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Drishti IAS : Karol Bagh

General Studies

(Prelims & Mains) Foundation Batch

Batch begins with Orientation Class by
Dr. Vikas Divyakirti

28th December
—
6:30 PM

Optional Subjects

Offline + Online

Karol Bagh Centre

- Geography by Mr. Rohit Wazir
- Sociology by Mr. Praveen Pandey
- History by Mr. Tauqeer Zafar
- Political Science (PSIR) by Mr. C. Singh

Prayagraj Centre

- Geography by Mr. Saurabh S. Tomar
- History by Mr. Mukund Ranjan

IAS Test Series

GS Mains Test Series 2021

24 Tests | 12 Tests | 8 Tests

Optional Subject Test Series 2021

Geography | History | Sociology | Hindi Literature

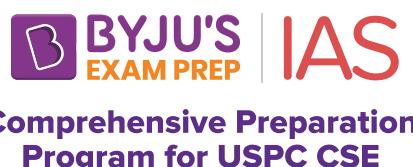
16 Tests | 8 Tests

Prelims Test Series 2022

25 GS + 5 CSAT Tests

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IN BRIEF



For Naga talks, AFSPA must go: NSCN (I-M)

GUWAHATI
The Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, or NSCN (I-M), has said the "Indo-Naga" political talks will not be meaningful under the shadow of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

NEWS ► PAGE 9

Sudha Bharadwaj out on bail from Byculla jail

MUMBAI

Human rights lawyer and trade unionist Sudha Bharadwaj was released on Thursday from Byculla jail after spending over three years in prison in connection with the Bhima-Koregaon caste violence case of 2018.

NEWS ► PAGE 8

BJP MP pitches for Mathura temple

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election in early 2022, BJP MP Harnath Singh Yadav on Thursday called for the repeal of the Places of Worship Act to construct a Krishna temple in Mathura.

NEWS ► PAGE 9

India pays homage to first CDS, wife and 11 other crash victims

IAF has ordered a tri-service inquiry into the accident, Rajnath tells Parliament

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday evening paid last respects to Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, wife and 11 defence personnel who were killed in the Mi-17V5 helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu. He was joined by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and the three Service Chiefs at the Palam Air Base.

Earlier, the Defence Minister informed Parliament that the Indian Air Force (IAF) had ordered a tri-service inquiry headed by Air Marshal Manvendra Singh, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Training Command, to investigate the crash.

The mortal remains were moved by road from Wellington to Sulur around noon since the weather was not appropriate for air operations and from there were flown in an IAF C-130J transport aircraft to Delhi.

The mortal remains of Gen. Rawat will be kept at his



Grieving nation: PM Narendra Modi paying tributes to CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat, 12 others in New Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Identification process

A defence official said the severity of air crash has led to difficulty in positive identification of mortal remains. "All possible measures are being taken for positive identification considering the sensitivities and emotional well-being of the loved ones," the official said.

Positive identification of

residence on Friday morning for members of the public to pay their respects and will be moved to the Brar Square Crematorium around 2 p.m., Army officials said.

Process for positive identification of the remaining mortal remains is continuing, the official said adding, the remains will be kept at the mortuary of the Army Base Hospital till the completion of positive identification formalities.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

SEE ALSO ► PAGE 3

'Black box' recovered

The Cockpit Voice Recorder and Flight Data Recorder of the IAF chopper that crashed with CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat and others were recovered on Thursday. ■ PAGE 8

Drones look for evidence

Amid foggy weather, investigators of the IAF and the Tamil Nadu police on Thursday flew drones at the site of the helicopter crash in Coonoor looking for evidence. ■ PAGE 8

Survivor sent to Bengaluru

Group Captain Varun Singh, the lone survivor in the IAF Mi-17V5 crash, was airlifted to Bengaluru on Thursday for intensive treatment. ■ PAGE 8

Farmers declare victory, to start vacating protest sites

No decision yet on SKM campaign against BJP in U.P. polls

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

The thousands of farmers camped out on the borders of Delhi for over a year will start returning home on Saturday, with victory rallies to celebrate the achievement of most of their major goals. On Thursday, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), a coalition of unions spearheading the protests, called off the agitation, accepting the Central Government's latest offer to resolve their pending demands.



Joy returns: Farmers celebrating at the Singhu border after ending their protest on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

cases filed against protesters, provide compensation for the kin of farmers who died at the protests, and form a panel to ensure that all farmers can sell their produce at remunerative minimum support prices (MSP).

"This is a historic victory for Indian farmers after a historic movement both in terms of size as well as the unity and peaceful nature of the protest," All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) leader Hannan Mollah said. "After the repeal of the farm laws last month, and today's proposal from the Government on the remaining demands, I feel we have achieved 95% of the

SKM's demands," Krantikari Kisan Union leader Darshan Pal said.

Victory celebrations have been scheduled for Saturday, out of respect for the cremation of Gen. Bipin Rawat on Friday. At the Singhu border site, a number of farmers have already begun packing up their temporary accommodations, although U.P. leader Rakesh Tikait said it could take a while for all protesters to vacate the protest sites, especially in his Ghazipur stronghold.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

FARMERS TO TAKE HOME
SINGHU MEMORIES ► PAGE 2

+ Gujarat HC flays closure of non-veg food stalls

Court asks Ahmedabad civic body how it can stop people from eating what they want

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court on Thursday reprimanded the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) for seizing food stalls selling non-vegetarian food in the city, and asked the civic body how it could stop people from eating what they wanted.

The High Court was hearing a plea by a number of petitioners whose carts selling non-vegetarian food items were seized by the AMC recently. The vendors included those selling non-vegetarian food, eggs and vegetables.

The court disposed of the petition filed by over 20 street vendors challenging the AMC's drive to remove food kiosks along the main roads in the city.

'Will expedite hearing'
The court directed the AMC that if the petitioners approached it [the High Court] within 24 hours to release their seized goods, "based on the policy and in accordance with law, their cases shall be considered as expeditiously as possible".

Justice Biren Vaishnav rapped the civic body, asking

whether it would decide what people should eat outside. "What seems to be the problem? You don't like non-veg food? That's your lookout. How can you decide what I should eat outside? It's always the convenience of the respondents. How can you stop people from eating what they want? [Is it] suddenly because somebody in power thinks that this is what they want to do?" Justice Vaishnav asked the counsel representing the civic body. "Tomorrow, you will decide what I should eat outside the house?"

He also asked if only non-vegetarian food vendors were being singled out. The AMC has been contending that the drive was not meant to target such vendors but to remove encroachments.

Civic bodies in other cities

too such as Vadodara, Rajkot, Junagadh and Jamnagar had recently launched a similar drive. This came after Gujarat Revenue Minister Rajendra Trivedi and some municipal councillors from the ruling BJP publicly stated that selling non-vegetarian food on the roads "hurt the sentiments" of Hindus.

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He also asked if only non-vegetarian

Farmers to take home Singhu memories

Protesters to vacate site tomorrow; promise to build memorials of hospital, library in Jalandhar village

HEMAMI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

The song and dance had started the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the repeal of the three farm laws but the roar of "Jo Bole So Nihal... Sat Sri Akal" was loudest on Thursday when a speaker announced from the main stage at the Singhu border that all their demands have been accepted and they will leave for their homes on Saturday. Farmers camping at the protest site for the last 378 days broke into a celebratory dance as beats of drums played in the background.

Removing the tarpaulin from his makeshift accommodation, Kuldeep Singh, 40, a farmer from Patiala, said he will miss the place a lot but is happy to return home. "Who could have imagined seeing so many trucks and trolleys and flags together at one place. I will miss this the most," he said.

"I am upset," said Gandhi Vir Bhan from Haryana's Kaithal, trying hard to hide his smile. "Free main zameen mil gayi thi Delhi mein. Ab chhori padegi (We had got free land to stay in Delhi. Now we will have to leave



Time to wrap up: Farmers dismantling tents at the Singhu border on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

that)," he laughed with his peers. "It's been a remarkable one year and probably the most memorable one of our lives," he said.

Life Care Foundation Hospital, which has treated thousands of people at the protest site in the last one year, will wrap up once all the farmers leave, said Avtar Singh, the man running the hospital. "We'll go back with fanfare. There will be DJs on 'Kisan Express' and 'Kisan Metro' (trucks named so as they ferried protesters to the main stage)," said Mr. Avtar.

The legacy of the hospital and Jangi Kitab Library –

which have been a permanent feature at the site – will be memorialised at Cholang village in Jalandhar where a farmer has reportedly offered land for the memorial. "The replicas will be installed and every year, on November 26, we will gather there," he said.

Looking back, Mr. Avtar said not only farmers, but also the local residents had become the hospital's regular patients. "We lost a little over 700 people during the protest. The numbers may have gone up drastically if not for the hospital."

According to Mr. Avtar, the

protest was a success because of the elderly who didn't budge. "If they would have given up and left because of circumstantial reasons, the protest would have failed apart."

It was this protest that made Jagdev Singh, 55, from Barnala pick up his camera again after 20 years. Sharing his story, Mr. Jagdev said he was a wedding photographer for 10 years before he met with an accident and injured his leg. He quit photography and became a full-time farmer. "A year ago, when I came for the protest, I picked up my camera again and I don't

think I'll stop now," he said.

The protest has also given life-long friendships to many. Jagtar Singh, 22, from Sangrur hugged his friend Jagneher Singh, 47, from Patiala as he said: "We have become lifetime friends here. I know I have someone for me in Patiala and he knows he has me in Snagru."

Mixed emotions

As the protest comes to an end, the street vendors at the site are upset, while the shop owners in the vicinity are happy. Ramvir Singh, who had been setting up his stall at the Singhu border for a year now, said he and his family ate all the meals at the site and his business had also been going well. "I'll now go back to the junction about a km from here and see how it goes there," he said.

Naresh Kumar, 42, a grocery store owner at Kundli junction, said his shop had been shut for over a year due to the protest and he is hoping to revive his business now. "People lost their money and livelihood. Many shopkeepers left permanently because they couldn't afford the rent. Now, there's some hope," he said.

BJP awaits poll outcomes in UP., Punjab to play its cards in Delhi

Ward rotation could also help boost its chance in civic polls

JATIN ANAND
MUNEEN KHAN

NEW DELHI

Following repeal of the three farm laws, the BJP's hope of retaining sway over the Capital's civic bodies hinges largely on its performance in Uttar Pradesh, the Aam Aadmi Party's success or lack thereof in Punjab and a routine electoral exercise in Delhi.

According to party sources, it dented public perception following the repeal of the three "black laws" as is dependent on poll results in the neighbouring States as it is on the rotation of municipal wards in Delhi which is scheduled early next year.

Sources said this rotation will come in handy in avoiding bad press the party usually generates whenever it announces replacement of sitting leaders to combat anti-incumbency as part of a considered and successfully tested strategy.

"Electoral success, the party has observed time and again is contagious. How well we win in Uttar Pradesh and how badly the AAP fares in Punjab will be significant

factors for the Delhi municipal elections," a party leader said.

might be some repetitions as well," the official said.

East Delhi Municipal Corporation's Standing Committee chairman B.S. Panwar said the rotational revision of the seats "will not affect our political prospects".

No benefits

"There is no question of gaining benefits because it's an exercise that is conducted by the State Election Commission. There have been instances where seats have remained in the same category for many years and then suddenly the repetition stops. But we are not worried about having to change candidates according to the rotations," said Mr. Panwar.

South Delhi Municipal Corporation's Standing Committee chairman B.K. Oberoi too said that he was doubtful on whether the rotational exercise would benefit the party. However, a senior leader said, "We will decide on the quantum and the details of the faces who will be replaced based on the results of the exercise which will probably be after the civic polls in Punjab in February."

Low-intensity explosion on Rohini court premises leaves one injured

Gang rivalry ruled out; lawyers call it another security lapse

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A low-intensity explosion occurred inside a laptop bag at a courtroom on the Rohini court premises on Thursday, injuring a naib court, the police said.

The police said that the forensic team collected the debris for test.

According to a senior police officer, an assembled device has been found inside the bag and it has been sent for examination. The officer said that the police are still ascertaining whether it was an explosive device.

Sources, however, ruled out the angle of gang rivalry behind the incident and said

the spot. The naib court, identified as head constable Rajeev, sustained minor injuries and is receiving treatment at a hospital.

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Rohini Court Bar Association president Inder Singh Saroha said all the lawyers practising at the court and the judges are concerned over the repeated security lapses.

Sharjeel gets bail in Jamia violence case

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday granted bail to Jawaharlal Nehru University PhD scholar Sharjeel Imam in a case related to violence on the Jamia Millia Islamia campus in December 2019.

The bail was granted by the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Dinesh Kumar. CMM Kumar said, "Considering the nature of offence, and the fact that he was not arrested during investigation, the application is allowed."

Mr. Imam was granted bail subject to furnishing a bail bond of ₹25,000 with one surety of the like amount. In the present case, he has been booked under Sections pertaining to rioting, attempt to commit culpable homicide among others of the Indian Penal Code.

Mr. Imam will continue to stay in jail because of other cases.

In October, a Delhi court had dismissed Mr. Imam's bail in a case where he allegedly delivered inflammatory speeches and incited violence during the anti-CAA-NRC protests in 2019.

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2. Agencies who are already empanelled with Directorate of Geology need not to fill all the documents. But they will convey their consent on this tender document in application format A-2.

3. The candidature of empanelled agencies will be assessed by technical committee on the basis of their interest shown in the work during empanelled period and experience of their work with the Department.

Last date of submission of EOI is 30.12.2021 at 1.00 P.M.

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(Vijay Kumar Ojha)
Director, Geology

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• Cost of tender document- 10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only) It will be submitted online through official website www.jharkhandminerals.gov.in → Other & Services → Payment

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FORDA suspends boycott for a week; some RDAs to continue stir

Doctors protesting against delay in PG NEET counselling

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA) on Thursday suspended for a week its ongoing boycott of work over delay in PG NEET counselling. But resident doctors' associations (RDA) of some hospitals said they will continue their boycott of routine services, except emergency issues.

"A plea was issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for fast-tracking the court hearing (related to PG NEET counselling) and we were assured by the Union Health Minister that the Office of the Prime Minister is also looking at the issue and the process will be completed within a week. Considering the above and looking at the security situation of the nation owing to the untimely demise of [the] Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, and other army personnel in a tragic accident yesterday, FORDA has decided to hold the agitation for a period of 1 week after discussing with State RDA representatives," FORDA said in a statement.

The Association said that resident doctors will be resuming all services with immediate effect and in case the issue of PG NEET counselling is not addressed by December 16, they will be forced to call for a complete shutdown of all services except COVID-related duty.

But all RDAs have not suspended the strike.

cept COVID-related duty.

But all RDAs have not suspended the strike.

Only emergency service

"We will be continuing the boycott tomorrow (Friday) also. We have de-escalated the strike to resume emergency services from tomorrow. However, all non-emergency work will be boycotted," said Dr. Keshav, president of the RDA of Maulana Azad Medical College and associated hospitals.

Dr. Aditya, president of the RDA of GTB Hospital, too said they would continue the boycott of routine services, but doctors will attend emergency work.

If bill is high, DJB to give explanation

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board (DJ) will give an explanation if the water bill is more than 1.5 times the previous one, Water Minister Satyendar Jain said on Thursday.

"The DJB today has revised the billing system. Now your bill cannot be more than 1.5 times the previous one. If it crosses this, an explanation will be provided to the customer and he/she can put in grievance for the same," Mr. Jain said. He added that the Government has started treating wastewater coming from Haryana. "Haryana discharges 15MGD of wastewater in Delhi through dra-in number 6. We have started treating this," he said.

IN BRIEF

Maintain COVID protocols in Sadar Bazar, says HC

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Commissioner of Police and the Station House Officer of Sadar Bazar to ensure compliance of COVID-19 protocols by vendors at the market. It gave the direction on a plea highlighting laxity in enforcement of COVID-19 behaviour in Sadar Bazar by the local police.

EDMC launches project for park maintenance

NEW DELHI

East Delhi Municipal Corporation Commissioner Vikas Anand on Thursday said the civic body has launched a pilot project for maintenance of parks under its jurisdiction. Based on the PPP model, it will allot eight of its parks to private nursery owners for a period of five years.

North municipal corporation planning to sell 132 plots at throwaway rates: AAP

BJP challenges Govt. to order inquiry into property deals

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday alleged that the BJP-governed North Delhi Municipal Corporation is planning to sell 132 plots in Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar at "throwaway price to fill our own pockets".

AAP MLA Dilip Pandey claimed that 94 of these 132 plots marked for sale by the BJP were meant for building hospitals, toilets and night shelters for the poor. "Why is the North MCD going to sell 132 plots at throwaway prices? Now that it is certain that they [BJP] will be kicked out, they are plundering whatever

Pandey levelled unfounded allegations regarding plots allocation at Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar. Same allegations were earlier levelled by Durgesh Pathak and Saubh Bharadwaj," Mr. Kapoor said. He said if AAP leaders believed that there is an irregularity in any property deal of North MCD, then they should ask the Delhi Government to order an inquiry.

"Similarly if AAP leaders have even an iota of sympathy for civic employees, then instead of doing lip service they should ask Delhi Government to release accumulated municipal funds," Mr. Kapoor said.

"Today in this series Dilip

**कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय,
कोनार नहर प्रमण्डल, झुमरी
(गिरिधीर)**

शुद्धि-पत्र

एतत् द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि PR.N0-257491, में टंकण भूल वश निविदा जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 15.12.2021 टंकित हो गया है, उसके स्थान पर 16.12.2021 पढ़ा जाय। बाकी शर्ते यथावत् रहेगी।

कार्यपालक अभियंता,
कोनार नहर प्रमण्डल, झुमरी
(गिरिधीर)

PR258877 (Water Resource)21-22*D

Timings

DELHI

FRIDAY, DEC. 10	
RISE 07:03	SET 17:26
RISE 12:24	SET 23:53
SATURDAY, DEC. 11	
RISE 07:04	SET 17:26
RISE 12:58	SET 00:00
SUNDAY, DEC. 12	
RISE 07:05	SET 17:26
RISE 13:28	SET 00:50

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 23 08
Safdarjung 23 08
Palam 22 11

Delhi Palam Today
24°C A dry weather to continue. Day will be pleasant with cool breeze. Night will be slight cold and hazy. Moderate fog during morning.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
23°C The weather will be dry. A slight cold morning turns pleasant day with cool breeze. Night will be slight cold and hazy.

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THE HINDU

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BJP youth leader stabbed in Jamshedpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAMSHEDPUR
A BJP youth leader died at a hospital in Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district on Thursday morning after being stabbed with a dagger, police said.

Suraj Kumar Singh, 26, the BJP general secretary of the district, succumbed to injuries at the Tata Main Hospital here, they said.

He was allegedly stabbed by one Sonu Singh and his accomplices on Tuesday in Harhargutti when he was returning home, police said.

Co-pilot's village in Rajasthan gets ready to bid him farewell

Squadron Leader Kuldeep Singh from Jhunjhunu perished in chopper crash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAIPUR
In a village 50 km from Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu district headquarters, grieving relatives of Squadron Leader Kuldeep Singh, who was the co-pilot of the IAF helicopter that crashed in Tamil Nadu, and residents were on Thursday busy preparing for his cremation.

Singh's last rites will be conducted at the Mahatma Gandhi Government School ground in his Ghardana Khurd village and thousands are expected to gather to bid him farewell.

Village sarpanch Ummed Singh Rao said the Education Department has given its nod for Singh's cremation at the site. His statue will also be installed in the school.

"This is very sad news for everyone in the village. As soon as the news of Singh's death was confirmed on Wednesday evening, his rela-



Remembering the heroes: Students light candles to pay tributes to the crash victims in Amritsar on Thursday. • AFP

tives started reaching the vil-

lage," he said.

"The entire village is en-

gaged in making arrange-

ments for the funeral proce-

sion and the cremation," he

added.

Mr. Rao said Singh's father

had retired from the Navy

and many of his cousin

brothers are also serving in

different arms of the armed

forces.

His father and other mem-

bers of the family live in Jai-

pur, while his extended fami-

ly lives in Ghardana Khurd.

"Singh's father is currently

said to be in Delhi," he

said.

Chief of Defence Staff

General Bipin Rawat, his

wife Madhulika and 11 other

people on board an IAF

crash yesterday at Coonoor, Tamil Nadu at the age of only 40 years," an official statement quoted Ms. Banerjee as saying.

Rai was in the personal se-

curity of Chief of Defence Staff General Rawat, she

said. The Chief Minister said that Rai's sacrifice for the country will never be forgotten.

"The demise of this brave son of the hills is an irreparable loss. We will always re-member the sacrifice of Bengal's brave son Satpal Rai," she said.

He also leaves behind five brothers and two sisters.

'He promised to take us on vacation'

Wife of Satpal Rai says he last came home on Deepavali

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DARJEELING / KOLKATA

A pall of gloom descended on Takdah, a sleepy hamlet in West Bengal Darjeeling district, on Thursday as locals learnt about the death of Havildar Satpal Rai who was among the 13 people killed in the helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu's Coonoor.

Rai, who was a native of Takdah, is survived by wife, a daughter and a son who is also in the Army.

Rai's distraught widow said that he had last come home during Deepavali. "He

was supposed to come home in April again and had pro-mised us a vacation to some place," she said.

His body is likely to arrive in Takdah on Friday, a neighbour of the Rai family home said.

CM expresses grief

Expressing deep condoleances, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to Rai's mother. "I sincerely express my deepest condolence to the unfortunate and sudden

demise of Late Havildar Satpal Rai due to the helicopter

crash yesterday at Coonoor, Tamil Nadu at the age of only 40 years," an official statement quoted Ms. Banerjee as saying.

Rai was in the personal se-curity of Chief of Defence Staff General Rawat, she

said. The Chief Minister said that Rai's sacrifice for the country will never be forgotten.

"The demise of this brave son of the hills is an irreparable loss. We will always re-member the sacrifice of Bengal's brave son Satpal Rai," she said.

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+ Ex-AAP Punjab convener joins Akali Dal

Sucha Singh Chhotepur will be SAD candidate for the Batala Assembly seat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Former convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, Sucha Singh Chhotepur on Thursday joined the Shiromani Akali Dal ahead of the Assembly polls.

Mr. Chhotepur, who was AAP's Punjab convener was removed from the post in 2016, following which he formed his own political outfit – Apna Punjab Party.

Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal announced that Mr. Chhotepur has been appointed as a senior vice president of the party and that he would also be the party's candidate for the Batala Assembly seat.

"Chhotepur Sahib has always been a champion of Punjabi pride and has done

the most to expose outsiders' conspiracies to divide the people of the State along communal lines. I have profound satisfaction today that the champion of unity of all Punjabis returns home when I am the chief sevadar of the party," said Mr. Badal.

Mr. Chhotepur said that the future of Punjab's unique cultural identity as well as peace, progress and prosperity were in danger of being hijacked by a vicious three-pronged attack by non-Punjabi invaders, which include the Congress, the Bharatiya Janta Party and the AAP. "All three want to usurp the destiny of Punjab by creating divisions, hatred and misunderstandings not only between two brotherly communities, the Hindus and the Sikhs, but also by engineering a civil war within the Sikh quom," he said.

Hitting out at AAP supremo and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Mr. Chhotepur said the latter was only interested in becoming Chief Minister himself.

"This is why he sits on stage with Bhagwant Mann and Harpal Cheema and states that the party is searching for a capable person. Kejriwal hated Punjab and Punjabis from the core of his heart and heaps contempt and humiliation on every Punjabi leader in AAP who tries to raise his or her voice in favour of the State," alleged Mr. Chhotepur.

Mr. Chhotepur said that the future of Punjab's unique

choice of rally's venue, which shares border with Gurugram, Rewari and Mahendragarh districts, also hints at the party plans to explore possibilities for expansion in these districts dominated by the Ahirs.

The supporters at the rally, which coincided with its third foundation day anniversary, however, sounded a word of caution saying that "less than expected" turnout could be the hint of erosion in support and should serve as a "wake-up call" for the party.

In a scathing attack on the former CM at "Jan Sarokar Rally" here, party's national president Ajay Chautala said that Mr. Hooda had

bought thousands of acres of agricultural land across the State at throwaway prices rendering the farmers penniless, adding that those who usurped the farmers' land were now claiming to their well-wishers.

Attack on INLD
Mr. Chautala also attacked the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) saying that the party's present condition was not hidden from anyone. "When we left the INLD to launch JJP, we handed them over the party's flag and funds, but they could not handle it," he said.

The choice of rally's venue, which shares border with Gurugram, Rewari and Mahendragarh districts, also hints at the party plans to explore possibilities for expansion in these districts dominated by the Ahirs.

Ken-Betwa project a boon for Bundelkhand

It will increase agri output: Chouhan

ANUP DUTTA

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Thursday that the Ken-Betwa river link project will lead to prosperity for the drought-prone Bundelkhand region.

The Chief Minister thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and the Cabinet for approving the project.

Chhattarpur, Panna, Tigmarg, Niwari, Damoh, Sagar, Datia, Shivpuri, Vidisha and Raisen districts of Madhya Pradesh would benefit upon completion of the river link, said an official.

In addition, 103 mega watt of hydropower and 27 mega watt of solar power will be

generated from the project, he said.

A tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed in the presence of the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Government of Uttar Pradesh and the Prime Minister to prepare the detailed DPR of the project.

Mr. Chouhan said the linking of rivers will increase agricultural production and lead to prosperity. A new dawn of development and progress will be ushered in Bundelkhand when the project takes shape.

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MI-17 helicopter died on Wednesday after it crashed near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu.

Governor condoles death

Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra condoled Singh's demise.

"The Governor Kalraj Mis-hra has condoled the martydom of Squadron Leader Kuldeep Rao, resident of Ghardana Khurd, Jhunjhunu, in a helicopter accident in Tamil Nadu," an official statement said. Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje took to Twitter to pay a tribute to Singh.

"Deeply saddened to learn that #Rajasthan too has lost a brave-heart in the heli-copter crash that claimed the life of CDS #BipinRawat & others. I salute the martyrdom of Squadron Leader Kuldeep Rao, a resident of Ghardana Khurd, Jhunjhunu," she said.

Chief of Defence Staff

General Bipin Rawat, his

wife Madhulika and 11 other

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crash yesterday at Coonoor, Tamil Nadu at the age of only 40 years," an official statement quoted Ms. Banerjee as saying.

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Witness statements fabricated, says Khalid

He is an accused in the Delhi riots case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Former JNU student leader Umar Khalid on Thursday told a Delhi court that witness statements recorded by the police in the riots conspiracy case were "fabricated".

IN BRIEF



Kerala moves SC against water release from dam

NEW DELHI

The Kerala Government has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to Tamil Nadu not to release a huge quantity of water in the early hours from the 126-year-old Mullaperiyar dam, saying it causes heavy damage to the people living downstream of the dam. A Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and C.T. Ravikumar is scheduled to hear on Friday the pleas which have raised issues about the dam on the Periyar river in Idukki district.

Two Sabarimala pilgrims from A.P. die in accident

IDUKKI

Two Sabarimala pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh were killed when a bus rammed a parked van from behind at Amaravathi in the Peruvanthanam police station limits in Idukki on Thursday afternoon. The deceased have been identified as Kurnool residents Narayana Naidu, 44, and Ishwar, 42. The bodies were sent for autopsy at the Kanjirappally taluk hospital, the police said. Three injured pilgrims have been admitted to Medical Trust Hospital at Mundakkayam.

Tiger on prowl causes panic in Wayanad village

KALPETTA

Panic gripped residents of Kurukkumoola, near Mananthavady, under the North Wayanad Forest Division after eight domestic animals were killed by an alleged tiger on the prowl in 12 days. The villagers under the aegis of an all-party action council took out a protest march and staged a dharna in front of the North Wayanad Divisional Forest Office at Mananthavady on Thursday along with the carcass of the calf, which was reportedly killed by the tiger.

Bird flu triggers alert in Alappuzha

8,000 to 10,000 ducks were culled by rapid response teams after the outbreak was confirmed

STAFF REPORTER
ALAPPUZHA

Alappuzha district was put on alert on Thursday after an outbreak of bird flu was confirmed at Kunnumma South (Ward 10) in the Thakazhy gram panchayat.

District Collector A. Alexander said the H5N1 subtype of the Influenza A virus was reported in ducks. Mr. Alexander, who chaired a meeting to take stock of the situation, said steps had been initiated to check the spread of the disease.

Joseph Cherian, a duck farmer from Purakkad, who was raising around 13,500 ducks close to the outer bund of a paddy field in Thakazhy with an eye on the Christmas season, lost more than 10,000 birds in the past two weeks.

Following the mass death of ducks, the Animal Husbandry Department (AHD) last week sent samples of



High alert: A rapid response team of the Animal Husbandry Department prepares to cull ducks at bird flu-hit Kunnumma in Thakazhy, Alappuzha, on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

carcasses to the National Institute of High Security Animal Disease (NIHSAD), Bhopal, for analyses, which tested positive for avian influenza. AHD officials said that between 8,000 and 10,000 ducks belonging to five farmers within a one-km radius of the infected area

were culled by rapid response teams as part of the containment measures. The carcasses were disposed of as per norms.

Sale banned

The Collector has issued an order banning movement and sale of duck, chicken,

quail and other domestic birds, their eggs, meat and waste (manure) in 12 local bodies (within the nine km radius of the hotspot) of Champakulam, Nedumudi, Muttar, Edathua, Veeyapuram, Karuvatta, Thrikkunnappuzha, Thakazhy, Purakkad, Ambalappuzha South,

Ambalappuzha North, and Haripad Municipality.

Besides, the place in Ward 10 of the Thakazhy gram panchayat where the disease was confirmed has been declared a containment zone. The movement of people and vehicles to and from the place has been banned.

Mr. Alexander directed the Assistant Conservator of Forests to monitor migratory birds for avian influenza.

Apart from Thakazhy, duck mortality has been reported from Nedumudi in Alappuzha and Veerapandiyam in Kottayam district in recent days. The AHD has sent samples from these places for analyses.

Earlier this year, avian flu caused by the H5N8 strain of the Influenza A virus was detected from six places in Kuttanad, and Kainakary in Alappuzha district and Neendoor in Kottayam district.

Singareni coal production hit as workers go on 3-day strike

Unions protest Centre's move to auction four coal blocks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PEDDAPALLI



SCCL trade union leaders participating in the strike at a coal mine at Yellandu.

Committee (JAC) of all the major trade unions of the SCCL, affiliated to the IN-

TUC, the AITUC, the CITU, the HMS and the BMS, besides the TBGKS, setting aside ideological affiliations to protest the Centre's decision to auction four coal blocks in Telangana for commercial mining.

The SCCL, the only State-owned coal mining company in south India, with a manpower of around 43,000, suffered an estimated production loss of a little over 1.50 lakh tonnes on the first day of the strike, informed sources said. The SCCL management tried to avert the strike, but in vain.

HC admits plea to stop OTT show of Churuli

Dialogues in film atrocious, says court

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI



Observing orally that the dialogues in the Malayalam film *Churuli* are "atrocious in nature", the Kerala High Court on Thursday admitted a writ petition seeking a directive to remove the movie from the OTT platform immediately.

According to the petitioner, the film was replete with filthy and offensive words that outraged the modesty of women and children.

The movie was accessible to everyone, including children and teenagers, as it had been released on the OTT platform. Though the

film was capable of invoking a sense of curiosity and mystery in the minds of the audience, it had an overdose of foul language, the petitioner said.

+ T.N. Govt. submits file on ICC inquiry to HC

It had called for action against ex-DGP

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Government on Thursday submitted before the Madras High Court the entire file related to an inquiry conducted by an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) against suspended special Director General of Police (DGP) Rajesh Das.

The committee had found *prima facie* material to initiate disciplinary proceedings against him for allegedly making sexual advances towards a woman IPS officer.

Justice V. Parthiban had called for the files to look at the procedure adopted by the ICC before recommending disciplinary proceedings.

Therefore, the government had asked the ICC, headed by IAS officer Jayashree Raghunandan, to hold a disciplinary inquiry against the suspended DGP and submit a detailed report.

"The disciplinary inquiry is under way. The petitioner herein will be given an opportunity to inspect the relevant documents, in consonance with the guidelines issued by the Government of India," the A-G said.

Accordingly, Advocate-General R. Shunmugasundaram submitted three volumes of documents and said the question of allowing the

suspended DGP to cross-examine witnesses did not rise, since no punishment had been imposed on him on the basis of the ICC inquiry report. He said the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013, and the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules of 1969 permitted the ICC itself to conduct disciplinary proceedings.

Therefore, the government had asked the ICC, headed by IAS officer Jayashree Raghunandan, to hold a disciplinary inquiry against the suspended DGP and submit a detailed report.

"The disciplinary inquiry is under way. The petitioner herein will be given an opportunity to inspect the relevant documents, in consonance with the guidelines issued by the Government of India," the A-G said.

Coonoor tragedy brings back memories of Sakleshpur crash

Back then, a local resident had helped recover black box

SATHISH G.T.
HASSAN

The tragic chopper crash at Coonoor in Tamil Nadu, in which Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and 12 others were killed, has brought back to the residents of Sakleshpur memories of a 30-year-old accident involving an aircraft of the Indian Navy. It was eventually a local resident who helped the forces in tracing the remains of the chopper.

The aircraft, on a sortie from Mangaluru to Bengaluru, had crashed in the forests of the Western Ghats at Aramane Gudda in Sakleshpur taluk in 1991.

Kishor Kumar of Hongda-

CMYK

Theatre as canvas



Splash of colours: Artists painting graffiti on the wall of a defunct movie theatre as part of the Vypeen Folklore Festival, which is under way at various venues across the island in Kerala's Kochi. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

3 districts record 100% coverage in first dose

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU

With 94.57% of the 4.89 crore eligible population having been jabbed with the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine till Thursday, Karnataka has moved up to the first position among larger States in terms of first dose.

Karnataka, which stood in the third position in the first dose administration till a week ago, is now followed by Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh where 94.46% and 93.83%

of the target population has been covered with one dose, according to data from CoWIN.

From 21,013 average vaccinations per day in January when COVID-19 vaccination



Jab count: Students holding forms meant for vaccination details of parents, at a school in Bengaluru. ■ SUDHAKARA JAIN

was rolled out, the State's daily average vaccinations shot up to 4,83,144 in September, the highest. September also saw 14,10,11,162 doses administered, the highest so far. While a total of 91,15,528 doses were administered in November, over 53% of this number have been administered in the last nine days alone this month. In fact,

vaccinations have picked up since November 26, following growing concern over Omicron, the new variant.

Good show by Kodagu
So far, three districts – Bengaluru Urban, Gadag and Vijayapura – have achieved 100% coverage in terms of first dose administration. While Kodagu has covered

Congress dumps official candidate on eve of Council poll in Nagpur

Declares support for Independent

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Washim (Gopikishan Bajoria of Shiv Sena), Nagpur (Girish Vyas of BJP), Solapur (Prashant Parichar, Independent) and Ahmednagar (Arunkaka Jagtap of NCP).

As per the ECI, elections will not be held in Solapur and Ahmednagar. The date of poll is December 10 and result will be declared on December 14.

Candidates in four out of six Council seats have already been declared elected unopposed.

The two seats in Mumbai have already gone to Sunil Shinde of Shiv Sena and Rajhans Singh of BJP, while the Congress and BJP retained Kolhapur and Nandurbar-Dhule seats respectively. Election will now be held for Nagpur and Akola Council seats.

Maharashtra Govt. seeks stay on polls

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

A day after all political parties demanded a stay on election process until reservation for OBCs in local body polls is resumed, Maharashtra Government on Thursday said it also holds similar view.

"State Government is firm on the stand that either the elections should be held on all seats or no election should be held," said Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

Mr. Pawar said that Supreme Court has not scrapped the State Government ordinance, but stayed elections on OBC-represented seats only.

Campaign launched to save Chamundi Hills

'New projects are eroding green cover'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU

Members of the Chamundi Betta Ulisi Samiti launched a signature campaign in the city on Thursday to muster public support to help save the Chamundi Hills and its environment.

This is part of an ongoing campaign to urge the Karnataka Government to stop new projects, some of which are inimical to the environment and erode the green cover.

The

campaigners have decided to reach out to schools and colleges and meet people in residential areas so that the movement to save the hills will gain traction.

The response was warm and enthusiastic from a section of the public, though many were unaware of the developments pertaining to the Chamundi Hills, said the samiti.

The Chamundi Hills witnessed a series of landslides in October and November due to erosion by run-off water. This has been attributed to loss of green cover and despite such ecological havoc, the authorities are hell-bent on implementing the scheme which will ruin the environment of the region, according to the samiti.

The Chamundi Hills are situated in the hills and are known for their scenic beauty. They are a popular destination for tourists and hikers. The hills are covered in dense forests and have several waterfalls and streams. The Chamundi Hills are located in the state of Karnataka, India.

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99% of the target population

with the first dose, 12 other districts including Chikkaballapur, Belagavi, Davangere, Udupi, Ballari and Uttara Kannada have achieved

coverage of 95% and above.

With the State having ad-

ministered 3,31,06,589 sec-

ond doses as on Thursday, 67.6% of the eligible 4.89 crore population has been

fully vaccinated so far.

Arundhathi Chandrashekar, State Mission Director, National Health Mission, said the focus was now on second dose.

"As on December 9,

nearly 46,000 people who

have taken their first dose

are due for second dose. We

have been prioritising people

who come for second doses," she said.

M ND-NDE



A tragic loss

India must realise Gen. Rawat's plans for genuine tri-service operational capabilities

In India has lost a capable and experienced military leader in the tragic death of the country's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat, in a helicopter crash near Coonoor in the Nilgiris on Wednesday. His wife, Madhulika, and 11 others also perished when the Indian Air Force's Mi-17V5 helicopter came down in a heavily wooded area. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has announced in Parliament that a tri-service inquiry, headed by Air Marshal Manvendra Singh, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Training Command, of the IAF, will take place into the incident. The IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari, has already visited the crash site; the cockpit voice and flight data recorders have been recovered, which would give investigators insights into how the crash occurred. It is imperative that the inquiry be done both thoroughly and speedily. Without speculating on the cause, it needs to be stressed that speedy course corrections in training or hardware are imperative given that these Mi-17V5 choppers are being used to ferry top military leaders across the length and breadth of the country.

Gen. Rawat had not even completed two years as CDS when the Coonoor tragedy happened. After completing his tenure as Army Chief on December 31, 2019, he slipped into his new role as CDS the very next day. Many of his plans to give India genuine tri-service operational capabilities are still to be realised. In such a situation, the Government should not lose time in appointing his successor to ensure that the plans on the drawing board do not suffer. An aggressive China and a still belligerent Pakistan define India's security challenges. The situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) continues to be tense with Indian and Chinese troops staring down each other. Gen. Rawat, known to have been proximate to the ruling establishment, had never minced words while speaking about the challenges facing the country and had waded into political controversies. Though the concept of having a CDS was recommended by a Group of Ministers in 2000 after the Kargil war, it took another 20 years for one to be appointed. The CDS, who functions as Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister, is expected to work in tandem with the three service chiefs who continue to operate in their respective domains – a role and function that is still in the making. To ensure that the new CDS and the service chiefs function as a team, the Government would do well to keep in mind the principle of seniority while choosing Gen. Rawat's successor.

Omicron shadow

RBI may need to act to ward off price pressures sooner rather than later

The RBI's latest monetary policy action, of maintaining *status quo* on benchmark interest rates, the policy stance, as well as the full-year GDP growth and inflation projections, stems largely from a wariness of the risks posed by the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus. Announcing the bimonthly policy, Governor Shaktikanta Das observed that 'headwinds from global developments' were the main risk to the domestic outlook, which was now "somewhat clouded by the Omicron variant of COVID-19". With the key drivers of demand in the economy – private investment and private consumption – still lacking meaningful momentum, the Monetary Policy Committee had opted to continue with its growth supportive 'accommodative' policy stance so as to enable a durable and broad-based recovery, he said. While it may sound churlish to question the MPC's stand, given that the ongoing recovery from last fiscal's record contraction is still yet to register an across-the-board expansion from pre-pandemic levels, the fact that one of the six members of the rate-setting panel has dissented on the policy stance for a third consecutive time, cannot be ignored. Positing in October that the 'upside risks to long-term inflation and to inflation expectations had become more aggravated', external member Jayanth Varma had at the time cautioned the committee against falling into "a pattern of policy making in slow motion" guided by an excessive desire to avoid surprises. And while his specific reasons for voting against the grain this week are not immediately available, that the MPC is for now prioritising growth over price stability is clear.

Governor Das, who acknowledged the criticality of taming inflation when he asserted "price stability remains the cardinal principle for monetary policy as it fosters growth and stability", however, seems to be sanguine about the outlook for retail prices. Contending that winter arrivals would help bring down vegetable prices, which had spiked in October contributing to a marginal quickening in headline CPI inflation that month, Mr. Das has banked on optimism in asserting that the 'slack in the economy' may limit the pass-through of cost-push pressures that have kept core retail inflation persistently high for 17 months. The RBI's November round of 'Inflation Expectations Survey of Households' shows that households expect inflation to accelerate in the near and medium term. The median inflation expectation of respondents polled in an extension survey earlier this month, in order to factor in both a possible Omicron impact and the softening in fuel prices in the wake of the cut in excise duty, projects the three-months ahead rate at 10.8% and the one-year ahead reading at 10.9%. And though the RBI has begun to slowly tighten the liquidity spigot it opened in the wake of the pandemic last year, a more robust response to ward off price pressures will become imperative sooner rather than later. For a delay risks undermining precisely what Mr. Das said was the RBI's motto at this juncture, ensuring "a soft landing that is well timed".

Children and schooling in the post-COVID-19 era

India will have to confront bitter facts if it wants to prepare a recovery plan of any credible and practical value



KRISHNA KUMAR

When someone in the family falls sick, all normal routines and arrangements are affected. And then, the deeper problems that lay hidden under the momentum of routine lie exposed and revealed. The same applies to an epidemic. The term currently used is 'pandemic' because it covers the whole world, but one cannot forget that even a universal illness manifests itself in regionally specific, local ways, exposing the problems to which societies had become accustomed. In our case, the pandemic has revealed the limits of our wherewithal to look after the collective needs of children during a calamity. A child in the family has a radically different status from that accorded to children as a collective entity in our country. The pandemic has revealed that society and state institutions prefer to ignore the conditions under which the family copes with the demands of childhood.

Peripheral concern

Children's education and health are two major domains in which welfare policies of the modern state are expected to support and enhance the family's role. In both these domains, the policy framework reflects a minimalist stance, both in terms of financial investment and institutional strength. In policies as well as in their execution, there is considerable diversity and disparity among the States. The overall picture suggests that childhood is of peripheral concern. Gains made in this context

have proved difficult to sustain.

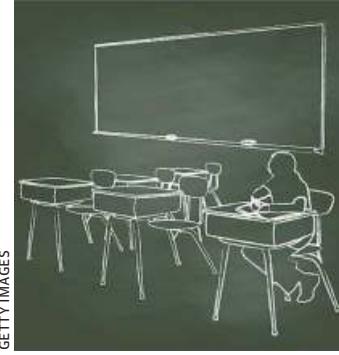
The pandemic's deep effect

When the Right to Education (RTE) Act was promulgated over a decade ago, it seemed like a breakthrough. This perception was grounded in the structures and procedures created under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan during the decade preceding the RTE. These structures were not perfect, but they marked a new beginning in the direction of local autonomy and devolution of power. These fragile structures required nurturing on a long-term basis. Neglect and decay set in quite soon in regions where the system was weak to begin with, and then came COVID-19. Several recent surveys show that the pandemic has left the entire system ravaged. Even something as basic as meal for the youngest age group ceased.

Teaching switched wholesale to the online mode, leaving it to the family to cope with the demands hidden in this medium. A flat discourse pervaded the ethos, offering few choices or clues to enhance them.

India was unique in the fact that even the very youngest age group was covered by online teaching. With the reopening of schools, the outcomes of prolonged exposure to digital devices in confined spaces have started to be revealed and documented. The vast majority of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds could not access online teaching for reasons totally beyond their control. And among those who did have access to online lessons, rates of comprehension and progress were quite low.

Studies show that academic losses are compounded by emotional problems. A survey carried out by the Vipla Foundation has traced the kinds of stress children experienced at home. Exposure to



domestic violence, prolonged hours in front of TV, especially among boys, and addiction to digital sources of entertainment are among the various outcomes of COVID-19 confinement.

A recovery plan

Systemic recovery will undoubtedly prove arduous. The time required for recovery will depend on imagination and resources. A significant beginning has been made in Tamil Nadu. A committee chaired by Professor R. Ramanujam has been asked to prepare a three-year recovery plan and a new curriculum. A major problem this committee will need to address is the addictive effect of prolonged online teaching. Devices such as the smartphone induce small children into a seductive bond that may not be easy to shake off. Restoring children's innate desire to relate to the world physically and socially surrounding them will constitute a major step towards educational recovery. This will demand de-addiction from digital instruments.

The COVID experiment of exclusive dependence on digital machinery has resulted in a radical expansion of its market. It has also permitted digital activism to mutate into an ideological doctrine of progress. The Ramanujam committee may not find it easy to deal with this doctrine. Its believers

and new recruits must be persuaded to listen to child psychologists and teachers of young children. Their voices, feeble though they are at present, offer the best promise of healing our injured system.

It was not a strong and resilient system to begin with. Its key functionaries – the teachers – had little say in decisions and no autonomy to do their best. Distrust in the teacher cuts across the deep divisions that characterise the system. On one side of the divide are government schools of various types, with differential levels of funding but common norms of governance. On the other side are private schools ranging from shoestring budget schools to the well-endowed, elite institutions. What sustains this straggling order of institutional outfits is the grand national fantasy that even an inadequate system such as India's can generate a sufficient number of good doctors, judges, teachers, engineers, civil servants and so on.

Shifting of children

No description can capture the differential realities of experience that COVID-19 imposed on this vast range of institutions. Nor is there a comprehensive study to tell us how parents belonging to different socio-economic classes coped with their anxieties. We now know that financial constraints have forced a considerable proportion of children studying in private schools to shift to government schools. What this shift implies for the children and for the schools they will now attend needs more than speculation. Indeed, the shift itself remains a raw reality. In a recent webinar, Professor Shantha Sinha, former head of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, spoke about the astonishing demand faced by parents who wanted to transfer

their children from a private to a government school. As many private schools run entirely on the strength of the fees they collect, they had to close down during COVID-19. The digital record of children's enrolment maintained in some States continues to show their names in a private school. Seeking a transfer requires deletion from this record. Prof. Sinha said that many private schools in her region demand recovery of the COVID-19 period fee for granting deletion of the child's name. This is just one instance of the hundreds of bitter experiential facts we will need to gather from every part of the country in order to prepare a post-COVID-19 recovery plan of any credible and practical value.

Insightful report

For now, the best we can do is to browse through a new United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report titled "No Teacher, No Class" (<https://bit.ly/3IHFJKI>), and heed its same recommendations. Prepared by a team of scholars at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, this report tells us that India is facing a shortfall of at least one million school teachers. The report makes several key recommendations. The first is: "Improve the terms of employment of teachers in both public and private schools." Some of the other recommendations are: value the professional autonomy of teachers, build career pathways, and, above all, recruit more teachers. If sound, research-based advice is what we need for rebuilding the system, it is available in this excellent report.

Krishna Kumar is a former Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). He is the author of 'Smaller Citizens'

Getting a handle on the battle for Uttar Pradesh

There are signs of the political fight in the Assembly election becoming a bi-polar contest between the SP and the BJP



SANJAY KUMAR

If one is to go by the number of political parties contesting elections in Uttar Pradesh, it may be seen to be a multi-cornered contest. But the way alliances have been formed, the Assembly elections to be held next year seem to be headed for a clear bipolar contest – between the Samajwadi Party (SP) on the one hand and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the other hand. Having formed alliances with various smaller regional parties, the SP has been able to create a strong perception of being the only challenger to the BJP.

The BJP remains a formidable force being the ruling party, having registered three formidable victories in the State, i.e. the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the 2017 Assembly elections. There seems to be some unhappiness with the Yogi Adityanath government, but I do not get a sense of there being strong anti-incumbency against the ruling BJP government, which may be required to defeat this government. The BJP has also managed to form alliances with smaller regional parties which would only help the party in consolidating its support base. The stepping back by farmers in terms of slowly withdrawing their agitation may help in mellowing down Jat anger against the BJP in

western U.P., a region that had voted for the BJP in large numbers in the earlier election. The other contenders for power, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Congress, seem to be getting marginalised as except for their core supporters, other voters may not vote for either of these parties as it would be seen as their vote getting wasted. Evidence from surveys conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) suggest that nearly a quarter of non-committed voters vote for the party which they think is winning an election as they do not want to waste their vote. Since the BSP and the Congress are seen as parties out of the electoral contest, it would be difficult for these parties to attract votes beyond their core supporters.

The SP's plan

With the election clearly becoming a bipolar one, these are the questions that are being asked: Has the SP established a lead over the BJP? Is the BJP still firmly holding ground? Will U.P. now be a neck-and-neck contest? It would certainly be difficult to say how the U.P. election is pitched at this moment, but various political developments in the State give one a clear picture. When compared to the 2017 Assembly elections, the support base of the SP is on the rise, while the BJP seems to be vulnerable given some unhappiness with the government among various sections of voters.

It is important to note that the SP has formed an alliance with the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Om Prakash



Rajbhar's Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) and Krishna Patel's Apna Dal (Kamerwaadi). This will help the SP in mobilising votes of various Other Backward Classes castes besides the Yadavs who are its core supporters. An alliance with the RLD would help in mobilising the Jat votes in its favour.

Since Jats and non-Yadav OBCs had voted for the BJP in large numbers, this alliance may be able to dent the non-Yadav OBC and Jat support base of the BJP, as there would be some shift among these voters. An alliance with Om Prakash Rajbhar will help the SP in mobilising the votes of Rajbhar community with its sizeable presence in about 20 Assembly constituencies of eastern Uttar Pradesh. An alliance with the Apna Dal (Kamerwaadi) will also bring some Kurmi votes in its fold.

The SP is also in talks about forming an alliance with the Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party-Lohia headed by Shiv Pal Yadav and Janwadi Party-Socialist headed by Sanjay Singh Chauhan.

Though there have been large crowds in the various rallies of Akhilesh Yadav, crowds do not always turn into voters. There may

be strong supporters, but there are also a sizeable number of "hired people". The proportion of such a "hired crowd" in election rallies may differ from one party to another. A study of rallies by the CSDS during the 2019 Lok Sabha election showed that 25% of those attending election rallies confirmed having been called or brought to the rally by the party concerned based on some promise or other. The study also indicated that nearly a third of those participating in the rally might attend the rally of other parties as well.

Past experiments

Concerns are being raised why the SP's Akhilesh Yadav did not even make an attempt to form an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party or with Congress, or with both these parties to consolidate his position. Would not an alliance with the Congress or the BSP, or both, have helped the SP in mobilising greater support, rather than stitching up an alliance with smaller regional parties?

The experiment of contesting elections based on an alliance with the Congress and the BSP has failed miserably in the past. The SP-Congress alliance managed to win only 54 Assembly seats (the SP 47, the Congress 7) during the 2017 Assembly election with a 28.1% vote share (the SP 21.83%, the Congress 6.25%). Similarly, the SP-BSP alliance failed during the 2019 Lok Sabha election – the SP won only 5 seats and polled 19.26% votes while the BSP won 10 Lok Sabha seats, polling 17.96% votes. Going with an experiment which had

failed in the past would not have been a sensible strategy despite looking strong on paper; voters would not have trusted such an alliance. Perception plays an important role in Indian elections.

BJP's outreach

Despite its getting a number of parties as allies, the SP must note that the BJP too has managed to build similar alliances with various other regional parties. The BJP's alliance is with the Apna Dal (Sonelal) led by Anupriya Patel, the Nishad Party led by Sanjay Nishad, the Bharatiya Manav Samaj Party led by Kewat Ramdhani Bind, the Shoshit Samaj Party led by Babul Rajbhar, the Bharatiya Suheldev Janata Party led by Bhim Rajbhar, the Bharatiya Samata Samaj Party led by Mahendra Prajapati, the Manavhit Party led by Krishna Gopal Singh Kashyap, the Pritviraj Janshakti Party led by Chandan Singh Chauhan, and the Musahar Aandolan Manch (also known as the Gareeb party) led by Chandramani Vanvasi. These parties do not have a very large support base but are popular among some marginal OBC castes and Dalits.

In a way, these alliances would help the BJP in counter-balancing the SP's alliance with smaller parties. Finally, the electoral contest in U.P. remains wide open with the BJP having a slight edge as farmers appear to be satisfied with the Government's move on repealing the farm laws.

Sanjay Kumar is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi and a political analyst. The views expressed are personal.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat

The passing of India's first Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, Mrs Rawat and the Army entourage is a terrible shock. The nation has lost a master strategist and a dynamic military leader. For a country that has had to confront the reality of cross-border terrorism, the General was that inspirational leader who infused new life into the Armed Forces.

B. SURESH KUMAR,
Coimbatore

The passing of Gen. Rawat is a blow to India's defence forces. He was a great reformer and moderniser

of the Indian military. His chemistry with the Narendra Modi dispensation was excellent. I hope that the inquiry uncovers the truth.

VITHAL DESHPANDE,
Secunderabad

■ India has lost a great soldier and a pioneering strategist. Though it may take some time for the next CDS to be decided, having a successor will be a move that would not only help sustain and reinforce India's plans to unify the capabilities of its armed wings but also send out a signal of resolve to foes and friends. That would be a fitting tribute.

R. NARAYANAN,
Navi Mumbai

■ At a time when the country needed his valuable services with serious threats at the borders, we have lost a dedicated and valiant soldier par excellence. May the untiring and dedicated work Gen. Rawat and the other departed soldiers had done for the safety and well-being of India be a guide point to fellow soldiers and every citizen to become more nation-oriented.

THARCUS S. FERNANDO,
Chennai

■ As an airman discharged from the Indian Air Force back in August 1962, I felt pain over the loss. The General had an eagle's eye. During a Guard of Honour

presented to him, he noticed something amiss in the uniform worn by a soldier. When the poor soldier was summoned later, the General only had a suppressed smile. He asked the soldier to tie the laces of his boot properly.

MANI NATARAJAN,
Chennai

■ Gen. Rawat was a soldier whose commitment and contributions to ensuring the modernisation of the Army will be remembered for long. The nation has lost a front ranking General who won admiration for his strategic and dynamic leadership.

NIRANJAN SAHOO,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha

■ U.S. boycott
The U.S.'s diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics by projecting itself to be championing the ideals of democracy and human rights and by accusing China of posing a grave threat to these ideals has to be read this way.

It is nothing but a desperate attempt to muster support internationally in order to perpetuate its supremacy across the world in the backdrop of the growing economic power of China and its hegemonic ambitions becoming a thorn in the flesh of the U.S. The rhetoric of the U.S. on democracy and world peace sounds hollow as its actions are always

Does the Omicron variant make a case for booster doses?

PARLEY

There is scarce evidence that boosters add value to the main purpose of the immunisation programme

If conversations around booster shots to tackle COVID-19 were loud earlier, the emergence of the new variant, Omicron, has ensured that the clamour for booster shots has reached a fever pitch. The Health Minister stressed that India's priority is to fully vaccinate all adults and not administer booster shots even though adequate vaccines are available. He also said that any decision on booster doses will be based solely on scientific recommendations. At a recent meeting, the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation maintained that it was not recommending a booster dose for any section of the population, priority groups included, in the absence of evidence. In a conversation moderated by R. Prasad, Chandrakant Lahariya and Satyajit Rath discuss whether booster doses are required, and when and to whom they should first be given when there is enough evidence recommending their use. Edited excerpts:

What is the primary objective of a booster dose – to prevent symptomatic infection or to prevent moderate or severe disease and death?

Satyajit Rath: First, let me raise what I suspect is going to be an elephant in the room during this entire discussion. Are we talking about the purpose of vaccination with outcomes at the community level or are we talking about the outcomes of vaccination in terms of protection at the individual level? This is going to remain a point during any discussion about booster shots. The evidence so far is that we are far more efficiently protected against severe illness, hospitalisation and death by being full vaccinated than infection and transmission. The expectation from boosters is that they will proportionately increase protection against infection and transmission. However, the evidence that booster doses do this is fragmentary.

Chandrakant Lahariya: I would approach this in a different way. We know that boosters are being considered globally for a different set of populations. And when we think of the purpose of boosters, we have to go back to the purpose of the CO-

VID-19 immunisation programme. The purpose is to reduce hospitalisation, severe disease and death. Now, that purpose can be achieved through administering full vaccination. So, the booster dose does not have a separate purpose; it is intended to fulfil the overall objective of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. We really do not know whether giving booster shots adds any value to the primary purpose of the immunisation programme.

How much do we know about the effectiveness of Covishield and Covaxin in preventing symptomatic infection and severe disease? In the absence of many studies on vaccine effectiveness, what will be the basis on which a decision on booster doses will be taken?

CL: We know that there is evidence indicating that while the antibody level goes down over a period of time, protection against severe disease and hospitalisation remains unchanged. So, unless we change the purpose of the vaccination programme, which is to reduce symptomatic disease, the need for a booster shot is not going to be altered.

SR: In real-life effectiveness studies, while one can debate endlessly on just how much evidence is enough evidence, I don't have any difficulty in accepting that both Covaxin and Covishield provide a significant measure of protection against severe illness and death. We don't have reliable evidence about [protection against] infection and transmission and mild or asymptomatic disease. But none of that gives us evidence for how to decide about a booster dose. Because, if we are looking for protection against hospitalisation, we already have a vaccination campaign that in the first place is not complete, and where vaccines have been administered, we have every expectation that they are going to be effective. So I'm not certain of what the evidential or the tactical basis for discussing a booster dose inclusion in a vaccination campaign is.

India has administered over 1.26 billion doses, and the vaccination programme has



been going on for about 11 months. At this point, should we not have had several effectiveness studies looking at different aspects which should have helped us decide about booster doses?

SR: Certainly. But even if we have data about the effectiveness of two doses of Covishield or Covaxin in preventing hospitalisation and death, how does that tell us whether boosters will work or not? Even if it turns out that we don't have reasonable protection in real-life circumstances against hospitalisation and death with two doses of the vaccine, that doesn't automatically tell us that the booster is going to work.

CL: We need to remember that vaccine effectiveness remains unchanged over a period of time against hospitalisation and death. But the bigger point when deciding about a booster dose is: where is the cut-off for saying that this much protection is enough and this is what we want to achieve? Second, how do we decide what level of effective benefit or protection we want to achieve through the booster? Finally, do we have data for these vaccines [used in India] or different vaccines that giving a booster shot will result in improved protection? There is some data that a booster shot of the Pfizer vaccine produces improved protection. But we don't have that kind of data for other vaccines. So, all these studies should be done, analysed and interpreted in combination with other factors. On then can a decision be made.

Does the emergence of the Omicron variant make it necessary to administer a booster dose?

SR: The emergence of the new variant makes the case for a global in-

dence. For example, there is evidence that booster doses increase antibody levels. But do they increase antibody levels in specifically immunocompromised individuals who have not responded well or have not responded for a long duration to the primary vaccine schedule? We don't know.

Of course, if we had achieved proper universal primary immunisation coverage and if vaccine supplies were available and approved, it would be nice to have boosters available for identified categories of particularly vulnerable people. But no conditionality – the supply conditionality, the primary vaccination campaign success conditionality, or the conditionality of evidence for boosters working in these categories of people are being fulfilled.

CL: The need for a booster can be assessed based on the pattern of breakthrough infections or which population group over a period of time is reporting more severe disease. These would also vary according to the type of vaccine used. So, we need more granular data on epidemiology, disease burden, and transmission and hospitalisation, but protection against that [hospitalisation] is likely to be higher. For booster doses, evidence for protection is scarce. What Omicron does make the case for primary global inclusive vaccination more compelling rather than specifically increasing the pressure to plan for boosters.

CL: We know that the ability of the available vaccines in reducing transmission is limited. We also know that based on available data, Omicron causes mostly mild disease. Currently licensed vaccines have a proven role in reducing severe disease, hospitalisation and death. So, there is definitely a clear disconnect that because of Omicron there would be any additional advantage in reducing any kind of illness. The focus has to be on ensuring that everyone receives a primary schedule of vaccination. There is no additional value in administering a booster because of the Omicron variant.

Who do you think should be the first to get booster doses – immunocompromised people, people older than 60 years, or those with comorbidities?

SR: We really don't have good evi-

gory of people who should receive a booster dose before other groups. Also, the elderly. But the elderly may require far more boosting.

I also want to bring the final and slightly related point which is relevant. There is an ongoing discussion and broader consensus that while booster doses require more thinking, an additional dose or third dose as part of the extended primary immunisation schedule for those adults of any age group who are immunocompromised or who could not develop the immune sufficient antibody after two shots of primary schedule should be considered.

Should the focus not be on primary vaccination of the global community, especially in Africa where only a very small percentage of people have been vaccinated? Should India not be focused on distributing vaccines globally than on administering booster doses especially when there is no evidence of benefit?

CL: There is enough evidence to say that primary immunisation prevents severe disease, hospitalisation and death. That should be the core focus no matter which part of the world people are living in. Ensuring vaccine availability in different parts of the world should be the priority of all countries. Of course, during a pandemic, countries would want to prioritise their own population first and then share vaccines. I believe that now India can assure primary immunisation for the adult population and it has more vaccines. So, India's priority should be to revive the Vaccine Maitri initiative in an accelerated and sustained manner.

This becomes especially important as new variants are emerging most likely from settings where there is low vaccination coverage. Even if new variants are not emerging from such settings, their impact would be far worse in those settings. So, if the world wants to halt the pandemic, countries need to vaccinate their own populations but also share vaccines with the rest of the world before considering booster doses. And even when evidence on boosters emerges, there is far greater evidence on the benefit of primary immunisation and that points to the importance of sharing vaccines. India should definitely share its vaccines and now is the time.



Chandrakant Lahariya, physician-epidemiologist, is a public policy and health systems expert



Satyajit Rath, an immunologist, was formerly with the National Institute of Immunology



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

NOTEBOOK

Not a compromising position

The danger to journalism is not that journalists meet political actors; it is that they don't meet them enough

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

A recent meeting of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat with a select group of journalists in Delhi raised a few eyebrows. What should be the desirable terms of engagement between journalists and their interlocutors is a rather complicated question. The fall of journalistic standards is a reality of our times, and too much proximity between journalists and the people they write on – politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats, etc. – is one reason for this. But the increasing tendency to look for sinister conspiracies in such meetings is silly. It is like looking for a scam in every government decision. True, if the invitees at a select briefing are vetted based on their willingness to be pliable in the past, then the meeting is no longer a credible exercise. That said, my complaint about Mr. Bhagwat's meeting with journalists is not that some people participated in it, but that I was not invited! Let me explain.

The RSS is the most influential organisation in the country today. Its views shape not only our present and future, but also our notion of the past. I have striven hard to meet leaders of the RSS and been occasionally successful. But with Mr. Bhagwat, never. Once, I tried to meet the former chief K.S. Sudarshan without an appointment at the RSS office in Delhi, but was rebuffed by a stern elderly man who lashed out at me for my ignorance about the culture of the Sangh. I tried to reason that I wanted to overcome my ignorance, but it did not cut much ice. To make up for this limited access, I listen to the numerous speeches that Mr. Bhagwat and his colleagues give.

A journalist has no commitment to the person he meets or interviews. Again, it is sad that actors across sectors and political parties try to predetermine the agenda and outcome of their meetings with journalists and vet questions before interviews. This is truer for films and business than politics. Journalists who are competing for a scoop often give in. This has led to the understanding now that if



you are meeting someone, that ought to be an act of compromise in itself. The absolute requirement of separation between paid advertisement and editorial content is also being stretched by grandstanders: whether paid advertisement is nationalistic and patriotic enough, whether the advertisement is true or not, whether an ad is moral or not. But how does a platform distinguish between the claim of an advertiser that *karva chauth* is a great tradition and another that proclaims the virtues of a soap or soft drink?

An attempt to understand

I have met convicted murderers, law-evading scoundrels, kidnappers, fraudsters, and underground activists besides several prominent shapers of Indian politics over the years, and all that has helped me understand how they think and function. That is very essential to my own functioning as a journalist and hence, I am relentless in pursuing meetings, even when people are not initially welcoming. Among the people whom I have tried hard to meet but have not been able to until now include Steve Bannon and Mayawati. The RSS chief is on top of the list of the people I would greatly value meeting, but alas!

The danger to journalism or democracy is not that journalists are meeting political actors. The danger is that they are not meeting enough, they are not being allowed to meet, or are being allowed meetings only with conditions. The moral police among the tribe need to take a deep breath and relax.

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DATA POINT

Consumers' negative perception on prices remains high

As COVID-19-related restrictions in most States have gradually been withdrawn and economic activity has increased, consumers' perception of the economic situation improved slightly in November 2021 compared to the previous months, according to the latest round of the RBI's consumer confidence survey in urban areas. The marginal improvement in perception was mainly due to more optimism about employment opportunities and, to some extent, about income levels. However, 70% of them continued to be pessimistic about the economy. The consumers' negative perception about price rise of commodities reached a three-year high.

By The Hindu Data Team

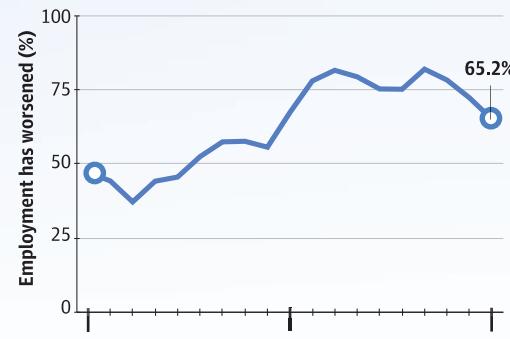
Perception about the economy

The graph shows the share of respondents (%) who said that the general economic situation worsened in November 2021 compared to the same month in 2020. While the negative perception (—) has reduced consistently over the last three cycles, 70.8% of the respondents were still pessimistic about the economy in November



Perception about employment

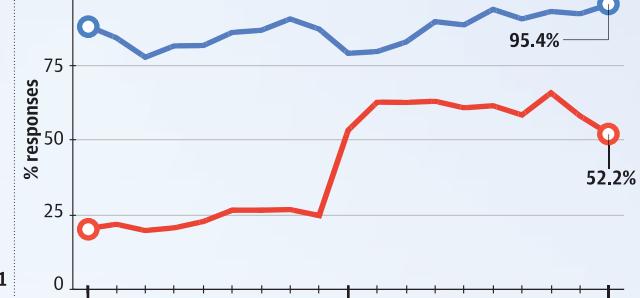
The share of people (%) who said that employment opportunities have worsened has also decreased over the past three cycles of the survey. In the November 2021 round of the survey, 65.2% of the respondents said employment opportunities had worsened compared to November 2020. The negative perception around employment is yet to reach pre-pandemic levels



Costly veggies: A vegetable market in Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh. The price of vegetables skyrocketed in the market in November 2021. ■ V. RAJU

Perception about income and price levels

The graph shows the share of respondents (%) who said that the price levels of commodities had increased (—) and income levels had decreased (—) in November 2021 compared to November 2020. In the November 2021 round, 95.4% of the respondents said the prices of commodities had increased, the highest in at least the last three years. While the negative perception about income levels decreased from the September 2021 cycle, it remained high compared to pre-pandemic levels



Future perception

Over three-fourths of the respondents said price levels will continue to increase one year from now compared to the levels in November 2021. On the other hand, most of them said they were optimistic about the general economic situation, employment opportunities and income levels in November 2022. While 33% said the employment scenario will worsen, only 11% said income levels will fall one year from now



FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 10, 1971

Impact of a week's war on Pakistan

New Delhi, Dec 9: It will be a week to-morrow since Pakistan started a full-scale war with pre-emptive bombing raids on a dozen Indian airheads and intensive shelling all along the border in the West and got it back in full measure on both the fronts. From India's point of view, the war is proceeding very satisfactorily with very few setbacks or surprises which had not been foreseen – and, as expected, with a devastating impact on Pakistan's capacity to fight simultaneously on both the fronts. According to Indian and foreign military experts here, the overall situation is good and it will get better in the next few days before the fighting on the ground reaches its climax in the west with the virtual conclusion of the fighting in the east. The present position in the eastern front is that except in Dacca the enemy resistance has crumbled and the trapped Pakistani army, now scattered all over Bangla Desh, is no longer an organised force under an integrated command, fighting doggedly to hold its ground or falling back in a disciplined fashion to regroup itself and resume the fight. The trapped enemy troops are either fleeing helter-skelter or withdrawing in scattered groups to make a dash to the exit points to stage a Pakistani-style Dunkirk down the Bangla Desh river system, little knowing that the Indian forces pursuing them are already astride the Padma, the Brahmaputra and the Megna to block their escape.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DEC. 10, 1921

Welcoming the Prince

A feature of the Prince's reception at Lucknow appears to have been the ample supply of motor lorries to convey spectators at Government expense. Innumerable vehicles of that sort were plying, it is said, with the inscription "Come and see the Prince, conveyance free," and the Associated Press wires down that the device was a tremendous success in gathering up a decent crowd to line the Prince's route. This information may not perhaps be credited at face value by a public to whom the ways of our news agency are not inscrutable but the point worth noting is that Government had to improvise this novel expedient to attract its citizens. Between this and the method of the volunteers there is but as much distinction as between temptation and persuasion, and yet the blame is apportioned with a rigorous one-sidedness.

CM YK

FROM PAGE ONE

India pays homage to CDS, wife, 11 others



Bitter loss: Kritika, left, and Tarini, daughters of Gen. Bipin Rawat, at Palam Airport on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Close family members of all the deceased personnel have arrived in Delhi whose assistance would also be sought in the identification process. "Appropriate military funerals of all deceased are being planned and coordinated in close consultation with close family members," the official added.

The Defence Minister made a statement in the Parliament on the fatal helicopter crash. "With profound grief and heavy heart, I stand to convey the unfortunate news of the crash of the military helicopter in the

noon of December 8, 2021, with India's first CDS, Gen. Bipin Rawat onboard," he said. "The CDS would be cremated with full military honours."

Mr. Singh said 13 of the 14 persons onboard the helicopter had succumbed to injuries. Group Captain Varun Singh is on life support in the Military Hospital at Wellington and all efforts are being made to save his life, Mr. Singh said, ending the statement by paying homage to the deceased persons and expressing condolences to the bereaved families.

According to police sources, the IAF's Accident Investigation Board officials earlier in the day visited the site for field investigation.

"Though we have registered a case and commenced inquiries with eyewitnesses and others, the IAF has the expertise to go into the technical aspects like aircraft forensics. They have the experience in probing in the past," a senior police officer told *The Hindu*.

The Upper Coonoor police have registered a case under Section 174 (inquest into death) of the Code of Criminal Procedure to inquire into the accident.

Firefighters of the Tamil Nadu Fire & Rescue Services assisted the investigating officials by cutting damaged trees and clearing debris. The crash site nestled in a valley was cordoned off by the local police before the Army had stepped in.

"Visibility has been poor with intermittent mist in the area since afternoon on Thursday. Drones are being deployed for aerial visuals as and when the situation is improving," a forest official, who was part of the rescue operations, told *The Hindu*.

The VIP helicopter

crashed in between two mountains in a tea estate located some 100 metres below the village, forest officials said adding that the local people were initially too scared to run down to extinguish the flames that had engulfed the helicopter.

The steep road leading to the village and the crash site in a narrow one-way lane are making it tough for rescue vehicles to operate with ease.

A senior police officer said the post-mortem went on till late on Wednesday night because some bodies were

charred beyond recognition.

The officer said the Coonoor police inspector was the first to visit the crash site and he alerted all other agencies. The work of the Tamil Nadu police in the swift rescue operation came in for appreciation by top defence officers who conveyed it to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin when he visited the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington.

Another senior police officer involved in the investigation said the weather conditions in the Nilgiris changed often, affecting visibility and aircraft operations.

There were several instances when helicopters carrying VIPs from Coimbatore to Udhagamandalam returned to base owing to inclement weather conditions.

However, it is possible that the pilot of the ill-fated helicopter had visibility issues and flew at a lower altitude to stay below the clouds.

"At times, it becomes difficult to judge the altitude while manoeuvring foggy weather conditions," he said.



Army personnel gathering evidence at the site of crash. ■ AFP

inquiry into the chopper crash.

'Black box' recovered; Air chief visits crash site

Army takes control of crash site

WILSON THOMAS
COIMBATORE

The cockpit voice recorder (CVR) and the flight data recorder (FDR) of the Mi-17V5 chopper of the Indian Air Force that crashed with Chief of Defence Staff Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat and 12 defence personnel on board at Katteri in the Nilgiris on Wednesday were recovered on Thursday.

The CVR and FDR, popularly known as 'black box', were retrieved during searches conducted at the crash site early on Thursday, a source said.

Examination of the two boxes, painted in orange, will give insights into the crash when the chopper was heading to the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington, from the Air Force Station, Sulur, near Coimbatore.

A retired Air Force officer said the CVR would have voice recording from the cockpit. The FDR would have the recording of various parameters of the aircraft.

A source said the two devices would be examined by the IAF as part of its ongoing

The Army has taken control over the entire area of the crash site and people from the locality and outsiders are not allowed to visit the place.

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari, and senior officers visited the crash site.

Meanwhile, a video of a chopper disappearing into the mist in the hills, purportedly shot by a tourist from the Nilgiri Mountain Railway track at Katteri, has emerged as the last moments of the crashed IAF chopper. After the chopper disappears into the mist, a crash is heard. Defence and

police sources said the video would be analysed as part of the investigation.

Farmers declare victory, to vacate protest sites

There were a few notes of caution as well. "Farmers have decided to suspend this agitation for now, but the movement will not end. The fight for farmers' rights, including MSP, will continue," said senior Punjab leader Balbir Singh Rajewal, who heads his own faction of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU).

The Centre's formal proposal, which was signed by Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agarwal despite the fact that farm leaders said most negotiations on the document were held with the Home Ministry's representatives, was received on Thursday morning. It included the same five points in Wednesday's draft, with major concessions on case withdrawal and compensation.

On the issue of MSP, it said a committee would have a specific mandate to ensure all farmers get MSP, and promised that SKM leaders would be among the representatives. After discussing the proposal in an hour-long meeting at the Singhu border protest site, SKM leaders emerged to announce their unanimous acceptance.

However, they are yet to take a common decision on whether to campaign

against the BJP in the upcoming Assembly polls in U.P. and Uttarakhand, as previously planned.

"On 'Mission U.P.' and 'Mission Uttarakhand', we will wait to take a decision. Election dates have not yet been announced, so we have time. Let's wait and see what is the situation by January 15 and then we will decide," said Mr. Tikait, who heads a BKU faction in western U.P.

Atamjit Singh, national convenor of a smaller BKU faction based in the Moradabad area, said that the 87 members of SKM's U.P. branch would "keep faith with U.P. voters" who have supported 15 rallies against the BJP over the last three months. "Only 10% of crops are sold at MSP rates. We must continue to fight for farmers to get the remaining 90% also," he said.

The Left-affiliated AIKS agreed, and hoped that the Tikait faction will return to the campaign trail once election dates are announced. "I cannot speak for the SKM as a whole. But as AIKS, we will certainly continue the fight against the BJP, which has failed to solve the problems of U.P.'s farmers," said AIKS president Ashok Dhawale.

His grief deepened upon learning that not all veterans



People shower petals as ambulances with the bodies of the chopper crash victims are taken to Sular. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

were allowed to pay respects at the Madras Regimental Centre (MRC), Wellington.

With no option left, Mr. Soundararajan, who retired as senior Havildar from MRC, waited on the side of the road to pay homage.

"He is yet to recover from the shock. He did not have a proper meal after hearing about the crash," said the war veteran's son B. Samuel.

Senthil Kumar, another resident of Mettupalayam, said people waited from 10 a.m. on the sides of the road. The convoy passed at 1.10 p.m. While many held the

national flag, a few broke down.

Children pay tribute

The convoy later passed through Annur and Karumathampatty towns, where too people showered petals on it. Children saluted as the convoy moved.

"I am unable to explain it in words. It was a very emotional moment as the vans carrying the mortal remains passed through my town after watching photos and videos of the crash in media," said K.K. Mahalingam, a resident of Karumathampatty.

Lone survivor Varun Singh airlifted to Bengaluru hospital

Doctors tell family that the next few days are critical



Group Captain Varun Singh

mander in October 2020 when he was posted with a Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) squadron.

Stellar record

On October 12, 2020, he was flying a Tejas aircraft on a test sortie when an emergency developed due to the failure of cockpit pressurisation at high altitude but he managed to land the fighter plane displaying extraordinary courage and skill, the citation said.

"Group Captain Varun Singh joined the Indian Air Force by clearing the National Defence Academy test and was adjudged the best pilot of his batch," said his uncle.

The fighter pilot comes from a family of defence personnel.

His father K.P. Singh is a retired colonel of the Army, and his younger brother, T. N. Singh, is a serving naval officer.

In Bengaluru, Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai visited the Command Hospital and enquired about the health of the group captain.

SC turns down plea from Aircel founder

Sivasankaran facing graft charges

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has declined a plea for diplomatic immunity raised by Aircel founder C. Sivasankaran, who is facing money laundering charges.

Mr. Sivasankaran claimed he was an 'Ambassador at large' for the Republic of Seychelles and was protected from criminal prosecution under the Vienna Convention.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said this was a ploy by Mr. Sivasankaran to ward off prosecution. He referred to a communication from the Seychelles Government that Mr. Sivasankaran was not on official duty. The court accepted Mr. Mehta's arguments.

Lookout circular
The Madras High Court had refused to quash a look-out circular (LOC) issued against Mr. Sivasankaran by the Foreign Regional Registration Officer (FRRO), Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Home Affairs.

The LOC had prevented

Govt. avoids comment on civil code

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Government refrained from commenting on a Supreme Court notice issued to it on a petition that seeks directions to the respondents to take steps to remove anomalies on the grounds of divorce, maintenance and alimony.

"The matter is *sub judice*," Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a written reply on December 3, referring to the matter that is pending at the top court.

He was responding to a question in the Lok Sabha on whether the Government has taken note of the observation made by the Supreme Court with regard to "enacting Uniform Civil Code" for all religions to bring uniformity in case of divorce and maintenance.

In another written response to a question, the Law Minister said the Government is taking steps to hold consultation with major political parties and other stakeholders on the Women's Reservation Bill to build consensus before it is brought to Parliament.

More cyclones in Arabian Sea recently, Minister tells RS

This has not measurably increased threat to western coast'



Wind speeds touch 220 kmph in very severe cyclones.

"extremely severe cyclones".

Coastal vulnerability

However, the eastern coast remained far more vulnerable to "extremely severe cyclones" than the western coast, but there was nevertheless "no significant trend" in the frequency of extremely severe cyclonic storms (ESCS).

The increase in frequency of cyclones over the Arabian Sea has not posed a corresponding increase in the coastal vulnerability along the west coast since most of such cyclones forming over the Arabian Sea were mak-

ing landfall over the coasts of Oman, Yemen etc and hence the threat to Gujarat & Maharashtra coasts remains same," Mr. Singh said in his written statement.

On an average, 60%-80% of the cyclones developing over the North Indian Ocean (NIO), comprising the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, made landfall causing loss of life and property. Low-lying coastal belts of West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and Puducherry were more prone to the impact of these systems.

The number of deaths due to cyclones has decreased significantly, as a result of the improvement in the early warning skill of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), and effective mitigation measures and response actions by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Still there is huge loss to property, his statement added.

IN BRIEF



Tejaswi ties knot with childhood friend in Delhi

PATNA

Celebrations were back at the RJD State headquarters here on Thursday when news broke that the party's de facto leader Tejaswi Yadav

has tied the knot with a childhood friend at a farmhouse in Delhi. The 32-years-old got hitched to Rachel Iris about whom not much is known barring the fact that the couple have known each other since childhood.

2-year jail for 3 CPI(M) leaders in Tripura

AGARTALA
A court on Thursday sentenced three senior CPI(M) leaders to two years in jail in a case relating to ransacking of a court building in south Tripura in 2015. Those sentenced include Tapas Datta, former State president of the DYFI; Trilokes Sinha and Badal Debnath. The attackers had also allegedly threatened then district and sessions judge Ruhidas Paul.



Sudha out on bail from Byculla jail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Human rights lawyer and trade unionist Sudha Bhadravaj was released on Thursday from the Byculla jail after spending over three years there in connection with the Bhima Koregaon caste violence case of 2018.

The other co-accused Shoma Sen and Jyoti Jagtap are still in jail. Ms. Bharadwaj, 61, was arrested on August 28, 2018.

After repeatedly denying her default bail, medical bail and bail on merits, the Bombay High Court granted her bail on December 1.

The court held, "In our view, all the requisite conditions to release Ms. Bhadravaj on default bail stood fully satisfied."

Shah misled Parliament, says Adhir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhary, leader of the Congress Legislative Party in the Lok Sabha, said on Thursday that Union Home Minister Amit Shah made a misleading statement in the Lok Sabha on Monday, saying the victims of the firing in Mon district of Nagaland on December 4 had been shot as they tried to flee on being asked to stop by the armed forces.

Raising the issue at the start of Zero Hour, Mr. Chowdhary said survivors of the incident had stated they had been directly shot without any order to stop.

Mr. Chowdhary noted that Sonia Gandhi had constituted a delegation to visit Mon in Nagaland and share the grief of families whose members were killed in the firing, but they were not allowed to enter the State.

Mon killings were for medals: Nagas

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

An apex body representing the Konyak Naga community said the December 4 killing of 14 civilians by the armed forces was driven by the desire for gallantry medals. The massacre happened at Oting village in Nagaland's Mon district, which is dominated by Konyaks.

"The Konyak community had reposed trust in the Indian Army and the Indian Union for almost 60 years and maintained peace within the community. The community has also been yearning for a solution to the protracted Naga political issue at the earliest," the union said. But it regretted that the "hard-earned trust" was destroyed by the armed forces with the botched ambush leading to the death of civilians.

No peace with AFSPA: NSCN(I-M)

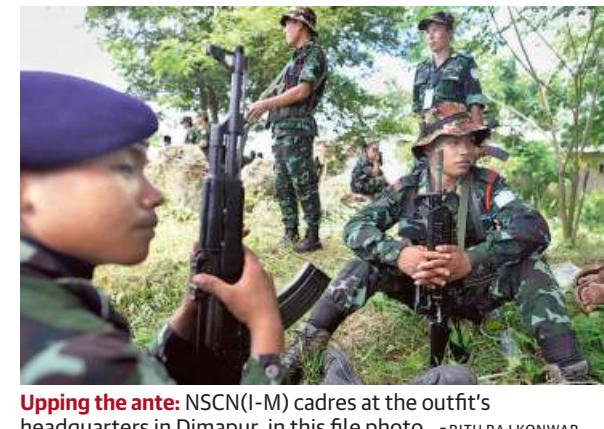
Emboldened by 'draconian' law, soldiers are treating Nagas as sub-humans, it says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, or NSCN(I-M), has said the "Indo-Naga" political talks will not be meaningful under the shadow of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

The NSCN(I-M) is the key player in the peace process that has been hanging fire since 1997, when the extremist group declared a ceasefire.



Upping the ante: NSCN(I-M) cadres at the outfit's headquarters in Dimapur, in this file photo. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

Several factions of the rival Khaplang group came on board the peace process from 2001.

Referring to the December 4 killing of 14 civilians by the armed forces at Oting village in Nagaland's Mon district, the NSCN(I-M) said it had now been driven to the point of taking a stand on the draconian AFSPA.

Licence to kill'

"This notorious AFSPA has given the Indian security forces the licence to shoot and kill anyone on mere suspicion... The Nagas have had the bitter taste of this act on

numerous occasions and it has split enough blood. Blood and political talks cannot go together... No political talks will be meaningful under the shadow of the AFSPA," the outfit said.

"Let human dignity take control and be made an integral part of the Naga political peace process. Unfortunately, the Oting killing has become threat to the Nagas' longing for Naga political solution."

It said the Centre must immediately withdraw the AFSPA if it wanted to do justice to the Naga people.

Absolute fidelity'

"Therefore, this time around, the Naga people expect that the judgment [of the special investigation team probing the December 4 incident] must be transparent and must be swiftly delivered. This is the only way to establish absolute fidelity between the Naga people

The NSCN(I-M) said the soldiers, "emboldened by the Act beyond measure", had been treating the Nagas like sub-humans without the fear of any scrutiny of court of law.

and the Government of India," the statement said.

The outfit accused the armed forces of stripping naked the bodies of the 14 victims and trying to wrap them in military fatigues to give the impression that they were militants. "They were caught red-handed by the villagers before they could succeed in their plan," it said.

Political maturity

In a rebuttal to Home Minister Amit Shah's statement in Parliament on the December 4 incident, it said that in a situation like this, Mr. Shah was expected to show political maturity and statesmanship to cool down the socio-political upheavals.

However, he added fuel to the fire by standing behind the para commandos, which was like rubbing salt into the wounds of the Nagas, the outfit said.

The NSCN(I-M) called the December 4 operation "a deliberate mission to kill and nothing to do with 'credible' intelligence of the NSCN movement in the area".

Bills to extend tenure of ED, CBI chiefs passed in LS

Congress members walk out during voice vote

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Amid strong objection from the Opposition, the Lok Sabha on Thursday passed two Bills allowing the Centre to extend the tenure of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) chief and the CBI Director up to five years from the current two. The Bills replace the ordinances brought in last month. Congress members walked out in protest when the two Bills were put to voice vote in the Lok Sabha.

Several Opposition MPs questioned the need to bring an ordinance days before the winter session of Parliament, and alleged that it was

done to grant extension to one officer, ED chief S.K. Mishra.

Accusing the Narendra Modi Government of 'dismantling' checks and balances, Manish Tewari of the Congress said the Government should not bring Bills

that further the perception that the ED and the CBI were frontal organisations to harass the Opposition.

Replying to the debate on the Central Vigilance Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2021 and the Delhi Special Police Establishment (Amendment) Bill, 2021, Jitendra Singh, Minister of State for the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), pointed out that posts such as that of the CBI Director is chosen by a high-level panel that not only included the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of India but also the Leader of the Opposition or the single largest Opposition party.

The Bill was cleared through a voice vote.

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said, "During COVID-19, we held meetings with pharmaceutical manufacturers and assured them of removing all bottlenecks to research and manufacture vaccines in record time."

RS passes pharma education Bill

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Thursday passed the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (Amendment) Bill, 2021, under which six more institutes of pharmaceutical education and research, other than the one at Mohali, will be accorded the status of institute of national importance.

It was reportedly made by the latter during the debate on the Judges Salaries and Conditions of Service Bill on Wednesday.

Ideological warfare

The spat occurred during Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, when Mr. Tharoor objected to comments made on him during his speech on the Bill in the House which was brought to his notice later when he went through the proceedings verbatim later in the day.

"It was said that I have a

Opposition suspends protest to mourn General Rawat

Not allowed to speak in Rajya Sabha, Trinamool walks out



Joint fight: Mallikarjun Kharge and other Opposition leaders outside Parliament on Thursday. ■ PTI

not allow any of the Opposition leaders to speak and the Trinamool Congress MPs walked out in protest.

The Congress and the other Opposition parties continued to be in the House. Speaking to presspersons later in the day, Mr. Kharge described the events in the House as unfortunate. "We may have our political differences with the Government but this was not a political issue. We wanted to express

our condolences and pay tributes to the country's first Chief of the Defence Staff but the Opposition was not given the opportunity to do so. This is how the democracy is being run," he said. He was accompanied by RJD leader Manoj K. Jha and T.K.S. Elangovan of the DMK. As a mark of respect, Congress president Sonia Gandhi directed her party not to celebrate her birthday.

Tharoor, Nishikant Dubey spar in Lok Sabha yet again

Debates on Bills should stick to the subject, says Speaker



Shashi Tharoor

Pushkar death case this year. Speaker Om Birla remarked that debates on Bills should stick to their subject and nothing else.

Dubey's claim

Responding to Mr. Tharoor within the Zero Hour period, as it came to a close, Mr. Dubey said he had raised the issue precisely because the Speaker had asked all MPs to stick to the subject.

"I raised a point of order under Rule 352," he said, pointing that many Opposition MPs had been raising court-related issues pertaining to Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States, Home Minister, BJP MPs of the Rajya Sabha.

"If you raise one accusatory finger pointing here, four will point back at you," Mr. Dubey said.

BJP MP pitches for Mathura temple

Ahead of U.P. polls, Harnath Singh Yadav calls for repeal of Places of Worship Act

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election in early 2022, Harnath Singh Yadav, BJP MP, on Thursday called for the repeal of the Places of Worship Act to construct a Krishna temple in Mathura.

He is the second BJP MP from Uttar Pradesh to make this demand in the winter session of Parliament. On Monday, Balia MP Ravindra Kushwaha said that if the farm laws could be repealed, this law too could go. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP has started a campaign for the Krishna temple. The Places of Worship Act was brought in by the Narasimha Rao Government in 1991, which, while



keeping the Ram Temple dispute outside the purview of this law, froze the status of places of worship as they were on August 15, 1947.

Violation of right
During Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Yadav said the then Government provided legal cover to foreign invaders who captured the birth-

place of Lord Krishna. The law, he argued, violated the right to equality and life enshrined in the Constitution. His statement was met with loud protests from the Opposition benches. But the Chair did not intervene and let Mr. Yadav continue. "This arbitrary, irrational and unconstitutional law impinges on the rights of Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists," he said. When the Opposition continued to protest questioning how this was permitted, Deputy Chairman Harivansh said Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu had approved this submission.

Later, RJD MP Manoj K. Jha told presspersons that the Opposition would write a joint letter protesting against allowing members to deliver such divisive speeches. "Such issues, which have the potential to damage the social fabric further, should not be allowed during Zero Hour in Parliament. We should not forget the number of lives lost in the Ram Temple-Babri Masjid dispute," Mr. Jha said.

The MHA did not respond to questions on the delay. On Thursday, the Minority Affairs Ministry told the Lok Sabha that the constitutional and legal validity of the CAA has been challenged in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India" and the "matter is sub judice." The Governments of Rajasthan and Kerala have filed petitions under Article 131.

The Act has been opposed by many States too. The Central Government has received resolutions adopted by the Assemblies of Meghalaya, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Punjab against the Act.

Rajasthan and Kerala have filed petitions in the Supreme Court.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYATI RAJ (Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India) Rajendranagar, Hyderabad-500030

WALK IN INTERVIEW ON 28.12.2021

NIRDPR, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India, proposes to engage the services of Medical Officer (Male) for its Health Centre on contractual basis initially for a period of one year on a consolidated remuneration of Rs.75,000/- p.m. Rent free accommodation will be provided in the campus.

For Eligibility Criteria and other details please visit: www.nirdpr.org.in.

Adv. No. 26/2021 (NIRDPR/AR(E)/Admn.A/2021/MMO)

Sd/- Assistant Registrar (E)

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY - e-Tender Notice

Tender ID : 13-18/2021-22/PHC/KNR Jal Jeevan Mission-Kannur, Kasaragod District- Kodial, Azhikode, Madur, Mogral Puttur and Muliyar Panchayaths-Laying, Distribution System and providing FHTCs-WSS to Kolachery and adjoining Panchayaths-Laying gravity main from WTP Chavasseryparamba to GSLR at Padikkunnu, EMD : Rs. 20,0000-500000. Tender fee : Rs. 11200-16800. Last Date for submitting tender : 10-01-2022 02:00pm. Phone : 0497 2705902

Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, Superintendent Engineer PH Circle, Kannur

KWA-JB-GL-6-685-2021-22

TELANGANA FOODS IDA : NACHARAM : HYDERABAD - 500076

Phone No.2715207, 08 & 09

TENDER NOTIFICATION

No.TF/GG/Tender/GN-RF/PMT/376/2021-22, Dt. 08.12.2021 Telangana Foods invites tenders for procurement of Groundnuts, Rice Flakes and 1kg Pouch for Balaramu + Production. For details please visit website: <https://tender.procurement.gov.in> and website: <https://tfoods.telangana.gov.in> from 10.12.2021 at 1pm onwards.

R.O.No.: 2410-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22, Date: 09.12.2021

Sd/- Managing Director

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E-TENDER NOTICE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Poringalkuthu SHEP

E-Tender ID : 2021_KSEB_458282_1

PAC - Rs. 2,91,63,719/- Last date -14.12.2021 - 4.00 pm.

Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.kseb.in

Ref: PR/MC/1/E23/1-E-Tender/2021

O/o the Chief Engineer, (Commercial & Tariff), Vydyuthi Bhavanam, Pattom, TVPM

Tender invited from utilities and Traders for banking power with KSEB Ltd during the period from 01.03.2022 to 30.09.2022

Tender No: CE/C&P/Banking-Tender/1/2021-22/

Last Date -12.01.2022/02.00 pm. Visit www.kseb.in

Ref : PR/MC/1/F/210/2021

The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd.

(A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking)

KMML Sankaramangalam, Chavara - 691 583

Kollam, Kerala, India. Phone: 0476-2686722 to 2686733 (12 Lines). E-mail: contact@kmml.com

TENDER NOTICE

Competitive Tenders are invited for the following. For more details please visit the E-Tendering Portal <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> or <a href="http://www.k

'Democracy doesn't happen by accident'

At Democracy Summit, U.S. President asks for concrete commitments from participant countries

SIRIAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Joe Biden kicked off Day One of his Summit for Democracy, calling on countries to make "concrete commitments" to reaffirm their democratic values. Over 100 countries have been invited, as well as civil society actors, members of various parliaments and the private sector.

"Democracy doesn't happen by accident. We have to renew it with each generation," Mr. Biden, sitting beside his Secretary of State Antony Blinken, told over 50 world leaders who could be seen on a large screen.

"We have to stand for justice and the rule of law for free speech, free assembly, a free press, freedom of religion, for all the inherent human rights of every individual," the President said.

The purpose of the gathering was not to assert that any of the participant countries were perfect democracies, Mr. Biden said, but "to lock arms and reaffirm our shared commitment to make our democracy better" and to share ideas and make "concrete commitments" on combatting authoritarianism, fighting corruption and promoting human rights - the three themes of the summit.



New initiative: U.S. President Joe Biden, left, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaking from the White House during the opening of the Democracy Summit on Thursday. ■ AP

Mr. Biden said he was launching the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, which, along with the U.S. Congress would commit \$224 million toward various democracy related projects including transparency, fair elections and free and independent media.

(A White House factsheet released on Thursday said the Initiative would involve \$424.2 million. The White House clarified for *The Hindu* that this was the correct amount).

Calling a free and independent press the "bedrock of democracy", Mr. Biden said the U.S. was launching a multilateral effort to enhance independent media. He also described a recently announced defamation defence fund by the United States

repression.

Additionally, this week, the U.S. released a strategy on countering corruption.

There is a second summit planned for a year from now, where countries are expected to discuss progress on their commitments. However, the monitoring mechanism seems to rely on civil society actors holding governments accountable, rather than there being any binding mechanism that emerges from the discussions.

"And our hope is that through the entirety of this process, we can really have a dialogue between participating governments and civil society, and that civil society will hold all of us accountable," one official said during Monday's briefing call.

Pre-recorded interventions by world leaders have been scheduled for Thursday and Friday, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention scheduled for Friday.

Modi lauds U.S. for summit; Imran to give it a miss

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi "commended" the U.S. for holding a summit for democracies that was inaugurated by U.S. President Biden on Thursday, even as Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has decided to skip it, making India one of only three South Asian nations attending the two-day event.

"PM Modi said the democratic spirit, including res-

pect for rule of law and pluralistic ethos, is ingrained in Indians,"MEA sources said.

"The PM had spoken about the need for democracy in global governance and for technology companies to contribute to preserving open and democratic societies," they added.

Mr. Modi is due to make his "national statement" on Friday where all leaders are expected to make specific commitments on promoting

democracy, on the lines of the climate change summit, officials aware of the agenda said.

"Certainly India is going to be playing a prominent role. We would encourage those who weren't [invited] to work on commitments to democracy," U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jennifer Larson said.

While India, Pakistan, Nepal and the Maldives were invited to the summit, Afghan-

istan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka were not among about 100 countries on the list.

When asked, Jennifer Larson admitted that limits on the number of invitees on the list had been "arbitrarily placed".

She expressed hope that other democratic countries in the region would be invited to the next summit.

Pakistan's decision not to attend comes on the back of

severe criticism of the summit plans from China, which has not been invited, along with Russia, presumably as they are Communist single-party states.

"We remain in contact with the U.S. on a range of issues and believe that we can engage on this subject at an opportune time in the future," the Pakistan MFA said on Thursday, but did not give a specific reason for missing the summit.

The list of suspects, of high-ranking naval officers, included Mr. Karannagoda, who was Navy Commander at the time of the abductions.

With witness accounts and the body of evidence pointing to the apparent involvement of a team of naval officers, the Attorney General's Department, in November 2019, indicted over a dozen high-ranking naval officers on charges of abducting and conspiring to murder the 11 young men.

The list of suspects, of high-ranking naval officers, included Mr. Karannagoda, who was Navy Commander at the time of the abductions.

Even as hearings on the original case are set to continue

the charges against the other 13 officers remain and the admiral is yet to be acquitted - victims' families are appalled at Thursday's appointment.

'Completely unfair'

"This is completely unfair," said Jenifer Weerasinghe, mother of Mohammed Dilan Jamaldeen, one of the 11 disappeared youth. "The admiral was the navy commander when my son was abducted. He certainly knows what happened to him and the others. That is why he was named a suspect. How could they give him a post like this?" she asked, terming the development "another huge blow".

The President's appointment of the admiral as Governor also adds to the list of military men given civilian positions in recent years.

Since 2020, Mr. Rajapaksa has appointed at least 28 serving or former military and intelligence personnel to key administrative posts, the UN Human Rights Chief Bachlet noted in a report early this year.

Mr. Karannagoda's appointment is "a double whammy", according to human rights lawyer Bhavani Fonseka from the Colombo-based NGO Centre for Policy Alternatives. "It further entrenches impunity and militarisation," she said.

Saudi prince discusses security with Qatar on his first visit after blockade

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DOHA

Saudi Arabia's de facto leader has discussed regional security with Qatar during his first visit since the kingdom ended a four-year blockade, official media said.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman arrived late on Wednesday as part of a Gulf tour, nearly a year after relations were restored

between the two nations in January.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties with Doha over allegations it supported extremists and was too close to arch-rival Iran - allegations Doha denied.

During talks with Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the two sides exchanged views on "eve-

rything that would protect stability and security in the region", the Qatar News Agency said.

Prince Mohammed's tour had been overshadowed by France's arrest of a man suspected of involvement in the 2018 killing of Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

However, it later turned out to be a case of mistaken identity.

A video of the aftermath of Tuesday's attack showed the charred bodies of 11 victims, some believed to be

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BANGKOK

Myanmar government troops raided a small north-western village, rounding up civilians, binding their hands and then burning them alive in apparent retaliation for an attack on a military convoy, according to witnesses and other reports.

A video of the aftermath of Tuesday's attack showed the charred bodies of 11 victims, some believed to be

teenagers, lying in a circle in Done Taw village in Sagaing region.

Outrage spread as the graphic images were shared on social media over what appeared to be the latest of increasingly brutal military attacks in an attempt to put down stiffening anti-government resistance following the army takeover in February.

Human Rights Watch called for the international community to ensure that commanders who gave the order are added to targeted sanctions lists, and more broadly, efforts are stepped up to cut off any source of funding to the military.

"Our contacts are saying these were just boys and young people who were caught in the wrong place at the wrong time," a spokeswoman for the group, Manny Maung, said.

"This incident is quite bra-

zen, and it happened in an area that was meant to be found, and seen, to scare people," she said.

The images could not be independently verified, but an account by a person who said he was present when they were taken generally matched descriptions of the incident carried by independent Myanmar media.

The government has denied that it had any troops in the area.

Serum Institute let us down, says Africa CDC

Vaccine maker ended talks abruptly

REUTERS

NAIROBI

UN chief to attend Beijing Olympics

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

UNITED NATIONS

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will attend the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, his spokesman said, after the United States announced a diplomatic boycott.

The United States said that it would not send a diplomatic delegation in a protest against rights abuses by China. Australia, Britain and Canada also announced diplomatic boycotts.

France has no plans to join the boycott, President Emmanuel Macron said, calling such a move "insignificant."

China warned nations that they would "pay the price" for boycotts.

Biden to call Ukraine leader amid Russia row

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden will call Ukraine's leader on Thursday in a show of support, after warning Vladimir Putin of sanctions "like none he's ever seen" if Russian troops attack Ukraine.



request for comment.

Mr. Nkengasong said Serum had engaged in discussions last year with the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT), and that at one point he had believed a deal was very close, but then Serum abruptly ended the talks.

Serum did not immediately respond to a Reuters

request for comment.

ELECTRONICS CORPORATION OF TAMIL NADU LIMITED CHENNAI - 35 (ELCOT)
TENDER NOTICE

ELCOT invites bids for Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Touch Screen Devices at Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Secretariat

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Due Date & Time for submission of Tenders 21.12.2021 @ 02.00 PM

Tender Opening Date & Time 21.12.2021 @ 02.30 PM

Pre bid meeting & Portal Training 14.12.2021 @ 11.00 AM

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KERALA WATER AUTHORITY, e-Tender Notice

Tender No: 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 /2021-2022/KWA/PHC/TVLA, JM - 2020-21, 2021-22 (III SLSSC) - Supplying and laying distribution system and providing FHTCs in Kadapra, Peringara, Anicadu, Mallappally and Ayirod Panchayats in Pathanamthitta District. EMD: Rs. 200000 to 500000. Tender fee: Rs. 11200 to 16800. Last Date for submitting, Tender : 17-01-2022, 02:00 pm.

Phone : 04692600162

Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in

www.etenders.kerala.gov.in KWA-JB-GL-6-675-2021-22 Pathanamthitta

Name and Address of the entity seeking Expression of Interest (EOI):

BANGALORE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT LIMITED

Administration Block, Bravo-1, Kempegowda International Airport, Bangalore 560 300

www.bangaloreinternationalairport.com

NOTICE FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

S. No. Tender Title Short description of scope of work

1 Supply of Renewable Electricity for a period of 3 years beginning from 1st April 2022, which may be extended for a further period of up to 2 years.

Supply of Renewable Electricity of 30 million units in the first year with an increment of 5 million units in consecutive years, for a period of three (3) years beginning from 1st April 2022, which may be extended for a further period of up to 2 years.

Pre Qualification Criteria & other Information: Available on BIAL website (<http://www.bangaloreinternationalairport.com/our Business/tender.jspx>)

Submission Due Date & Time for the above: 1300 hours on 21st December 2021.

Note: Any further addendums to this EOI shall be made available in BIAL website.

Applicants who are interested shall express their interest by sending an email to embed@bialairport.com and submit the relevant documents by uploading in the BIAL Tenders website ([https://www.bialtenders.com](http://www.bialtenders.com)) writing to Head - Procurement & Contracts

Controversial ex-Navy chief is Gotabaya's pick as Governor

He has been accused of abduction, murder conspiracy

MEERA SRINIVASAN COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Thursday appointed a former Navy chief, previously accused of abduction and conspiracy to murder, as Governor of the North Western Province, delivering what victims' families called "yet another blow" to their 12 year-long fight for justice.



Wasantha Karannagoda, right, with Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Activists and lawyers consider the case "emblematic" of the alleged criminal conduct of military during civil war years. It also drew notice for the rare progress made by way of evidence gathering and prosecution in court.

Wasantha Karannagoda rendered "a great service to the Motherland during the humanitarian operation as the Commander of the Navy," a statement from the President's office said, of the man named 14th suspect in a gruesome case now commonly referred to as "Navy II" case.

This is Mr. Rajapaksa's second controversial appointment in recent months. In October, he chose a reactionary Buddhist monk Galagodaatte Gnanasara, earlier convicted for contempt of court, and accused of inciting violence against Muslims, to chair a panel on key legal reforms.

In the years 2008 and 2009, 11 youth - most of them

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	58,807	0.27
US Dollar	75.60	-0.13
Gold	47,156	-0.23
Brent oil	75.25	-0.19

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	769.75	8.35
Asian Paints	3178.70	70.20
Axia Bank	693.95	-3.15
Bajaj Auto	3341.00	8.95
Bajaj Finance	17996.60	-25.05
Bharti Airtel	713.95	-1.20
BPCL	393.75	2.60
Britannia Ind	3623.90	48.15
Cipla	894.50	-3.45
Coal India	152.65	1.75
Divis Lab	4576.95	-28.00
Dr Reddys Lab	4594.25	23.55
Eicher Motors	2542.95	37.40
Grasim Ind	1722.75	6.50
HCL Tech	1168.55	-3.05
HDFC	2842.05	-10.95
HDFC Bank	1526.85	-26.95
HDFC Life	683.15	-3.25
Hero MotoCorp	2520.95	30.30
Hindalco	455.65	-1.80
Hind Unilever	2339.75	-0.85
ICICI Bank	755.00	1.60
IndusInd Bank	946.40	1.10
Infosys	1763.45	10.10
Indian Oil Corp	119.70	-0.70
ITC	235.40	10.45
JSW Steel	674.10	1.15
Kotak Bank	1916.35	-4.10
L&T	1879.80	54.75
M&M	851.10	10.35
Maruti Suzuki	7421.75	-13.15
Nestle India Ltd.	19284.75	-194.35
NTPC	126.05	-1.20
ONGC	147.35	-1.05
PowerGrid Corp	203.20	-1.60
Reliance Ind	2456.45	38.35
SBI Life	1161.35	-8.15
State Bank	488.65	-2.90
Shree Cement	2641.50	263.65
Sun Pharma	759.75	2.20
Tata Consumer		
Products Ltd.	777.50	5.35
Tata Motors	493.95	0.05
Tata Steel	1176.85	3.85
TCI	3601.75	-25.15
Tech Mahindra	1611.20	6.40
Titan	2373.15	-32.40
UltraTech Cement	7433.85	9.90
UPL	742.20	14.10
Wipro	643.20	1.50

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 09		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.32	75.64
Euro	85.22	85.59
British Pound	99.33	99.75
Japanese Yen (100)	66.33	66.64
Chinese Yuan	11.86	11.92
Swiss Franc	81.70	82.06
Singapore Dollar	55.19	55.43
Canadian Dollar	59.42	59.67
Malaysian Ringgit	17.85	17.95
Australian Dollar	53.90	54.13

Source: Indian Bank



No authorised vendor for rooftop solar: Ministry

The new and renewable energy ministry said that no vendor has been authorised by it for the installation of rooftop solar. The clarification came after it found some vendors claiming they were authorised by the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy to install rooftop solar under grid-connected rooftop solar scheme. PTI

Mahindra Manulife unveils open-ended fund

MUMBAI
Mahindra Manulife Investment Management Private Ltd. has unveiled 'Mahindra Manulife Balanced Advantage Yojana,' an open-ended fund. "The scheme is suitable for investors seeking capital appreciation while generating income over medium to long term by investing in equity and equity-related instruments and debt and money-market instruments," the firm said.

Bharat Bond ETF subscribed 6.2 times

NEW DELHI
The Finance Ministry on Thursday said that the third tranche of Bharat Bond ETF was oversubscribed 6.2 times against the base issue size of ₹1,000 crore. "Overwhelming response seen in Bharat Bond ETF 2032 NFO. Total collection over ₹6,200 crore. Issue... subscribed more than 6.2x against the base issue size of ₹1,000 crore," DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted. PTI

Prodapt to acquire U.K.'s SLR Dynamics

CHENNAI
Digital transformation services provider Prodapt said it has acquired U.K.-based software solutions firm SLR Dynamics for an undisclosed sum. This acquisition will result in protecting more than 100 jobs at SLR Dynamics. Over the next three years, Prodapt plans to grow the U.K. team by adding 400-500 employees with a plan to invest £50 million, the company said in a statement.

CM
YK

India's retail inflation likely accelerated in Nov. to 5.1%

Reuters Dec. 6-8 poll of 39 economists cites rising prices of vegetables, fruits

REUTERS
BENGALURU

India's retail inflation likely accelerated last month towards the upper limit of the RBI's target range as fruit and vegetable prices rose, a Reuters poll found.

The Reserve Bank of India left interest rates on hold on Wednesday but the central bank said price pressures may persist in the near-term.

The December 6-8 poll of 39 economists forecast November consumer price inflation at 5.1%, faster than October's 4.48%. If realised, it would be within the RBI's target band of 2-6% for a fifth consecutive month. The CPI data is due on December 13.



Feeling the pinch: Strong momentum in prices of perishables fanned inflation last month, says Singhal. ■THULASI KAKKAT

"Last month's reduction in fuel taxes and a slightly favourable statistical base were offset by strong momentum in the prices of perishables," said Yuvika Singhal, economist at QuantEco Research.

That was pushed further "because of untimely rains and the uptick in LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) and kerosene prices", she added.

Brent crude oil, India's

biggest import, slid more than 16% last month.

High inflation last year has kept this year's price gains compared with a year earlier subdued. But that is expected to wane as prices are set to rise for mobile phone bills and clothes, putting inflation back on a rising trend.

"The upcoming impact from the hike in telecom tariffs, volatility in the price of perishable goods and any plausible supply-chain disruptions from COVID-19's latest variant could negate the recent respite we had in fuel and global commodity prices," said Madhavi Arora, lead economist at Emkay Global-Financial Services.

SEBI proposes rules for retail algo trading

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator SEBI on Thursday proposed a regulatory framework for algorithmic trading (algo trading) by retail investors to make such trading safe and prevent market manipulations.

In market parlance, algo trading refers to any order that is generated using automated execution logic.

The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) monitors fuel stocks of 136 coal-based thermal power plants with total generation capacity of more than 166 GW.

Coal stock available with power plants monitored by the CEA was 41.6 MT as on November 30, 2020, which declined to 31.9 MT on March 31, he wrote. Also, with increased power generation and some interruption

Coal at power units rises to 10-days cover: Minister

Stocks at thermal plants rise to 21 MT



in supply of coal by companies mainly due to heavy rains and increase in prices of imported coal, stock at the plants slumped to about 11.4 MT as on September 30, 2021, he said.

Subsequently, with the efforts of the Ministry of Power, Ministry of Coal, CEA, Coal India Ltd. and the Railways, coal stock had started improving, he added.

TVS Motor boosts Central America reach

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

TVS Motor Company has strengthened its presence in Central America by sealing a distribution partnership with Active Motors SA, an arm of Grupo Q, for Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

Grupo Q is a leading distributor of motor vehicles in Central America. Active Motors SA would support TVS Motor with dedicated sales, service, spares and customer relationship management.

As a part of this association, Active SA Motors will facilitate the opening of three flagship outlets and about 50 dealerships for the Indian firm in a phased manner across Nicaragua and Costa Rica, as per a statement from TVS Motor.

'Clarify tax relief rule for SEZ projects with WfH'

Ease compliance burden: Nasscom

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) has submitted recommendations for the upcoming Budget, including clarification on availability of income tax relief in projects for which staff Work-from-Home (WfH), reduction in compliance burden and certainty to taxpayers.

Nasscom said the industry had potential to grow twofold in revenue to \$350 billion by FY26, and favourable consideration to the suggestions would help reach the goal. It sought clarification as to whether WfH by employees of units in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) would not affect eligi-

Paytm bank granted status upgrade

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

Paytm Payments Bank has gained central bank approval to function as a scheduled payments bank, Paytm said, helping it to expand its financial services operations.

As a scheduled payments bank, Paytm Payments can participate in government and companies' request for proposals, primary auctions, fixed-rate and variable rate repos and reverse repos, along with participation in marginal standing facility.

It will also be eligible to be a partner in government-run financial inclusion schemes. Shares of parent One 97 Communications rose 2.6% on the BSE on Thursday.

Govt. mulls 5G test bed roll-out in early January

'SMEs, industries can trial solutions'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The government is planning to roll out a 5G test bed in early January to enable small and medium enterprises and other parts of industries to come and test their solution on a working platform, a top Department of Telecom official said on Thursday.

To promote 5G indigenous technology, DoT had in March 2018 approved a multi-institute collaborative project to set up a 5G Test Bed at a total cost of ₹224 crore. A test bed consists of a specific environment including hardware, software, operating systems and network configuration to test a product or service.

"One more effort that we have taken in the recent

past is setting up a 5G test bed. We hope to roll out this 5G test bed in early January which will enable SMEs and other parts of industries to come and test their solution on a working platform," DoT Secretary K. Rajaraman said at the India Mobile Congress. At present, the DoT has allocated spectrum to Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, Vodafone Idea and MTNL for 5G trials.

HMD to export Nokia phones from India

Feature phones still have use cases'



from HMD's partner factory in Sriperumbudur to the United Arab Emirates.

Though the feature phone market was declining, there were still strong use cases for the devices and demand was driven by low entry cost, longer battery life, need for secondary devices as well as by people wanting a 'digital detox', he pointed out. "Not just in India, feature phones are a big market globally," he said.

Equity MF inflows rise to 4-month high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Net flows into equity mutual funds rose to a four-month high of ₹11,615 crore in November on a strong SIP book despite extreme volatility in markets.

This was also the ninth consecutive monthly net inflow, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India showed on Thursday.

In comparison, equity mutual funds logged net inflows to the tune of ₹5,215 crore in October, ₹8,677 crore in September and ₹8,666 crore in August.

November saw the highest monthly net infusion since July, when equity-oriented mutual funds witnessed net inflow of ₹25,002 crore.

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TV PICKS

The Ashes: First Test, day 3, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1 a.m. (Saturday)
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Saturday)

IN BRIEF



Curry moves closer to all-time 3-point record

LOS ANGELES
Golden State star Stephen Curry drained six three-pointers to move within 10 of breaking Ray Allen's (2,973) all-time NBA record in the Warriors' 104-94 victory over Portland Trail Blazers on Wednesday. **The results:** Hornets 106 lost to 76ers 110; Cavaliers 115 bt Bulls 92; Pistons 116 lost to Wizards 119 (OT); Pacers 122 bt Knicks 102; Heat 113 bt Bucks 104; Raptors 109 lost to Thunder 110; Rockets 114 bt Nets 104; Grizzlies 96 lost to Mavericks 104; Timberwolves 104 lost to Jazz 136; Pelicans 114 lost to Nuggets 120 (OT); Warriors 104 bt Trail Blazers 94; Kings 142 bt Magic 130; Clippers 114 bt Celtics 111. AP

COVID-19 ends India's Asian CT campaign

DONGHAE (SOUTH KOREA)
The Indian women's hockey team was on Thursday forced out of the ongoing Asian Champions Trophy after one of its player tested positive for COVID-19, joining Malaysia which was also compelled to withdraw after being hit by the dreaded virus here. A day after the cancellation of its matches against Korea and China, an Asian Hockey Federation source said that the Indian team is no longer competing in the event. PTI



Mauresmo named French Open director

PARIS
Former women's World No. 1 Amelie Mauresmo was on Thursday named director of the French Open, replacing Guy Forget. Mauresmo will be in place until at least 2024, French tennis federation president Gilles Moretton said. Mauresmo is a two-time Grand Slam winner (Australian Open and Wimbledon in 2006) and the 2004 Athens Olympics silver medallist. AFP

Head's rapid-fire ton puts Australia in command

Warner rides his luck but falls short of a century; Labuschagne contributes 74 as the hosts lead by 196 runs

THE ASHES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRISBANE

Travis Head blasted a rapid-fire century to crush England hopes on the second day of the opening Ashes Test at the Gabba on Thursday.

At the close of play Australia was 343 for seven, a lead of 196 on England's dismal first-innings total of 147.

Head was on 112 off 95 balls, alongside Mitchell Starc (10).

Robinson's two in two
England had threatened a comeback after tea when Ollie Robinson took two wickets off consecutive balls, but Head's aggressive innings put paid to any hopes of a miracle recovery.

Head came to the crease with Australia 189 for three after Steve Smith edged Mark Wood to 'keeper Jos Buttler just before tea.



Cutting loose: Head hit 12 fours and two sixes in his unbeaten 95-ball 112. AFP

He then watched David Warner (94) and Cameron Green depart to Robinson's accurate seamers after the break.

But the 27-year-old Head attacked from the outset and was particularly harsh on spinners Jack Leach and Joe Root.

He smashed two sixes and 12 fours in his century, his third overall and his first since the Boxing Day Test against New Zealand in 2019.

Leach, one for 95 from 11 overs, failed to assert any control and with Ben Stokes also struggling for fitness, skipper Root had to rely heavily on his three-man seam attack.

Warner rode his luck in the first two sessions.

He was bowled off a no-ball by Stokes before lunch, then dropped by Rory Burns in the first over after the break, before Haseeb Haq bungled a simple run-out when Warner was on 60.

No-ball drama

Warner's good fortune began in the opening session when Stokes bowled him when he was on 17, but the all-rounder had overstepped to give the Australian opener a reprieve.

Television replays showed that Stokes had also overstepped on the first three balls of his over, but nothing was called.

That led to suggestions that had he been called ear-

lier, he would have adjusted his run-up and Warner's prized wicket – off Stokes' fourth delivery – may have stood.

Marnus Labuschagne contributed 74 before slicing an attempted cut off Leach to Wood at backward point.

SCOREBOARD

England – 1st innings: 147.

Australia – 1st innings: David Warner c Stokes b Robinson 94, Marcus Harris c Malan b Robinson 3, Marnus Labuschagne c Wood b Leach 74, Steve Smith c Buttler b Wood 12, Travis Head (batting) 112, Cameron Green b Robinson 0, Alex Carey c Pope b Woakes 12, Pat Cummins c Hameed b Root 12, M. Starc (batting) 10; Extras (b-4, lb-4, nb-4, w-2): 14; Total (for seven wkt.s in 84 overs): 343.

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-166, 3-189, 4-195, 5-195, 6-236, 7-306.

England bowling: Woakes 20-7-56-1, Robinson 18-8-48-3, Wood 20-4-57-1, Stokes 9-0-50-0, Leach 11-0-95-1, Root 6-0-29-1.

Third 'Test' ends in a draw

IND-A IN SA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BLOEMFONTEIN

Sarel Erwee (97) and Zubayr Hamza (125 not out) flayed the India-A bowlers as South Africa-A declared at 311 for three in its second innings on the fourth and final day of the third 'Test' here on Thursday.

Pursuing a target of 304, India-A finished at 90 for three when the match was called off.

Prithvi Shaw made 38 off 34 balls with eight fours before falling to Senuran Muthusamy.

Abhimanyu Easwaran (19) and Devdutt Padikkal (15) were the other batters dismissed.

Hanuma Vihari (13) and Ishan Kishan (0) were unbeaten as the contest ended in a draw.

The scores: South Africa-A 268 & 311/dec. in 86 overs (Sarel Erwee 97, Zubayr Hamza 125 n.o.) drew with India-A 276 and 90/3 in 17 overs (Prithvi Shaw 38).

We couldn't have had two white-ball captains: Ganguly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI



Ganguly and Kohli.
■ FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

BCCI president and former India skipper said.

Ganguly said the selectors felt that multiple leaders in the white-ball format would lead to confusion and that's why the Chetan Sharma-led committee suggested that it's better to have one leader.

Meanwhile, the BCCI on Thursday thanked Kohli for displaying "grit, passion and determination" during his tenure.

"So, the selectors felt that they cannot have two white ball captains in two white-ball formats. That's too much of leadership,"

The BCCI on Wednesday named Rohit as ODI captain going into the 2023 World Cup and Ganguly, in an interaction with PTI, opened up on the issue, asserting that the incumbent was spoken to and duly accepted the decision.

"We had requested Virat not to step down as T20 captain, but he didn't want to continue."

"A leader who led the side with grit, passion & determination. Thank you Captain @imV Kohli," the Board tweeted".

Ganguly accepted the decision.

Ganguly said the selectors felt that multiple leaders in the white-ball format would lead to confusion and that's why the Chetan Sharma-led committee suggested that it's better to have one leader.

Meanwhile, the BCCI on

Thursday thanked Kohli for

displaying "grit, passion & determination" during his tenure.

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Manipur claims 21st National title

Beats Railways 2-1 on penalties; fine work by custodian Okram Roshini Devi

FOOTBALL

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

There is no stopping Manipur. The women from the North-East made it 21 out of 26 at the National senior football championship on Thursday. They defeated Railways in a final that failed to produce a goal in 120 minutes.

The players on either side had so forgotten how to put the ball into the net, they struggled to do it even from the penalty spot in the shoot-out. Railways struggled more, as it finished runner-up for the second time in a row.

Poor shooting

The Railways women converted only one of their kicks. That had more to do with poor shooting, but



Unstoppable: The Manipur women celebrate their record victory. ■ K. RAGESH

they were denied also by some fine work by the Manipur custodian Okram Roshini Devi, who emerged as her team's hero.

She didn't have to do anything spectacular, though, to stop the last kick from Railways.

Suprava Samal's kick was gentle and straight at her; she gathered it after a bit of

a fumble. It took some time before her teammates to realise that the match was over and the trophy was theirs.

They may have needed the shoot-out to win their 21st title – and they were runner-up on four occasions – but this was a remarkable performance still, for they were without many of

their main players, who are away on national duty.

They had more reasons to celebrate at the closing ceremony; Roshini was named the tournament's best goalkeeper and captain from Prameshwari Devi the most valuable player.

The result (final): Manipur bt Railways 2-1 on penalties (0-0 in normal time).

Mittal beats Bhardwaj for trap gold

SHOOTING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ankur Mittal, the reigning double trap World champion, won the trap gold in the 64th National shooting championship at the New Moti Bagh Gun Club in Patiala on Thursday.

In a very competitive field of 221, the 29-year-old Mittal topped the 'single barrel' final with 43 to beat Aditya Bhardwaj by three points.

Qualification topper Zoravar Singh Sandhu was pipped to the bronze by Rayyan Rizvi, while Akash Kushwaha and Danish Ahmad finished fifth and sixth respectively.

A regular in the national team, Prithviraj Tondaiman shot 115 and missed the final by one point. Olympian Kyann Chennai and Asian Games silver medallist Lakshay She-



Medallists: Winner Ankur Mittal, centre, is flanked by Aditya Bhardwaj and Rayyan Rizvi. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

oran shot 114 and finished 10th and 11th respectively.

Former World champion and multiple Asian and National champion Manavjit Sandhu shot 109 and finished 35th.

Former Asian champion Anwer Sultan (109), the only Indian shooter to win an Olympic quota for the Sydney Olympics in 2000, also shot 109 for the 40th place.

Olympian and national coach Mansher Singh and former national champion Anirudh Singh shot 108 and placed 41st and 43rd respectively.

The president of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), Raninder Singh, two-time silver medallist in the national championship, shot 95 and placed 95th.

Athens Olympics silver

medallist in double trap, Ravyardhan Singh Rathore shot 93 for the 133rd spot.

In the junior section, another double trap shooter, 19-year-old Shapath Bhardwaj won the gold as he pipped Vivaan Kapoor 4-3 in the shoot-off after the two were tied on 41 in the final.

Meanwhile, in the 50-metre rifle prone event in Bhopal, Bandhvi Singh won the women's and junior gold medals with a score of 626.0.

The results: At Patiala: Trap:

Men: 1. Ankur Mittal 43 (117); 2.

Aditya Bhardwaj 40 (117); 3.

Rayan Rizvi 33 (116).

Juniors: 1. Shapath Bhardwaj

41(4) 113; 2. Vivaan Kapoor 41

(3) 113; 3. Aakash Kushwaha 30

Medora may score encore

BENGALURU: Medora, who is in fine fettle, may score an encore in Bangalore 1000 Guineas (1,600m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Friday (Dec 10). There will be no false rails.

1 KRISHNA PLATE (Div. III) (1,200m), rated 00 to 25, 2.00 p.m.: 1. Areca Angel (4) H.M. Akshay 60.5, 2. San Bernardino (3) P. Siddaraju 58.5, 3. Quick Shots (7) Vishal Bunde 57. 4. Rightly Noble (9) Saddam H 57, 5. Stuning Beauty (5) L.A. Rozario 57. 6. Florencia (10) Salman Khan 56.5, 7. Top News (11) Tausif Khan 56.5, 8. Ultimate Power (2) Chandrashekhar 56, 9. Star Citizen (1) Likith Appu 55.5, 10. He's The One (6) S. Saqlain 54 and 11. Prime Star (8) J.H. Arul 52.

1. RIGHTLY NOBLE,

2. ARECA ANGEL, 3. TOP NEWS

2 FRANKEL PLATE (1,400m),

maiden 3-y-o only (Terms):

2.30: 1. Baba Voss (8) Mark 52,

Purple Legend (6) S. Saqlain 57,

3. Siege Perilous (7) Dhama Singh

57, 4. Tactical Command (1) Darshan 57, 5. Ultimate General (5)

Rayan Ahmed 57, 6. Demeter (3)

B. Harish 55.5, 7. Only You (2)

Neeti 55.5 and 8. Pink Jasmine

(4) Akshay Kumar 55.5.

2. ONLY YOU, 3. PINK JASMINE

3 KRISHNA PLATE (Div. II)

(1,200m), rated 00 to 25, 3.00:

1. Commandpost (5) H.M.

Akshay 61, 2. Nostradamus (9)

Likith Appu 60.5, 3. Beautiful Oblivian (1) Vishal Bunde 58.5, 4.

Chios (1) J.H. Arul 58.5, 5. Embosom (4) Shreyas Singh 58, 6.

Niche Hemp (8) L.A. Rozario 58,

7. Tiffanny (6) Tousif Khan 58,

Max Mueller (3) Chandrashekhar

57.5, 9. Orogenesis (2) Ikrام

Ahmed 57.5, 10. Glorious Logan

(7) Salman Khan 57 and 11. Smile

Around (10) S. Saqlain 57.

1. CHIOS, 2. COMMANDPOST,

3. EMBOSOM

4 SEATTLE SLEW PLATE

(1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only (Terms):

3.30: 1. Evaldo (1) Akshay

62.5, 2. Twilight Fame (2)

P. Siddaraju 62, 3. Country's

Jewel (8) H.M. Akshay 61.5, 4.

Welcome Surprise (6) Tousif

Khan 61.5, 5. Impeccable (1) Vishal Bunde 61, 6. Ultimate

Choice (7) Saddam H 60.5, 7. For

midable Star (4) Salman Khan

59.5, 8. Galactical (10) J.H. Arul

59.5, 9. Zhu Zhu Zest (3) S.

Saqlain 59.5 and 10. Sir Jersey (5)

Shreyas Singh 58.5.

1. IMPECCABLE, 2. GALACTICAL,

3. COUNTRY'S JEWEL

Days best: **SIEGE PERILOUS**

Double: THE SOVEREIGN ORB - IMPECCABLE

Jackpot: 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8.

Treble: 3, 4 & 5; (ii): 6, 7 & 8.

the Indian hopes as she beat Zhanel Rustemova of Kazakhstan after losing the first set.

Results (quarterfinals):

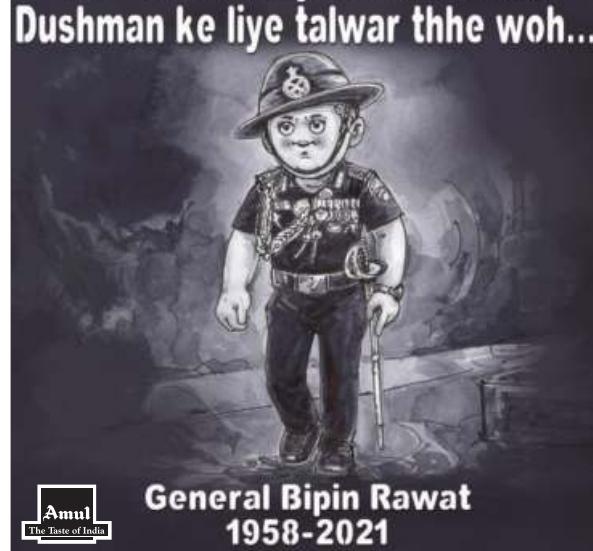
Boys: Chirag Duhan bt Woobin Shin (Kor) 6-3, 6-4 in the Aryan Pumps ITF Asian junior tennis quarterfinals at the Deccan Gymkhana here on Thursday.

Second seed Nishant Dabas and Saheb Sodhi also reached the semifinals and will play each other.

Chirag will next challenge Max Batyutenko of Kazakhstan, who stopped Aman Dahiya in three sets.

In the girls' section, Shruti Ahlawat sustained

Har sainik ke yaar thhe woh, Dushman ke liye talwar thhe woh...



General Bipin Rawat 1958-2021

daCunha/AB/783

Chirag ousts Woobin



Big scalp: Chirag Duhan in action. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ASIAN TENNIS

SPORTS BUREAU

PUNE

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Text & Context

NEWS IN NUMBERS



Space exploration

2 The number of unmanned missions to be launched by India in 2022 before the country's first human spaceflight programme, 'Gaganyaan', is scheduled to take off by the end of next year. The Venus mission is planned for 2022, while the Solar Mission for 2022-23, said Jitendra Singh who is the Minister of State, Science and Technology. These unmanned missions would be accompanied by robots. The third mission to the moon, Chandrayaan-3, is also likely to be launched in 2022. ISRO has also planned a Space Station mission for 2030.

Power in Loss

74,433 In ₹cr, the losses of power discoms across States & UTs in India in 2019-20. This was lower than the ₹86,700 cr in 2019 and higher than the ₹58,474 cr in losses in 2018. The bulk of the losses were in Tamil Nadu - ₹19,684 cr, ₹17,962 cr, and ₹12,541 cr in 2020, 2019 and 2018, respectively. Rajasthan's discoms also suffered a loss of ₹12,277 cr in 2020. Discoms which are in the private sector made a cumulative profit of ₹471 crore in 2020. LOK SABHA Q & A

Accidental deaths

47,984 The number of people who died due to road accidents on National Highways, including on expressways, in 2020. In 2019, as many as 53,872 persons died due to road accidents on National Highways. The major causes of such accidents in 2020 were vehicle design and condition, road engineering, over-speeding, drunken driving / consumption of alcohol & drugs, driving on the wrong side of the road, jumping the red light and use of mobile phones. LOK SABHA Q & A

A huge fine

1.28 in \$ billion, the fine imposed by Italy's antitrust regulator on Amazon for "abusing its market dominance". The regulator said Amazon used its dominant position to favour its own logistical service to the detriment of its competitors. This is one of the largest fines imposed on an U.S. based technology firm (the largest fine was imposed by the EU on Google in 2018 for engaging in anticompetitive behaviour via the dominance of the Android operating system). Amazon has said that it will appeal the fine.

Annus Horribilis

21 The number of years after which FC Barcelona failed to make it out of the group stage of the UEFA Champions League, following the club's 0-3 defeat to Bayern Munich on Wednesday. The team will now play in the Europa League, the second-rung continental tournament. FC Barcelona's performance comes at a time when the club is saddled with a large debt of nearly \$1.6 billion dollars forcing it to limit its buying in the transfer market and to recruit talent from its youth and Barcelona-B teams. The club also lies 7th in the La Liga.

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

EXPLAINER

The 'diplomatic' Olympic boycott

Why has the U.S. announced a 'diplomatic boycott' of the Beijing Winter Olympics? What has been China's response?

ANANTH KRISHNAN

The story so far: On December 6, the U.S. Government said it will not send any official representation to the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, due to start on February 4, 2022, announcing what is being called a "diplomatic boycott" of the games. The decision elicited a strong response from China, which slammed the move as a "political stunt" and said the Olympics "were not a stage for political posturing and manipulation". The spat over the Winter Olympics is the latest clash between the U.S. and China, adding to a long list of differences on trade, Taiwan, human rights and the South China Sea.

What does a 'diplomatic boycott' of the games mean? A "diplomatic boycott" means no U.S. official will be present at the Winter Olympics in Beijing. This stops short of a complete boycott, which would have meant the non-participation by U.S. athletes. As such, the absence of official representation will not

treat these games as business as usual". These games, she argued, could not be treated as such because of China's "human rights abuses and atrocities in Xinjiang". This isn't the first U.S. move aimed to highlight Chinese actions in Xinjiang. In March, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned two Chinese Government officials "in connection with serious human rights abuses against ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region", where hundreds of thousands of Uighurs, a Muslim minority, have been sent by Chinese authorities to "re-education" camps, a network of which were constructed beginning in 2016 to house thousands of detainees. Beijing initially denied the existence of the camps, but subsequently claimed the centres were for "vocational training". Amid a growing outcry from the U.S. and the EU which also announced sanctions, authorities said last year that most of those in the camps had "graduated". This week, Beijing described U.S. allegations of "genocide" in Xinjiang as "the biggest lie of the century".

A "diplomatic boycott" means no U.S. official will be present at the Winter Olympics in Beijing.

impact the games as much as an athletic boycott would have. Chinese officials, meanwhile, pointed out that they had not invited any U.S. official to attend the opening, saying their "political agenda was doomed to fail".

What led to the U.S. boycott? White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the decision was taken because "U.S. diplomatic or official representation would

so far, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have also announced that their officials will not be present at the games. Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, has said he will travel to Beijing for the opening of the Winter Olympics. China has also been garnering support from countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Who else is 'diplomatically boycotting' the games?

On the one hand, Beijing has sought to play down the impact saying the concerned countries were not invited, while on the other, its Foreign Ministry threatened "countermeasures", as yet unspecified. China's media, meanwhile, has been largely playing down the reports of the boycotts, underlining how the authorities are going all-out to ensure the games are conducted without a hitch. Beyond the statements decrying "politicisation" of sports, there is certainly a domestic political undercurrent to the games, which are meant to showcase, as with the Beijing Olympics in 2008, China's



November 30 China-Africa foreign ministers' summit, attended by foreign ministers of China and 53 African countries, said it backed the games and "opposed the politicisation of sports". Last month, the Russia-India-China (RIC) foreign ministers in New Delhi also voiced support for the games in the statement issued after the meeting.

How is China reacting to the boycott?

In a virtual summit last month, the U.S. and Chinese Presidents committed to "responsibly" manage their growing competition amid increasing conflicts. At the summit, President Joe Biden called for "common sense guardrails to ensure that competition does not veer into conflict," while Mr. Xi emphasised the "need to treat each other as equals" and warned against "drawing ideological lines", calling on the U.S. "to meet its word of not seeking a 'new Cold War'".

The exchange over the Winter Olympics, however, is yet another reminder of the challenge both sides face in doing so, as a clash over ideology and political systems adds to an already long list of differences.

Gearing up: A woman flies a ribbon near the logos of the Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Games in a park in Beijing, China on December 8, 2021. ■

REUTERS

LETTER & SPIRIT

The Citizenship question in the Constituent Assembly

ABHILASH M.R.

'Letter and Spirit' as a new column will focus on explaining and understanding basic Acts and Articles enshrined in our Constitution. These columns will put into context different aspects of the Acts being historical, legal, political etc. Today's column discusses the Constituent Assembly debates around Citizenship.

With the contentious farm laws repealed, the discussions turn to the second most politically and legally resisted legislation of recent times, The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. The vignettes of the citizenship question find its retro-reflection in the Constituent Assembly debates which serve as the undeniable autobiography of India's basic law.

The citizenship question had been one of the most gruelling tasks confronted by the drafting committee as admitted by Dr B.R.Ambedkar, who moved a set of consolidated amendments to the citizenship provisions of the original draft. He said that the task had given the drafting committee "such a headache" and multiple "drafts were prepared" and "destroyed" before arriving at a consensus, which may satisfy "most people, if not all."

The critics

The prognosis of Dr. Ambedkar that the draft may not satisfy all came true as the secular and liberal provisions of the proposed draft and the official amendments were fiercely contested on the floor of the Constituent Assembly on religious, ethnic and hyper-nationalistic considerations. While Article 5 of the draft constitution (Article 5 of the Constitution of India) was criticised for its lack of exclusive and preferential provisions on religious lines regarding the declaration as to who shall be the citizen of India (on the date of



commencement of the Constitution), Article 5A of the draft (Article 7 of the Constitution of India), was excoriated on the ground that its proviso sought to grant citizenship rights to the migrants of Pakistan who had returned to India under a permit for resettlement granted by Indian authorities. Dr P.S.Deshmukh from the Central Provinces and Berar proposed changes to Article 5 of the draft by proposing to replace the universally honoured "jus soli" principle by qualifying it with a religious appendage that "every person who is a Hindu or a Sikh by religion and is not a citizen of any other State, wherever he resides shall be entitled to be a citizen of India." In the process, the additional "domicile requirement" as conceived by Article 5 along with the "jus soli" principle was consigned to oblivion.

As the "jus soli" principle is premised on the automatic grant of citizenship based on the place of birth provided the person is domiciled in India, qualifying it with religious identity, was in fact a proposal to ingrain religion into the bedrock of the Constitution. The concern of Dr. Deshmukh justifying the exclusion of people belonging to other religions, as echoed in his question, "Is it then wise

that we should throw open our citizenship so indiscriminately?", found fraternal support in Thakur Das Bhargava from East Punjab who exclaimed "Hindus and Sikhs have no other home but India!". These views were also supported by Prof. Shibbon Lal Saksena of the United Provinces.

The assertion of Dr. Deshmukh that "by the mere fact that he is a Hindu or a Sikh, he should get Indian citizenship because it is this one circumstance that makes him disliked by others" finds its resonance today in the presumptive base of the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act that only people belonging to some faiths are victims of persecution and violence and the doors of the country can be legitimately shut to any other instance of persecution and ethnic violence.

Dr. Deshmukh found a steadfast ally in Jaspat Roy Kapoor of the United Provinces who expressed his strong opposition to the grant of citizenship rights to the returnees by stating that "once a person has migrated to Pakistan and transferred his loyalty from India to Pakistan, his migration is complete. He has definitely made up his mind at that time to kick this country and let it go to its own fate, and he went away to the newly created Pakistan, where he would put in his best efforts to make it a free, progressive and prosperous state."

The defenders

The well-reasoned response to Jaspat Roy Kapoor by Brajeshwar Prasad, a member from Bihar, highlighting the fact of panic driven migration without certain intention to settle down in Pakistan was left unanswered with precision. R.K. Sidhu from C.P. and Berar retorted that mentioning the name of some communities will make other communities feel that they were being ignored.

Jawaharlal Nehru's response in

defence of the draft definition and secularism was unequivocal as he observed that "we have only done something which every country does except a very few misguided and backward countries in the world. Let us not refer to that word in the sense that we have done something very mighty", indicating how some people consider themselves as being generous while advertising to the idea of a secular state. He did not mince words when he stated that "you cannot have rules for Hindus, for Muslims and for Christians only. It is absurd on the face of it". Nehru also impressed upon the possibility of the second wave of migration including non-Hindus and non-Sikhs who were part of the first wave influx. Hence, in his view, foreclosing the doors fearing the influx of some may deprive others of exercising their choice.

Brajeshwar Prasad went further in stating that "I see no reason why a Muslim who is a citizen of this country should be deprived of his citizenship at the commencement of this Constitution, especially when we are inviting Hindus who have come to India from Pakistan to become citizens of this country. People who have never been in India but have always lived in the Punjab and on the frontier have come and become citizens of this State; why cannot a Muhammadan of the frontier be so when we have always said that we are one?"

Mahboob Ali Baig went one step ahead by calling the position of Dr. Deshmukh as "ridiculous" as it contemplated giving citizenship rights only to persons who are Hindus and Sikhs. Mr. Baig sought to dissuade the Constituent Assembly from following in the footsteps of those countries which were being condemned everywhere.

Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar too spoke in support of the amendments proposed as well as supported by Dr. Ambedkar. History is known to set examples.

was clear in his view that "we cannot on any racial or religious or other grounds make a distinction between one kind of persons and another, or one sect of persons and another sect of persons having regard to our commitments and the formulation of our policy on various occasions."

The denouement

Dr. Ambedkar's sagacious rejoinder settled the dust of left out concerns and rendered clarity to the intent of the draft as well as the consolidated amendment. He highlighted that the principal thrust of Article 5A was to declare that persons who migrated to Pakistan after 1st of March 1947 (Internal disturbances commenced on this date) shall not be Indian citizens and the proviso provides exception to the general law.

While not bothering to re-answer what had been negated by the deliberative wisdom of the Assembly, he declared that some migrants from Pakistan were allowed to return on the basis of the agreements between both the Governments and on the basis of an ordinance promulgated.

The amendment No. 164 proposed by Dr. Deshmukh modifying Article 5 to make citizenship as a matter of right to Hindus and Sikhs irrespective of the place of residence was rejected. Other amendments proposed by Dr. Deshmukh, Jaspat Roy Kapoor and Shibbon Lal Saksena were withdrawn with the leave of the house as they were on the verge of being defeated, whereas the consolidated amendment moved by Dr. Ambedkar was adopted leading to the finalisation of the provisions in the Constitution.

The Constituent Assembly debates on citizenship showed that in the rousing of sentiments of ethnicity and distrust, sagacity had an upper hand, leading to the saner denouement of toleration. History is known to set examples.

THE GIST

The citizenship question had been one of the most gruelling tasks confronted by the drafting committee as admitted by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. These debates around citizenship in the light of The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 seem even more relevant today.

Critics of the proposed amendment like Dr. P.S.Deshmukh from the Central Provinces and Berar suggested changes to Article 5 by proposing to qualify the universally honoured "jus soli" principle with a religious appendage. These views were supported by Prof. Shibbon Lal Saksena and Jaspat Roy Kapoor of the United Provinces.

Defenders of Dr. Ambedkar's proposed amendments like Brajeshwar Prasad, talked about the panic driven migration without certain intention to settle down in Pakistan that happened during the partition. Mahboob Ali Baig went one step ahead by calling the proposition of Dr. Deshmukh as "ridiculous" as it contemplated giving citizenship rights only to persons who are Hindus and Sikhs. Jawaharlal Nehru also extended his full support to the proposed amendments.

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IN THE LIMELIGHT

The OTT proliferation

The streaming wars just got much more interesting

GAUTAM SUNDER

■ There has been a significant rise in vernacular OTT platforms. These homegrown video apps have emerged to be relevant disruptors, thanks to the lack of regional content on international platforms.

■ Subscriptions (monthly or annual) are cheaper by 40 to 50 per cent in comparison to the global streamers, and some have made it easier for potential user bases in rural areas to use physical currency, top-up cards, or even mobile balance to sign up easily offline.

■ Some platforms like Amazon are merging with local OTTs in order to gain traffic for their own platforms. The platform recently launched its vertical, collaborating with eight other subscription-based OTT video brands such as Eros Now, Hoichoi and manoromaMAX at discounted rates.

The rise in vernacular OTTs

According to the latest FICCI-EY report, the share of regional language consumption on OTT platforms will cross 50% by 2025, going past even Hindi at 45%.

Hyderabad-based Aha, for instance, has blitzed the market with successful hyper-local content since its launch in March 2020, and now has a user base of around 1.7 million. Their focus on original titles, as well as non-fiction shows (Telugu Idol is up next) has proven to be a hit, and the brand is set to now enter the Tamil market in January 2022. Sun NXT remains the main player in Tamil Nadu, but has not made any originals yet, with prominence given to its TV channel shows

and Sun Pictures-produced films; the reason why Aha sees a way in.

Koode (Malayalam), Olly Plus (Odia), Talkies (Tulu, Konkani, Kannada), Reel Drama (Assamese), Pitaara TV's Chaupal (Punjabi), Oho Gujarati and CityShor.TV (Gujarati) are just some of the vernacular brands that are grabbing

As per Ormax Media's findings, only 25 per cent of India now has access to OTT platforms. That number is set to burgeon in coming years, as India is currently the world's fastest growing OTT market.

valuable market share.

With some of these players already experienced in film production, the go-to strategy is to ensure original content is churned out as quickly as possible, with culturally driven storylines, relatable small-town themes, and the cast populated with upcoming local names or YouTube/ TV stars who have been ignored by the larger players and who the audiences already identifies with.

A classic case in point is the success of acclaimed Malayalam drama, *The Great Indian Kitchen*, which was rejected by the bigger sites before finding a home on Neestream, which consequently put the platform on the map.

Easy access

Subscriptions (monthly or annual) are cheaper by 40% to 50% in comparison to the global streamers, and some of them, like Hoichoi, have made it easier for potential user bases in rural areas - (where the main mode of transaction is cash) to use physical currency, top-up cards, or even mobile balance - to sign up easily offline.

As per Ormax Media's findings, only 25% of India now has access to OTT platforms. That number is set to rapidly rise in coming years, as India is currently the world's fastest-growing OTT

market and is set to emerge as the world's sixth-largest by 2024, according to PwC. Regional streamers will no doubt benefit heavily from this, as more people in non-urban areas get access to the Internet.

But it's not as if the global names are ignorant of this trend; rapid steps have already been taken to learn from previous missteps. Netflix learnt that the immense fandom of southern stars like Vijay, Ajith or Pawan Kalyan can even outstrip their Bollywood counterparts, and acted quickly to set up a dedicated Twitter handle for south Indian content and regional language-dubbed Hollywood films and web series. Though their original productions last year like *Navarasam* (Tamil) and *Pitta Kathalu* (Telugu) were disappointing, more projects have been commissioned already, with A-list actors and music artistes as part of the fray.

If you can't beat them, join them

Amazon Prime, by far the most stacked in regional content among the big players, has tasted a lot of success of late (*Soorarai Pottru*, *Drishyam 2*, *Jai Bhim*). And with a certified star like Suriya inking an exclusive deal with them, it is already poised for the upcoming challenges. The platform also recently launched its channel's vertical, collaborating with eight other subscription-based OTT video brands such as Eros Now, Hoichoi and manoromaMAX at discounted rates. If you can't beat them...

Similarly, ZEE5, which also boasts of a decent regional library thanks to its content from various ZEE TV channels down south, could potentially bolster its appeal if it joins hands with SonyLIV, after the merger between Sony Pictures Networks India and Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd.

With over 40 video OTT apps (and counting) set to tussle for viewership in 2022, it will be fascinating to see how the international behemoths face off against the homegrown up-and-comers. One thing is for sure though: the viewer will always be the winner.

THE GIST

■ There has been a significant rise in vernacular OTT platforms. These homegrown video apps have emerged to be relevant disruptors, thanks to the lack of regional content on international platforms.

■ Subscriptions (monthly or annual) are cheaper by 40 to 50 per cent in comparison to the global streamers, and some have made it easier for potential user bases in rural areas to use physical currency, top-up cards, or even mobile balance to sign up easily offline.

■ Some platforms like Amazon are merging with local OTTs in order to gain traffic for their own platforms. The platform recently launched its vertical, collaborating with eight other subscription-based OTT video brands such as Eros Now, Hoichoi and manoromaMAX at discounted rates.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Test yourself on the Nobel Prizes that are traditionally given away on December 10, the death anniversary of Alfred Nobel

1 Aside from Marie Curie, name the only other person to have won a Nobel in two different categories.

2 What specifically connects the Peace laureates Carl von Ossietzky, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Liu Xiaobo?

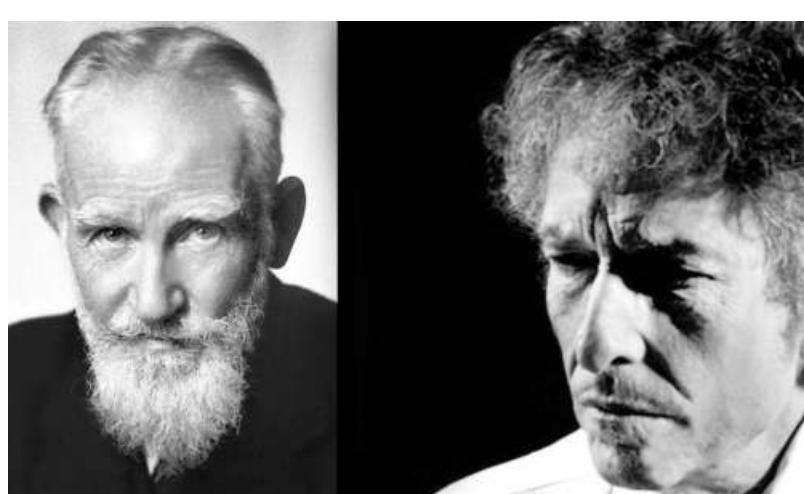
3 Between 1901 and 2021, the Nobel Prizes and the prize in economic sciences have been awarded 609 times. Which category has the most laureates?

4 Name the last married couple to be awarded the coveted prize.

5 What is the contribution of Erik Lindberg, Gustav Vigeland, and Gunnar Svensson-Lundqvist to the history of the Nobel Prize?

6 Apart from the hand-painted diploma and medal, what else do the laureates receive?

7 Who in 1979 cancelled the scheduled celebratory banquet and used the 'savings' for feeding the poor?



◀ Identify the two laureates and what rare distinction have the two achieved?

▪ NOBELPRIZE.ORG

Please send in your answers to the

dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:

1. variola major, 2. Syphilis, 3. Between 7 and 17 days, 4. It was on that date the WHO's International Smallpox Assessment

Commission declared that the country was free from the age-old scourge, 5. Somalia, 6. USA (Atlanta) and Russia (Koltsovo), 7.

Edward Jenner

Early Birds: Mohammad Kiron Kareem

Sriaram Kalingarayar| RahulSai Veyikandal

Vivek Brahmane| Aysha M Fizal



A view of the Betwa river in Bundelkhand region near Jhansi. ▪ THE HINDU

FROM THE ARCHIVES

A huge, costly mistake

SUNNY SEBASTIAN

The Union Cabinet on December 8, 2021 approved the implementation of the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project at a cost of ₹44,605 crore with the Centre funding ₹39,317. The project involves transferring of water from the Ken river to the Betwa river through the construction of Daudhan dam and a canal linking the two rivers. In this piece dated April 20, 2021, Sunny Sebastian breaks down how the benefits of the project do not seem certain and are far outweighed by the costs to the environment. Edited excerpts:

A river project which remained a pipe dream for more than three decades after it was first mooted may now become a reality. Last month, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and the Centre signed a tripartite agreement to transfer "surplus" water from the Ken basin in M.P. to the "deficit" Betwa basin in U.P. The Ken-Betwa project is part of the national river linking project which proposes to connect 14 Himalayan and 16 peninsular rivers with 30 canals and 3,000 reservoirs in order to irrigate 87 million hectares of land. It has the status of a national project, as the Centre will contribute 90% of the cost. It is India's first river linking project and will take eight years to complete. First mooted in the 1980s, the Ken-Betwa project was taken up seriously only during former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's regime. Since then, former Union Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti has been the torch-bearer of the project. The project, the Government says, will enhance the irrigation potential of the water-starved Bundelkhand region in U.P. and M.P., facilitate groundwater recharge and reduce the occurrence of floods. According to the Memorandum of Agreement signed, the to-be-built Daudhan dam is expected to irrigate nearly 6,00,000 hectares in four districts in M.P. and 2,51,000 hectares in four districts in U.P. and provide drinking water supply to 41 lakh people in M.P. and 21 lakh in U.P.

Environmental concerns

However, the excitement of planners and politicians about this project, which costs ₹37,611 crore (2018 figure), is reportedly missing on the ground. The people of the region who are going to be affected by the project seem resigned to their fate. In public hearings held in the past, they were divided on political lines and also worried about the loss of the ecosystem and displacement. The project was on the drawing board for years mainly due to environmental concerns. Of the 12,500 hectares of land to get submerged by the project, more than 9,000 ha are categorised as forest land. The submergence area includes a critically important section of the Panna Tiger Reserve. The Reserve is considered as a shining example of conservation after it successfully improved the tiger and vulture populations. Congress president Sonia Gandhi wrote to Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar asking him not to implement the project. She said "around 40% of the area of the tiger reserve will be irretrievably damaged" if the project is implemented. Also, the project may destroy about 7.2 lakh trees. South Asia Network on Dams, River and People convener Himanshu Thakkar fears that this will affect rainfall in the already parched region.

Cost and benefit

The claims of Ken having surplus water may be unrealistic as the river is not perennial – in the past sometimes, it has slowed to a trickle. Another difficulty will be that the Ken flows 60-70 feet lower than the Betwa and at least 30% of the 103 MW power generated will be used for pumping the water up. The Union Ministry and the National Water Development Agency, which is entrusted with the project, have some issues to sort out. These include getting clearance from the Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court, which had raised concerns about the project. Thus, the benefits do not seem certain and are far outweighed by the costs on the environment. It is surprising that alternatives such as water-conservation and water-harvesting methods without building a dam haven't been seriously considered in the region. Large-scale solutions such as this are not always viable and the best. Given the serious doubts about the benefits, the Ken-Betwa project seems like a huge, costly mistake.

Sunny Sebastian is a former Vice-Chancellor and member, Rajasthan State Board for Wildlife

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