Older people are particularly at risk of developing severe disease, and even dying, compared with younger people. That is precisely the reason why people over 50 years are one of the four

high-risk groups to get the vaccine on priority. Since vaccines would become available in the market only after the government finishes vaccinating the priority groups, which would take many months, will trials be able to recruit only younger people?

Less than ideal

Only in an ideal situation will 100% of older people get vaccinated on priority. There will always be a certain percentage of older people who might be missed. Enrolling such people then depends on individual trial sites, says Dr. Ravi.

Dr. Jameel says, "Yes, younger people can be induced to participate in phase-3 trials. But the vaccine will then only be tested largely in a young and generally healthy group, unlike the population it would target when approved."

Serum Institute suing a Covishield trial participant for ₹100 crore has surely not helped in encouraging people to participate in trials. "That was a public-relations disaster. The picture that emerged was a company abandoning and threatening a trial participant who volunteered initially for no monetary gain," says Dr. Jameel.

Identical twins aren't perfect clones, study shows

15% of identical twins showed up to 100 genetic differences

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Identical twins are not exactly genetically the same, new research shows.

Scientists in Iceland sequenced DNA from 387 pairs of identical twins - those derived from a single fertilized egg - as well as from their parents, children and spouses. That allowed them to find "early mutations that separate identical twins," said Kari Stefansson, a geneticist at the University of Iceland and the company deCODE genetics, and co-author of the paper published Thursday in the journal *Nature Genetics*.

Genetic mutations

A mutation means an alteration in a sequence of DNA - a tiny change that is not inherently good or bad, but can influence physical features or susceptibility to certain diseases. They can occur when a cell divides and

makes a slight error in replicating DNA.

Identical twins

On average, identical twins have 5.2 of these early genetic differences, the researchers found. But about 15% of identical twin pairs have more genetic differences, some of them up to 100, said Stefansson.

These differences represent a tiny portion of each twin's genetic code, but they could influence why one twin is taller or why one twin is at greater risk for certain cancers.

Previously, many researchers believed that physical differences between identical twins were related mostly to environmental factors, such as nutrition or lifestyle. Jan Dumanski, a geneticist at Uppsala University in Sweden, who was not involved in the new paper, praised it as "a clear and important

contribution" to medical research. "The implication is that we have to be very careful when we are using twins as a model" for teasing apart the influences of nature and nurture, he said.

Previous studies, including a 2008 paper in *The American Journal of Human Genetics*, have identified some genetic differences between identical twins.

Setting the stage

The new study goes beyond earlier work by including DNA of parents, children and spouses of identical twins. That allowed the researchers to pinpoint when genetic mutations occurred in two different kinds of cells - those present in just one individual and those inherited by that person's children.

They also found mutations that occurred before the developing embryo split into two, setting the stage for twins.

Decoding a meteorite that fell near Jaipur in 2017

It is a type of stony meteorite that is a remnant of the first solid bodies to accrete in the solar system

ASWATHI PACHA

On June 6, 2017, at around 5 a.m., residents of Mukundpura village near Jaipur saw a bright trail in the sky followed by a thunderous sound. They spotted a burning object with a sulphur smell on the soft agricultural land.

The meteorite broke into several fragments, but a pit of about 15 cm in diameter and 10 cm in depth was formed at the impact site. The local police immediately collected it and handed it over to the Geological Survey of India, Kolkata. Now, a new study has shed light on the mineralogy of the meteorite.

Carbonaceous chondrite
The meteorite named Mukundpura CM2 was classified to be a carbonaceous chondrite. "This is a type of stony meteorite, considered the most primitive meteorite and a remnant of the first solid bodies to accrete in the solar system. The composition of carbonaceous chon-

drites are also similar to the Sun," explains Dwijesh Ray from the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad in an email to *The Hindu*. He is the corresponding author of the work recently published in *Geochemistry*.

He adds that meteorites are broadly classified into three groups - stony (silicate

rich), iron (Fe-Ni alloy), and stony-iron (mixed silicate-iron alloy). Chondrites are silicate-droplet-bearing meteorites, and this Mukundpura chondrite is the fifth carbonaceous meteorite known to fall in India.

Degrees of alteration
The study revealed that Mu-

kundpura CM2 had experienced varying degrees of alteration during the impact. Some minerals like forsterite and FeO olivine, calcium aluminium rich inclusion (CAI) minerals escaped alteration. Few magnetites, sulphides and calcites were also found. Detailed spectroscopic studies revealed that the meteorite had very high (about 90%) phyllosilicate minerals comprising both magnesium and iron. Further X-ray studies showed it also had aluminium complexes.

properties of the surface of these asteroids are consistent with CM carbonaceous meteorites. Therefore, a better understanding of the nature and evolution of such meteorites that have been aqueously altered will help considerably in the interpretation of results of these missions," he writes.

Early solar system

On being asked why it is important to study meteorites, Dr. Ray explains: "Meteorites are representative of asteroids. Asteroids are the remnant debris of the inner solar system formation process and thus offer the formation history or the building blocks of the planets. Therefore, by studying meteorites in the laboratory and asteroids by exploration and sample return mission we try to reconstruct the activity of early solar system events. Also, asteroids are often rich in volatiles and other minerals and can be exploited for future planetary exploration."

Harnessing what Einstein called spooky 'action at a distance'

'Entangled' particles mimic changes in each other regardless of the separation

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

In last year's budget session, the Finance Minister of the Government of India proposed that ₹8,000 crore be set aside to develop quantum science and technology. The detailed project report for a National Mission on Quantum Technology and Applications (NM-QTA) has been drawn out and finalised, and in the next couple of months, this mission might get approval. Recognising the importance of quantum technology, the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India had initiated a programme called QuEST at a modest 200-crore-rupes budget to explore the possibilities and engage with the researchers.

Potential applications
"In the international arena, huge investments, both public and private, are carried out to roll out quantum-based products. Potential applications include secure communication, fast computers that established quantum supremacy, sensors and quantum inspired devices," says Ashutosh Sharma, Se-



Quantum nature: Entanglement can be used to transmit a message at a very high level of secrecy.

cretary DST. "The first mover has the advantage in garnering market share and technology supremacy."

Quantum technology
Knowledge of quantum mechanics is an indispensable part of the electronics industry. However, in the twenty-first century, the term 'quantum technology' refers to something even more disruptive and radical. It involves exploiting the properties of individual, or a few fundamental particles, to achieve revolutionary changes in technology. One example is the property known as entanglement. When two objects, say two particles of light, also called photons, are in an entangled state, any changes made to the state of one, for example, its spin, are reflected in the other particle, however far they move from each other without breaking the entanglement.

If developed, this property can be used to transmit a message at a very high level of secrecy from one point to another.

In June 2020, China demon-

strated quantum communication technology that established quantum supremacy. "The first mover has the advantage in garnering market share and technology supremacy."

Notable contributions
One of the members of the committee, Hema Ramachandran of Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru, who passed away in November 2020, contributed to the work of getting the report finalised under extremely trying conditions, many times from the hospital. This is recalled by Prof Simon: "She was extraordinarily brave, had talent, a remarkable sense of commitment and sacrifice. She was always concerned about the academia-industry interaction being less than desirable and had plans to improve this interaction and co-operation."

Dr. Sharma, describing her as a "gem of rare brilliance", expressed hope that she would live through her work.

The NM-QTA is yet to be approved by the government, and it is under process. "Around 300 scientists, faculty and researchers; 30 institutes and good number of stakeholders were involved in developing De-

tailed Project Report on NM-QTA. Mostly, these researchers and institutes shall be involved while implementing the mission once approved," says Dr. Sharma. The approval, her colleagues hope, would be the best tribute to Hema Ramachandran who worked without letting any of them know her deteriorating health condition.

Good progress
There has been progress on several fronts as far as quantum technology is concerned, within India.

"There is a good progress in quantum communication, particularly in free space as well as in fibre. Prototypes have been developed and protocols are in place," Dr. Sharma explains.

"Once satellite-based transponders are available, free space communication could be demonstrated. Work is progressing smoothly and very soon, in less than six months, it will be demonstrated," he adds.

According to Dr. Sharma, on the fibre front, stretching beyond 150 km is being worked out. This includes development of repeaters so that signals could be boosted at every 150 km so that the desired communication can go for long distances.

Q Question Corner

**Unchanging crocs****Why haven't crocodiles evolved since the age of the dinosaurs?**

The crocodiles of today look very similar to those that lived during the Jurassic period some 200 million years ago.

Though lizards and birds have evolved and diversified into many thousands of species, crocodiles have only a few species - just 25. Now, scientists at the University of Bristol explain how a particular pattern of evolution known as the 'stop-start' pattern and certain environmental changes that have taken place since the dinosaurs were around. The team is also working to identify why some types of prehistoric crocodiles died out, while others didn't.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in



Ousting Trump

After the Capitol riot, there is a fresh effort by Democrats to remove the President from office. But is it easy?

GOPALAN BALACHANDRAN

The story so far: There is a huge clamour for the removal of U.S. President Donald Trump before January 20, when Joe Biden will be sworn in as the 46th U.S. President. Democrats have launched a fresh drive to remove Mr. Trump from office after he incited his Republican supporters to storm the U.S. Capitol, the seat of political power. Two avenues have been suggested for this: the exercise of the 25th Amendment of the Constitution or impeachment. On Friday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was quoted by agencies as saying that she had instructed the House Rules Committee to move ahead with a motion for impeachment and the legislation on the 25th Amendment, if Mr. Trump did not resign. But it is easier said than done.

What does the Amendment say?

Section 4 of the 25th Amendment allows for the immediate removal of the President "whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office." When that happens, the "Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President."

However, Vice-President Mike Pence seems to have no desire to take that step. For exercising the 25th amendment, therefore, Congress has to set up a special commission to determine that the President is unable to discharge his duties. Since such a step has never been taken before, Congress will enter a new field altogether. It will not only have to decide on the composition of the special commission, but will also have to set up the modalities for making such a determination. In addition, it will be difficult to convene the Senate to take up the issue of this special commission. The Senate will not reconvene for any substantive business till January 19. Although it will hold two *pro forma* sessions next week – on January 12 and January 15 – it is barred from conducting any kind of business during those days without agreement from all the 100 senators. The presence of Mr. Trump's allies in the Senate makes that highly unlikely.

Further, even if the Cabinet decides on the competency of Mr. Trump, he can resume his powers and duties by mere transmission to the two Houses his written declaration that no inability exists. He can also fire the principal officers who supported the initial declaration. Of course, the majority of the Cabinet, as it exists, or the special committee can again transmit to the house another fresh declaration that the President is

unable to discharge his powers and duties, for the Vice-President to again assume the powers and duties of the President. For him to continue, however, it has to be sustained by a two-thirds majority of both the Houses. All in all, the removal of Mr. Trump from the presidency through the 25th Amendment before January 20 is highly improbable, if not impossible.

What about impeachment?

The House of Representatives can draw up the articles of impeachment and pass it without any difficulty. However, the impeachment trial would have to take place in the Senate, and as mentioned earlier, it will not be able to act on the articles of impeachment received from the House without agreement from all the 100 senators before January 19.

Therefore, no substantive action can be taken to remove Mr. Trump from office before January 20. A copy of draft articles of impeachment circulating among members of Congress charged Mr. Trump with "inciting violence against the government of the United States" in an attempt to overturn his election loss to Mr. Biden, Reuters reported.

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell sent a memo to Republican senators detailing a possible timetable for an impeachment trial. He noted the Senate will hold its next work session on January 19 and needs the consent of all the 100 senators to convene sooner, meaning a trial would not begin until Mr. Trump was out of office, a source familiar with the document said.

What happens after he leaves office?

Mr. Trump could still be impeached after he leaves office. Most constitutional lawyers agree that an ex-President can be impeached, which would have the effect of preventing him from running for the presidency again. Irrespective of one's views on Mr. Trump's character, he will continue to be the President till the noon of January 20.

"Impeaching President Donald Trump with 12 days remaining in his presidency would only serve to further divide the country," White House spokesman Judd Deere told the media on Friday.

Dr. Balachandran is a policy commentator and a former Development Correspondent of The Hindu

The threat posed by avian influenza

How serious is the bird flu outbreak in India and what steps can be taken to contain it?

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

The story so far: Avian influenza, popularly known as bird flu, has been reported from Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh in recent weeks. During the first week of January, reports of unusual deaths of a large number of birds, including wild ones, started coming in from many States, indicating that the virus is being actively transmitted among various bird groups. The two virus types identified so far in the outbreaks – H5N1 and H5N8 – come under the category of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), which is of major concern to those keeping birds, because it leads to disease and death of fowl and causes economic havoc. H5N1 is a known threat to humans as well. The spread of the disease in a variety of birds in several geographical regions, and the seasonal movement of migratory birds, have prompted the Centre to issue an alert to States to adhere to the National Action Plan for Prevention, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza 2021. Internationally, the World Animal Health Information System in December 2020 identified outbreaks of HPAI in Taiwan, Iran, Israel, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam, a dozen European Union countries, Ukraine, Russia and the U.K., leading to a loss of over 4.8 million birds by the end of December 2020.

How serious is avian flu for bird health?

Avian Influenza (AI) is a highly contagious viral disease, affecting a variety of birds, including those connected with human consumption – chickens, ducks, turkeys, quails – as well as pet birds and wild birds. The World Organization for Animal Health, which collaborates with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), says HPAI virus strains H5N1, H5N2, H5N8, H7N8 have been identified in outbreaks, indicating active circulation. Infection histories point to H5N1 and H7N9 viruses posing a threat to human health as well.

The FAO says wild birds act as a natural reservoir of AI viruses. Their migratory movement could bring these pathogens to poultry, waterfowl and other domestic birds through contact. HPAI produces severe clinical signs of disease in birds, causing a high degree of mortality and economic loss. The response to an outbreak is a containment strategy, which is primarily centred around removing the diseased birds through culling. Such mass destruction causes a severe impact on farmers.

In the latest viral spread, in just one instance, Kerala has already identified over 69,000 birds, mostly ducks, stricken with H5N8, to be culled at four infection sites in the Kuttanad area of Alappuzha.

What is the economic impact of bird flu?

India's poultry sector, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, is worth ₹80,000 crore, of which the organised sector represents 80%, and the rest is distributed among unorganised sectors, including backyard poultry-keeping which is crucial for income and nutritional security.

Exports, mainly focused on West Asia, neighbouring countries and East Asia, were valued at ₹532 crore in 2017, with an emphasis on processed products such as egg powder, yolk powder, pharma ingredients, and chicken products. Avian flu is seen as a threat to the further growth of the sector as a whole.

By the government's estimates, there are 30 million farmers who keep backyard birds, while small and medium farmers who contribute to aggregators are crucial players in the larger ecosystem. India has a base of over 729 million poultry birds, of which 30% are layers and 40% are broilers, according to the National Action Plan for Egg and Poultry 2022. This large base shows that a serious outbreak of HPAI, as was witnessed during 2005-06 in some States, can be catastrophic. During that year, official data put the number of culled birds at over one million.

In later years, bird flu surfaced in several States, such as Manipur, Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, and Kerala, leading to destruction of millions of birds.



Steep measures: Farmers guiding ducks towards a cage for their culling, in Alappuzha on January 5. ■ PTI

Governments lay down biosecurity measures to keep domestic birds safe from transmission by wild or migratory birds and prevent local spread. The protocol involves active surveillance of bird areas to identify emerging outbreaks

Does bird flu pose a threat to human beings?

The WHO, in its literature on avian influenza, states

that humans can be infected with virus subtypes H5N1, H7N9 and H9N2. In a recent instance of human infection, a one-year-old was confirmed to have H5N1 in Lao PDR, thought to have been acquired from backyard birds kept by the family. Infection in other birds in the region was also confirmed. On the H5N1 virus, the WHO says, "Human cases of H5N1 avian influenza occur occasionally, but it is difficult to transmit the infection from person to person. When people do become infected, the mortality rate is about 60%."

The global health body records that since 2003, there have been 862 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with H5N1, and 455 deaths have been reported from 17 countries.

On the H5N8 strain, the consensus is that human infection cannot be ruled out, although the likelihood is low. However, H5N6 infection, of a related clade (a descendant type) has occurred among humans, the WHO says. One case of the H9N2 strain, in a three-year old girl, was reported last October from Guangdong, China. It was mildly symptomatic and was detected during routine surveillance for influenza-like illness.

AI viruses in poultry have a public health dimension because they cause severe disease in humans and "have the potential to mutate to increase transmissibility among humans", the WHO adds. This calls for pandemic preparedness. Human-to-human transmission is believed to have taken place in some instances as a result of close or prolonged contact, but "there has been no sustained human-to-human transmission identified".

Why does bird flu recur? Did the major outbreaks not help form strategies?

It is impossible to eradicate influenza viruses because they persist in a vast reservoir of aquatic birds. The answer to why there are periodic outbreaks that spread to domestic environments may lie in local bird-keeping conditions. After the unprecedented outbreak in 2006 in

Asia, in which as many as 258 cases of bird flu in humans had been reported till November 13 of that year, experts who met at an international conference in New Delhi under the aegis of WHO felt that continuous growth in poultry farming under poor sanitary conditions was sustaining the virus, with multiple susceptible species living in the same area. This underscores the importance of prevention and surveillance.

The Delhi Declaration passed at the summit resolved on a common framework for countries to build local strategies, but it did not lay emphasis on preserving the natural environment, which is key to helping wild birds move safely in an unspoilt habitat and stop transmission of viruses to domestic fowl, which threatens humans with infections and a potential pandemic due to mutating viruses.

What steps can be taken to minimise risk to domestic birds?

Governments lay down biosecurity measures to keep domestic birds safe from transmission by wild or migratory birds and prevent local spread. The protocol involves active surveillance of bird areas to identify emerging outbreaks. On the other hand, it is wrong and counterproductive, the FAO cautions, to attempt elimination of wild birds near human settlements through hunting, poisoning, and habitat destruction. Such activity disperses wild birds, and the viruses, to new areas. Moreover, hunting of wild birds and the absence of biosecurity measures bring the viruses directly to domestic fowl.

In the wake of an outbreak in 2020, the U.K. issued advice making it legally necessary for bird-keepers in that country to house them in such a manner that they do not come into contact with wild birds. The measures, which have general relevance to farmers everywhere, include housing or netting all captive birds, cleansing and disinfecting clothing, footwear and vehicles, reduction of people's movement in the farm bird areas to reduce contamination, eliminating or reducing contact between captive and wild birds, particularly through feed and water storage, and cleansing and disinfecting production areas. The U.K. uses a checklist approach to help farmers with best practices.

In India, the Central government requires veterinary staff to conduct inspections periodically under the Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, to catch any signs of disease among birds and other animals early. However, aquatic wild birds are often found in close proximity to domestic ones in many locations in India, near lakes, dams and reservoirs, making it difficult to achieve segregation. The waterways of Kerala are a good example of this phenomenon.

The logistics of a massive vaccination drive

How is the Central government preparing to roll out two COVID-19 vaccines across the country?

RAMYA KANNAN

The story so far: The Union Health Ministry on Saturday announced that the COVID-19 vaccination drive will begin on January 16, after the forthcoming festivals of Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal and Magh Bihu. The government had earlier approved emergency use authorisation (EUA) for two vaccine candidates – the Serum Institute of India's Covishield vaccine developed jointly by Oxford University and AstraZeneca, and Bharat Biotech's indigenous Covaxin. With Saturday's announcement, the country is set to begin population-level immunisation for COVID-19 and finds itself facing one of the biggest logistical challenges in a long while.

What are the challenges?

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, speaking to reporters on Friday, said about vaccine distribution in the U.S.: "[It would be] the greatest operational challenge we will ever face as a nation."

In India, with its vast geographical spread, the sheer volume of population, and questions of access, the vaccination drive will be fraught with challenges, and the most careful planning down to the last mile is required, not only to vaccinate and provide both the doses, but to also monitor adverse events. The Centre recently conducted dry runs of COVID-19 vaccination to check if the systems laid down for the operationalisation of vaccine delivery are in place and working well.

Who is in line for a vaccine?

Priority will be given to the healthcare and frontline workers, estimated to be around 3 crore in number, followed by those above 50 years of age and the under-50 population groups with co-morbidities, numbering around 27 crore, the Health Ministry said on Saturday. People who have an active COVID-19 infection or associated symptoms are advised not to come to vaccination camps to avoid spreading the virus. They may seek a vaccine 14 days after the symptoms abate, according to the FAQ issued by the Health Ministry earlier. Taking the COVID-19 vaccine is entirely voluntary.



People who have COVID-19 or associated symptoms are advised not to go to vaccination camps to avoid spreading the virus. They may seek a vaccine 14 days after symptoms abate, according to the Health Ministry

Aadhar or any accepted photo ID card may be used to verify the identity of the applicant to prevent misuse. Additionally, documents authorised by specialists to indicate co-morbidities or any other health conditions may be demanded.

Further details are also awaited on the steps that will be taken to allocate turns in the schedule after the registration and for further communication

regarding the date and venue of vaccination, even to people who may not have access to devices or the Internet. As per current information, text messages will be sent out after registration, telling the registrant where and when to go to get the shot.

After the second dose, Co-WIN will generate a digital certificate of completion for individuals who have been vaccinated. Messaging, chatbots and helpline assistance are available on the app, and any adverse event after the vaccination may be communicated back to the authorities through one of these access points.

What is the kind of field-level mobilisation required for the drive?

The existing State and district health networks are readying themselves to set in place every nut and bolt in the elaborate systems that will be required for the vaccination drive. This includes mobilising personnel, making sure transportation systems are in place to take the vaccine packs to different camps, ensuring healthcare personnel are able to reach the spot on time, making sure a cold-chain system is in place, identifying and removing hurdles that might prevent beneficiaries in the general population (at a later date) from reaching the spot, and ensuring coordination between different teams on actual vaccination days to avoid any hitches.

The removal of Mr. Trump from the presidency before January 20 through the 25th Amendment or the impeachment route while in office is highly improbable, if not impossible, according to experts

In good measure, the dry runs were not only a step to test the operational feasibility of various States to roll out the vaccine programme effectively, but also a recce to see if the electronic vaccine intelligence network, eVIN, used during routine immunisation programmes, and remodelled as Co-WIN, was functional at the field-level.

Co-WIN aspires to be a comprehensive digital database of every COVID-19 vaccine that will be administered in India – tracking beneficiaries, intimating them about vaccine sites and dates, pre- and post-vaccination procedures, issuance of vaccination certificates, and follow up through the booster dose. On January 5, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the details of healthcare and frontline workers in line for a shot had already been updated on the Co-WIN system, in bulk, by State and district health authorities. Currently, self-registration is not allowed on the application.

It has been promised that 'at a later stage of implementation', Co-WIN will also be available as an application or as a website in multiple Indian languages so that beneficiaries can access it to keep track of their own progress and be connected organically to the system, if questions were to arise. It will also be a tool for others to "register" for a vaccine once the first line of targeted beneficiaries is cleared.

U.S. CAPITOL

The siege of a historical power centre

Trump's call to march on the Capitol after his refusal to concede defeat appeared to have led to the assault on the seat of U.S. legislative power

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

The grand U.S. Capitol building in Washington, home to the Senate and House of Representatives, has hardly been immune to attacks historically, but on January 6, many across the country and the world watched with disbelief as the beating heart of the world's oldest democracy was subjected to a siege by a violent mob. Earlier that day, outgoing President Donald Trump appeared to incite hundreds of his supporters, gathered on the National Mall close to the Capitol, into taking imminent action by marching on the Capitol. The result was as dramatic as it was an ominous sign of the extent of hate permeating American society today – the mob attacked Capitol police, smashed windows, vandalised and stole public assets within the building, and ransacked and posed for selfies in lawmakers' offices, including that of House Speaker Democrat Nancy Pelosi. It appeared to be a dire warning and uncontrolled venting of rage that came with the election results – the loss of Mr. Trump by margin of nearly 7 million despite his garnering around 74 million votes – following which the Republicans also lost control of the Senate after a runoff election in Georgia on January 5 led to two seats of the upper chamber flipping to Democrats.

Ironically, a year later

The violence triggered by these events, and also the evident desire of the mob to disrupt Congressional proceedings to formally certify the win of President-elect Joe Biden – an act for which lawmakers boldly reconvened and voted on the same day – only demonstrates the importance of the Senate and House as parallel repositories of legislative power to counterbalance the executive power of the White House. It is undoubtedly for this reason that the Capitol building, as the locus of legislative power, has faced multiple security threats and assaults over many years since it was built.

It all began in with the "Residence Act" passed by Congress in 1790, when erstwhile President George Washington zeroed in on modern-day District of Columbia out of land ceded by the State of Maryland. After three commissioners surveyed the site, as they also oversaw the design and construction of the national capital and its many awe-inspiring government buildings, French engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant was hired to flesh out the detailed blueprint. It was L'Enfant who proposed situating the Capitol building at the elevated east end of the National Mall, a location he then described as "a pedestal waiting for a monument."

Ironically, a year later

L'Enfant was dismissed before any construction even began, for refusing to produce design drawings for the building on the grounds that he had memorised them, and also for not submitting to the commissioners' authority with regard to the planning. The planners quickly improvised, however, and a competition with an award of \$500 was announced for whoever could produce "the most approved plan" for the Capitol building by mid-July. While 17 plans submitted failed to make the mark, it was a proposal by Dr. William Thornton, a Scottish-trained physician in Tortola, British West Indies, that won approval. Thornton's plan was for the building to comprise three sections, including a central section topped

by a low dome, and flanked on the north and south by two rectangular wings, one for each chamber of Congress.

While the cornerstone of the building was laid by President Washington in 1793, construction using sandstone transported from Virginia by boat took a long time,

so much so that despite the subsequent involvement of renowned architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, rooms on the third floor of the extant structure remained incomplete in late 1800 when the U.S. Congress, Supreme Court, Library of Congress, and courts of the District of Columbia occupied the Capitol building.

The building faced its first major attack, a fire set off by British troops in August 1814, during the 1812 War. The incident, in the words of Mr. Latrobe, left the Capitol, "a most magnificent ruin." The troops were said to have "ignited a giant bonfire of furniture" in the Hall of the House of Representatives that was so intense it destroyed a life-size marble statue of Liberty.

Even as work on various

extensions continued through the early 1800s under the guidance of Boston architect Charles Bulfinch and later Philadelphia architect Thomas Walter, the project cost soared to over \$2.4 million by 1827.

A history of attacks

The first major incident of violence at the Capitol came

on January 30, 1835, when Richard Lawrence, a British immigrant, attempted to assassinate President Andrew Jackson while he was leaving the building from a Congressional funeral. The attempt failed when the powder from his pistol did not ignite and he was taken down by bystanders.

Next, a setback to the Capitol construction came in the form of a gas explosion



and fire in the north wing on November 6, 1898, underscoring in the architects' minds the urgent need for reproofing, a task completed by 1902.

Less than two decades later, in 1915, a German-born Harvard University professor set off a dynamite explosion near the Senate Reception Room – miraculously there were no injuries. While the assailant reportedly wrote that he had done it as "an exclamation point in my appeal for peace," he was detained. He later committed suicide while in custody.

In 1954, when the Capitol building had considerably less security than it does now – and no metal detectors – four armed Puerto Rican nationalists entered the House gallery, and opened fire indiscriminately as they waved a Puerto Rican flag, apparently for protest for independence for the commonwealth. Five House members were injured, and the attackers served long prison terms that were ultimately commuted by President Jimmy Carter in 1979.

On March 1, 1971, a violent anti-war extremist outfit, Weather Underground, set off a bomb inside a bathroom on the Senate side of the Capitol. While there were no injuries, hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage was incurred.

International flavour

Capitol attacks took on an international flavour a little more than a decade later, in 1983, when a leftist group calling itself the Armed Resistance Unit set off a bomb hidden under a bench outside the Senate chamber, apparently to protest the U.S. military's actions in Grenada and Lebanon. There were again zero casualties but seven persons were charged for the attack.

Following this incident, the House and Senate chambers took the precautionary step of adding metal detectors and heightened security, both of which were breached by the pro-Trump mob on January 6. Given the bitter polarisation of the U.S. electorate at this time, it may be wise for the administrators of the Capitol building to fortify its defences further.

In focus

■ President George Washington laid the cornerstone for the capitol in 1793. The construction continued through the early 1800s, while the project cost soared to over \$2.4 million by 1827

■ The building faced its first major attack, a fire set off by British troops in August 1814, during the 1812 war. The first major incident of violence came on January 30, 1835, when a British immigrant attempted to assassinate President Andrew Jackson

■ The attacks took an international flavour in 1983 when a leftist group set off a bomb outside the Senate chamber, apparently to protest the U.S. military's actions in Grenada and Lebanon

ZAKIUR-REHMAN LAKHVI

The terror mastermind

Mumbai attack mastermind jailed over fears of FATF action over terror financing

AMIT BARUAH

Just six days after his arrest on January 2, Zakiur-Rehman Lakhvi, the known Lashkar-e-Taiba mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror strikes, was sentenced to a five-year jail term on terror financing charges on January 8.

The speed with which the wheels of justice turned in Pakistan in the case of Lakhvi's terror financing case are in sharp contrast to the years he remained charged in the Mumbai attack case, in which he was eventually bailed out.

It's evident that where Indian pressure and American prodding didn't work in ensuring Lakhvi's conviction in the Mumbai terror strikes, in which 166 persons were killed, Islamabad's fears about punitive action from the Financial Action Task Force, or FATF, seem to have done the trick.

Islamabad has been facing the heat from the financial watchdog for some time on the issue of terror financing and has called upon Pakistan to make sure it complies fully with its action plan prior to a key FATF meeting in February.

Saeed's conviction

Lakhvi's sentence is also in line with that of Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed's conviction in four terror-financing cases in November and February 2020. In October 2020, FATF decided that Pakistan would remain on its grey list, pending full compliance with its action

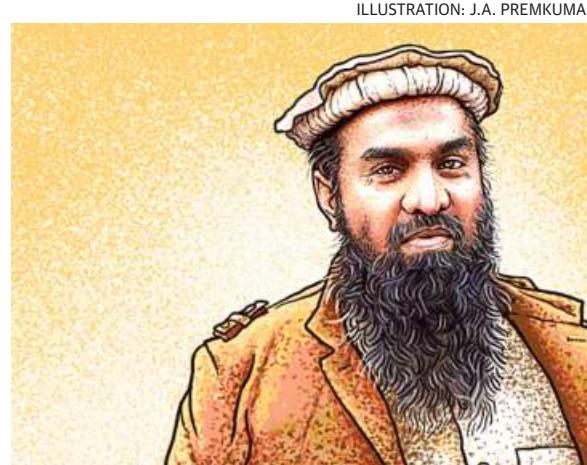


ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

Dawa (the parent wing of the Lashkar) leaders, of which trial courts had "decided" as many as 27 cases.

Strategic decision

It's clear that a strategic decision has been taken to shut down the JUD-Lashkar combine by the Pakistani establishment. However, even during his time as an "under trial" detainee in Adiala jail, Rawalpindi, Lakhvi could receive guests and use the Internet, access a mobile phone and watch television. He is even believed to have fathered a child while in jail. So, the jury will have to wait and watch what kind of "jail treatment" awaits Lakhvi this time.

The secrecy with which the Pakistani deep State operates makes it difficult to assess what exactly is happening. A recent arrest warrant for Masood Azhar, leader of the Jaish-e-Muhammad, confirms after years the presence of the wanted terrorist in Pakistan. Remember that Azhar was one of the terrorists exchanged by India in return for the passengers of the hijacked Indian Airlines flight to Kandahar in December 1999. Given their being creatures of the Pakistani establishment, and the enduring interest in using non-State actors to foment trouble in Jammu and Kashmir, it's quite likely that new outfits may have already received the blessings of the deep State. For now, Lakhvi and Saeed are in jail. Azhar's fate will be keenly watched in India.

blishment. The fallout of an India-terror related conviction would be a hot potato to handle, given that many key figures in the Pakistani establishment said at the time of the Mumbai terror strikes that these had been conducted by India itself.

In Lakhvi's case, the prosecution seems to have had its way with the Lahore anti-terrorism court judge. "The court was informed that Lakhvi was a founding member of the banned LeT, which was proscribed in the country in 2002 due to its involvement in terrorism, while the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has also imposed financial restrictions on him," *The Express Tribune* reported on Friday. The court held that a "dispensary" was under Lashkar's charge and being used for "terrorist purposes".

In all, the *Dawn* newspaper reported that the Pakistani Punjab's counter-terror department had registered 41 FIRs against Jamaat-ud-

Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed's conviction in four terror-financing cases in November and February 2020. In October 2020, FATF decided that Pakistan would remain on its grey list, pending full compliance with its action

WORKERS PARTY OF KOREA

The party of Kims

Kim Jong-un seeks to empower the WPK instead of the Army as his lead organ

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

Nine years since being anointed as the Supreme Leader of the authoritarian Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Jong-un has presided over the second party Congress of the ruling Workers Party of Korea (WPK) in his tenure. This was just the seventh Party Congress since the Workers Party took power in North Korea in 1948 and eighth overall. None were held between 1980 and 2016, a reflection of the nature of governance in this single party-ruled state, where the party exists merely as an extended entity of the personality cult that dominates government in the country.

But even then, two party Congresses being held since Mr. Kim Jong-un came to power signifies a shift from the previous iteration of the Kim dynasty.

Nominally, an "independent socialist State", North Korea is an authoritarian dictatorship led by the Kim dynasty with Kim Jong-un being the third ruler of the country, succeeding his father Kim Jong-il, who himself came to power after the death of his father and the country's founding leader Kim Il-sung. Political dynasties running in the same family are not the preserve of dictatorships or monarchies alone, but North Korea is unique among self-proclaimed socialist countries in institutionalising it. The hegemony of the WPK is enshrined in its Constitution



and Mr. Kim Jong-un as the Chairman of the WPK and the chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK is recognised as the "Supreme Leader" of the country.

Its governing "Ten principles for the establishment of a monolithic ideological system", a set of rules that have superseded the Constitution in the government's day-to-day functioning and which are supposed to be memorised by every citizen, include a Clause that the "party" and the "revolution" must be eternally carried forward by the "Baekdu bloodline" (shorthand for the Kim dynasty).

Guiding principle

The nominal ideology that governs the party and its rule in the country remains *Juche* (self-reliance) and *Songun* (military-first). *Juche* draws from the legacy of Kim Il-sung's rule during which North Korea was a key member of the Socialist bloc and worked towards

held in 1980.

The Kim Jong-un regime has given greater emphasis to policymaking process – convening meetings of the various leadership levels of the WPK. Even if these meetings are largely ceremonial and a means to convey policy decisions from the top leadership to the rank and file, the very fact that they are being more regularly convened suggests a functional difference from the previous regime. *Songun* is also never mentioned in Kim Jong-un's speeches, signifying a definite shift from the key ideology of the Kim Jong-il regime, with importance accruing more to the party organisation as opposed to the military.

The WPK retains its role as an organisation that allows for the regime to conduct mass scale surveillance of its citizenry and to reward those who are favourable to it and therefore provides it the edge in retaining its authoritarian rule.

Little is understood about the country's economy except for what is gleaned from recent defectors and satellite imagery. Recent scholarly work on North Korea using remote-sensed night luminosity data estimated high levels of poverty (of around 60%).

In the Congress' sessions so far, the regime seems to be harping on a self-critique of its economic efforts, in a way to reassure the regime's adherents of a renewed focus on livelihoods even as it continued to emphasise its nuclear brinkmanship.

Australia in a commanding position at the SCG

Three run-outs mark India's dismal batting performance as it concedes a 94-run lead; hosts 103 for two in second essay

INDIA IN AUS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SYDNEY
First innings heroes Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith steered Australia to a commanding 197-run overall lead in the third Test here on Saturday, leaving an injury-hit India with a mountain to climb.

Sitting pretty

They came to the crease after Will Pucovski and David Warner fell early, pushing Australia to 103 for two at stumps and a strong position with the four-Test series locked 1-1.

Labuschagne, who scored 91 in the first innings, was batting on 47 and Smith, who blitzed 131 in his first knock, was unbeaten on 29.

Australia padded up again after taking eight wickets on day three to dismiss India for 244 in reply to its 338.

Mohammed Siraj then stepped up to remove Pucovski for 10, caught by substitute 'keeper Wriddhiman Sa-



Profitable day: Pat Cummins, second left, scalped four and effected a run-out. ■ AFP

ha. R. Ashwin then took the prized scalp of David Warner for 13, his ninth career dismissal of the opener.

But the disciplined Labuschagne and Smith steadied the ship, building a threatening 68-run partnership that is slowly taking the game away from India.

India's task was made har-

der by the absence of Ravinder Jadeja and Rishabh Pant who were injured during India's innings.

India was all out just before tea after some scintillating bowling and razor-sharp fielding, having resumed on 96 for two.

Captain Ajinkya Rahane whacked Lyon for six before

his aggression cost him his wicket, chopping a Cummins ball onto his stumps in the next over.

Josh Hazlewood removed a dangerous Pant after a breezy 36 while Cummins snared Pujara, who ground out his 26th Test half-century, four balls later.

India slumped further,

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS

338.

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

Rohit Sharma c & b Hazlewood

26 (77b, 3x4, 1x6), Shubman Gill c Green b Cummins 50 (101b,

8x4), Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine

b Cummins 50 (176b, 5x4),

Ajinkya Rahane c Cummins 22

(70b, 1x4, 1x6), Hanuma Vihari

run out 4 (38b), Rishabh Pant c

Warner b Hazlewood 36 (67b,

4x4), Ravindra Jadeja (not out)

28 (37b, 5x4), R. Ashwin run out

10 (15b, 2x4), Navdeep Saini c

Wade b Starc 3 (13b), Jasprit

Bumrah run out 0 (2b), Mo-

hammed Siraj c Paine b Cum-

mins 6 (10b, 1x4); Extras (lb-1,

w-5, nb-3); 9; Total (in 100.4

overs): 244.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-16 (Pucovski, 5.5), 2-35

(Warner, 9.2).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 8-1-26-0, Siraj 8-2-

20-1, Saini 7-1-28-0, Ashwin 6-

0-28-1.

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 19-7-61-1, Hazlewood 21-

10-43-2, Cummins 21.4-10-

29-4, Lyon 31.8-87-0,

Labuschagne 3-0-11-0, Green

5-2-11-0.

AUSTRALIA – 2ND INNINGS

David Warner lbw b Ashwin 13

(29b, 1x4), Will Pucovski c sub

(Saha) b Siraj 10 (16b, 2x4),

Marnus Labuschagne (batting)

47 (69b, 6x4), Steve Smith (batting)

29 (63b, 3x4); Extras (lb-1,

nb-3); 4; Total (for two wkts. in

29 overs): 103.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-16 (Pucovski, 5.5), 2-35

(Warner, 9.2).

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nb-3); 4; Total (for two wkts. in

29 overs): 103.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-16 (Pucovski, 5.5), 2-35

(Warner, 9.2).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 8-1-26-0, Siraj 8-2-

20-1, Saini 7