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CENTRE SENDS TEAMS TO UTTAR PRADESH, PUNJAB, HIMACHAL PRADESH

New worry as states with fewer cases see Covid spurt, big jump in Rajasthan

Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh also report significant increase in active cases

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, NOVEMBER 22

EVEN AS states with relatively smaller caseloads have been reporting a spurt in Covid cases, the Centre has dispatched high-level teams to Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to help them tackle the spread of the disease.

While fresh cases of coronavirus infections continue to decline — or remain stagnant — in the worst-affected states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, on the other hand, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and even Himachal Pradesh have been seeing a significant rise in active cases.

Uttar Pradesh is the only one in the top 10 states with highest caseloads to have seen an increase in its active cases in the last two weeks, and that too only a nominal rise of less than 500.

While Delhi and Kerala continue to report the maximum



A market in Jaipur on Sunday. Night curfew has been imposed in parts of Rajasthan. Rohit Jain Paras

number of new cases every day, even these two seem have left their peaks behind, and are now witnessing a decline in their active cases.

In absolute terms, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and even Himachal Pradesh are still reporting far lesser number of

cases than Maharashtra, or some other top 10 states, but it is much more than what they were reporting earlier.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

RISING NUMBERS

■ Active cases on Nov 7
■ Active Cases on Nov 21

RAJASTHAN

16,627
21,951

GUJARAT

12,146
13,285

MADHYA PRADESH

7,736
11,192

PUNJAB

4,827
6,561

HARYANA

15,713
20,325

HIMACHAL PRADESH

4,222
7,102

Tunnel used by four Jaish men killed in Nagrota found

Cross-border tunnel is 15-20 ft deep, 150 metres long: DGP

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, NOVEMBER 22

IN A key breakthrough, the Border Security Force (BSF) and police have detected a cross-border tunnel in the Regal area of Jammu's Samba district that was used by four Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists to enter J&K before they were gunned down by security forces in an encounter at Nagrota three days ago.

"The tunnel is 15-20 ft deep and nearly 150 m long...It originates from inside Pakistan...It was used by the four Jaish-e-Mohammad militants who were killed recently," said J&K Police DGP Dilbagh Singh after visiting the site Sunday along with BSF IG (Jammu Frontiers) NS Jamwal and other senior officers.

"All the technical evidence



Cement bags with Pak markings found in tunnel: Police. ANI

available with us lead to this point only. It appears to be a fresh tunnel, but may have been used by militants earlier also," DGP Singh said, adding that cement bags with Pakistani markings were found inside.

The militants, who entered

Samba early Thursday and boarded a truck to Kashmir, were intercepted hours later and killed by security forces during a three-hour encounter.

DGP Singh said the tunnel showed signs of "proper

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Azad underlines again: Congress needs revamp, leaders have no connect

Says organisational polls must be held, blame not on national leadership

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

THE TURMOIL in the Congress that resurfaced after the party's poor performance in the Bihar elections and bypolls is showing no signs of abating. On Sunday, Ghulam Nabi Azad, one of the 23 senior leaders who wrote the unprecedented letter to Sonia Gandhi demanding sweeping changes in the party, said the Congress's organisational "system has collapsed" and its position will not improve unless reforms are carried out.

Talking to *The Indian Express*, Azad, leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha, said the situation of the Congress is "not good" but argued that "making it good is in our hands". He admitted that "our leaders have lost connection with people on the ground."

The only solution for the

EXPLAINED No clear roadmap

THE LETTER by 23 leaders to Congress president Sonia Gandhi seeking to force reforms and accountability in the party, and the lack of a cogent response from the leadership, have only served to make the Congress appear weaker vis a vis a surging BJP. The party has been running around in circles for the past six years with no roadmap to reconnect with the people.

party's revival, he said, is organisational election from booth-level upwards.

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KERALA: JAIL TERM FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Unease in CPM over ordinance, BJP and Cong call it bid to gag free speech

SHAJU PHILIP & MANOJ CG
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

IN THE face of widespread criticism and outrage over the Kerala government move to amend the law to mandate a jail term for any "offensive" social media post, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan claimed it would not be used against "free speech" or

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

IRON FIST, VELVET GLOVE
Ordinance violates Constitution, arms police with a chilling new weapon
PAGE 8

"impartial journalism". Few were buying this, with Opposition parties slamming the

CPM-led ruling LDF for the "harsh and draconian" move to "gag the media". Sources in Vijayan's own party said the Chief Minister's clarification came after intervention by the CPM central leadership. "There is considerable outrage...It becomes difficult to defend such an ordinance," a Politburo member said.

The CPI, a constituent of the LDF in Kerala, is upset, too. A party leader said Vijayan should

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Fake Aadhaar, Facebook account: how gang posed as cops, targeted contacts

JOHNSON T A
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 22

ON SEPTEMBER 15, a senior IPS officer in Karnataka, P Harishkharan, filed a complaint with a CID cyber crime police station in Bengaluru, saying somebody had created a fake Facebook profile with his name

and photographs and was seeking funds from his friends.

A day later, CID Deputy Superintendent of Police M H Nagthe lodged a similar complaint.

On October 5, another DSP in the CID, Prakash Rathod, lodged a complaint saying a friend of his friend had donated money after being approached by a fake

Facebook account in the DSP's name.

Investigations in over a dozen similar complaints made by police officers in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana have led the Karnataka CID cyber unit to an organised cybercrime network operating mostly from Bharatpur and other parts of Rajasthan.

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

STUBBLE BURNING: PAYING FOR POISON

BY JESSICA SEDDON & ASHOK GULATI
PAGE 8

EXPRESS NETWORK

EX-KARNATAKA MINISTER ROSHAN BAIG ARRESTED
PAGE 7



BCCI's IPL card: revenue Rs 4,000 cr, TV viewership up, 30,000 Covid tests

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 22

THE INDIAN cricket board earned "Rs 4,000 crore" in revenue from the IPL in the UAE, TV viewership was "about 25 per cent more than last year", and over 30,000 RT-PCR Covid tests were conducted for a total of 1,800 individuals without any of the 60 matches being affected by the pandemic.

This, according to BCCI

Treasurer Arun Dhimal, is the report card at the end of the high-profile T20 league. This year's IPL was also India's first major sporting tournament since the Covid outbreak started spreading across the globe in February.

Dhimal, however, did not discuss the breakup of revenue or viewership for the tournament that was held without spectators in the stands due to the pandemic. Organisers have been banking on the five-year

broadcast and media rights deal signed in 2017 with Star worth Rs 16,347 crore.

With stringent Covid curbs in India, the IPL was held from September 19 to November 10 in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. But, Dhimal told *The Indian Express*, the tournament was in doubt with barely two months to go when World No.1 tennis player Novak Djokovic tested positive after playing exhibition

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His 3-yr search for missing wife prompts HC alarm & a human trafficking probe in Shirdi

PAGE 1
ANCHOR

MAYURA JANWALKAR
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 22

IT WAS a 15-day holiday Manoj Soni had planned for his family in August 2017, and visiting Shirdi was not a part of that. But then, the date on the train tickets he booked from Ahmedabad to Vaishnodevi was July 9, instead of a month later.

"I realised this on August 9 after we had visited Somnath,



From the family album: Manoj Soni and his wife, Deepti, a nursing assistant, went missing from Shirdi on Aug 10, 2017

Dwarka and Nageshwar Jyotirling temples in Gujarat. We could not have travelled such a long distance in the unreserved compartment with our two children. That's when my wife and I decided to catch a bus to Shirdi from Ahmedabad," said Soni, 42.

On August 10, the family from Indore visited the famous Saibaba temple. "While the children were enjoying the rides at a fair, my wife wanted to take a look at the shops nearby. I felt she should go without the kids or they would demand a lot of things," said Soni.

His wife Deepti (38), wearing

a pink saree, has not been seen since.

And now, Soni's relentless efforts to find her have prompted the Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court to ask Maharashtra's top police officer to probe similar disappearances reported from the famous temple town and investigate the angle of human trafficking.

On October 29, taking note of a plea by Soni that he had run from pillar to post for three years and found the police "least cooperative", the Bench expressed dissatisfaction over the action of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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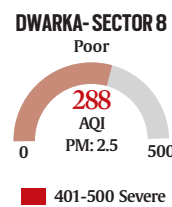
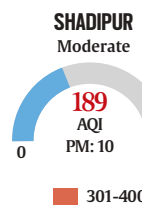
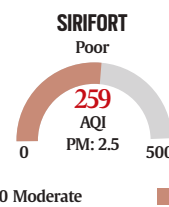
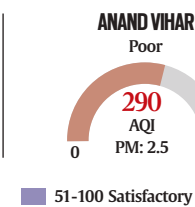
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0-50 Good



51-100 Satisfactory

101-200 Moderate

201-300 Poor

301-400 Very Poor

401-500 Severe

AFTER GOVT ORDER TO ROPE IN 4TH, 5TH YEAR STUDENTS TO MANAGE COVID CASES

Hospitals begin work to hire medical students — amid some objections

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

DAYS AFTER the state health department directed authorities to involve medical students and interns as Covid frontline warriors, Delhi government hospitals and teaching institutes have started working on the same to ensure better management of Covid patients.

In an order last Wednesday, the state health department had permitted all heads of Covid hospitals under the Delhi government to engage fourth- and fifth-year MBBS students, interns and BDS-pass doctors to assist duty doctors. The decision was taken after the government augmented the number of ICU beds in the hospitals owing to the rise in the daily Covid cases.

However, the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA), an umbrella body of resident doctors, has raised objections to the order.

In a letter to Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday, the association has highlighted how students and interns are not qualified enough to treat Covid patients: "Undergraduate stu-



Outside GTB Hospital. The health department permitted all heads of Covid hospitals under the Delhi govt to engage 4th and 5th year MBBS students, interns to assist duty doctors. Amit Mehra

dents are not skilled enough yet to be posted for Covid duties. They are still under training to acquire necessary clinical skills and are at higher risk of contracting the infection. Unfortunately, neither have there been adequate steps for recruitment of qualified doctors nor have undergraduate medical students undergone any special training to work in such unforeseen circumstances."

As per the order issued by

special secretary (health) SM Ali: "In view of... increased demand for ICU beds and medical HR in hospitals of (Delhi government) for management of Covid-19, all directors... are permitted to engage fourth- and fifth-year MBBS students, interns and BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery) pass to assist duty doctors."

Medical students, interns or dentists who are hired will be paid Rs 1,000 for an eight-hour

shift and Rs 2,000 for a 12-hour shift. Interns will receive this "honorarium" over and above their stipend. It is difficult to work longer hours with personal protective equipment, the order read.

"We have prepared a list of students who are a part of our medical institute. The names have been sent to the department and we will be preparing a roster soon, depending on the willingness of the students," said a sen-

ior doctor from Lok Nayak Hospital, which will engage interns and students from Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC).

A senior doctor from GTB Hospital, which will get students from University College of Medical Sciences, said: "Interns are already involved in management of patients, however, more students and BDS will now be engaged for treatment of patients. Details have been sent to the government, we will be able to finalise everything in a day or two."

2 markets closed till Nov 30 for violations

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority ordered the closure of two markets in Nangloi Sunday.

"It has come to notice that... directives issued with regard to wearing masks, maintaining physical distancing etc issued Government of India/Delhi are being flouted by vendors/visitors in Punjabi Basti Market and Janta Market Nangloi... DDMA... in overall imminent public interest ordered closure of Punjabi Basti Market and Janta Market till November 30," the order signed by additional district magistrate read.

3 arrested for stealing cop's service pistol

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

THREE MEN have been arrested for allegedly stealing a police constable's service pistol along with 10 cartridges from his home in Munirka. Police said the accused were planning to rob jewellers in Karol Bagh using the pistol. A case was registered at Karol Bagh police station on the complaint of constable Rajesh Kumar on Tuesday.

Kumar, who was deployed as PSO to a lawyer, told police that he was sleeping at his home in Munirka when the accused broke into his house and stole the bag containing the pistol and cartridges.

DCP (Central) Sanjay Bhatia said they received a tip from informers about the involvement of Vipin (32) and Vishal (23), who are involved in multiple cases of robbery and under Arms Act.

During investigation, a team led by Inspector Maninder Singh found that the accused were planning to rob jewellers in Karol Bagh. They arrested Atul (20), who is involved in two robbery cases and had recently got out on bail, from near a jewellery shop.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Take notice by all that, my client Mrs. MANDALSA RANI DEWAN (W/O LATE Mr. CHETAN DASS DEWAN), Age: 99 YEARS, Occupation:- NIL, Residing AT :- C-402 Empress Court Co-operative Housing Society, S. No. 67/B, Ghorpadi, Sopan Baug, Pune 411001, has and had severed and cutoff all her relations, ties, bindings, attachments, etc whatsoever and disowned excluded, expelled and debarred her son i.e. Late COLONEL AJIT KUMAR DEWAN's wife Mrs. ADARSH DEWAN and their children's during her sons life time and even thereafter from inheriting any of my client's properties, whether movable or Immovable properties for the reasons that my client was mistreated by them while my client was living with them due to their unethical acts. Therefore for any acts, deeds, things etc of them and/or any person or persons whatsoever, whatsoever, deals with them, they shall/will do so entirely at his, her or their own risks, costs and consequences, for which my client shall not be responsible in any manner, whatsoever, which is hereby informed to all the public at large. No complaint will be entertained hereafter.

Pune, Date: 18/11/2020
DILIP M. MELWANI
ADVOCATE
25/2, Shivajinagar, Tanaji Wadi, Guru Krupa Apts., Pune-411005, Mob. (+91) 9823062309 E: melwaniattoyns@yahoo.com



The door-to-door survey underway in Shakarpur, Sunday. Since November 20, three-member teams have been fanning out across the city's containment zones and high caseload areas. Teachers too are part of the teams. Abhinav Saha

Classes disrupted as govt teachers roped in for mega Covid-19 survey

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

TEACHING-LEARNING ACTIVITIES in several schools in Delhi have been disrupted as thousands of teachers have been roped in for the Delhi government's mega survey to identify and isolate suspected Covid-19 patients.

Since November 20, three-member teams have been fanning out across the city's containment zones and high caseload areas in a door-to-door survey to identify people showing symptoms of the infection and those who have come in contact with Covid positive patients.

Teachers of municipal corporation and Delhi government schools are being engaged as members of the three-member teams, supervisors of these teams, and also as sector magistrates' coordinating the supervisors.

For the duration of this exercise, which the government

hopes to wind up by November 24, teaching-learning activities in many of these schools have been temporarily disrupted.

"Ten out of the 50 regular teachers in my school have been put on duty. We had been conducting online classes for the students but obviously these teachers who are currently engaged full-time in the survey are not teaching now. The rest of the teachers are handling the school duties. The numbers are still less in our case, there are other government schools where 50-60% of the teachers have been engaged in this duty," said the principal of a northwest Delhi school.

There are several North MCD schools in which almost all teachers have been engaged. For instance, in an MCD school in Narela, all 16 teachers were engaged for duty, including one, being over 50 years of age, later sought exemption.

In a government school in Central Delhi, all teachers below the age of 50 and the principal have been roped in.

In Shahdara district, 566 pri-

mary teachers have been brought on board to be a part of the teams. In Northwest district, 1,300 primary teachers are part of the team.

"This current heavy deployment of teachers is for the survey work which will likely conclude by November 24. Besides, guest teachers and teachers above 50 have not been engaged for this so far the time being, the school can balance and optimise the use of their services. In this current situation, resources everywhere are being focused in the fight against Covid," said a Delhi government official.

This exercise has also involved mass training of teachers. An East Delhi municipal corporation teacher, who was part of one such training session at Yamuna Vihar Sports Complex, said, "There were thousands of teachers present at the venue which was a concern at a time that there are upper limit restrictions on gatherings in the city."

Teachers who have not re-

ported for their assigned duty have been served show cause notices, with the threat of action under the Delhi Disaster Management Act.

Meanwhile, teachers continue to be deployed for different Covid-related duties. For instance, on Saturday, the Southeast education district deployed 32 laboratory assistants from its schools to handle Covid duties at the behest of the DDMA.

PUBLIC NOTICE

SUBJECT: Transfer of ownership in respect of constructed property No. ... Built on old Plot No. 1221-P, Sector 38 in respect of 100% share upon the intestate death of Smt. Babita Devi.
Smt. Babita Devi who was the owner of the subject cited property to the extent of 100% as per record has died on 19/06/2020 and has no registered or un-registered will. Sh. Rajesh S/o Shammil R/o C-164 Bindapur, II Colony, Pocket 4, New Delhi-110059 intends to apply for the transfer of the said property in his favour being the legal heirs. If any person is having objections against the transfer of ibid plot/house her/she can submit objections in writing to the Estate Officer, HUDA Gurugram alongwith supporting documents within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. Otherwise the Estate Officer may sanction mutation of the property as per HUDA Policy and may not entertain subsequent claim if any.

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SCRAP FOR SALE (E-AUCTION)

E-Auction forms are invited from intending buyers for disposal, strictly on "As is Where is" basis, of damaged/defective Hyster Reach Slacker Machine Model R545-31 2H, excluding taxes, Salvage belonging to M/s Gundeep Impex Pvt. Ltd., 2A C-108 Shivam Plaza Pr-V, Focal Point, Ludhiana (Punjab)-141001. Hyster Slacker Machine can be inspected at M/s SDA Heavy Equipment Pvt. Ltd., No. 10-A, 2nd Phase, Peenya Industrial Area, Bengaluru-560058 between 23.11.2020 to 07.12.2020 after taking prior appointment from Mr. Ashwani Kumar-9078176951
E-Auction date/time-08.12.2020 between 03:00 PM to 04:30 PM Interested buyers/bidders have to deposit an EMD (D.D. of Rs. 3 Lacs in favour of "M/s Gundeep Impex Pvt. Ltd." payable at Ludhiana to participate in the auction. One or all bids/offers can be cancelled without assigning any reason. E-Auction forms can be obtained from the Auctioneers Salvor Settlers Pvt. Ltd., 511, 5th Floor, Usha Kiran Building, Commercial Complex, Azadpur, Delhi-110033, Contact Mr. Jitender Thakur: 8744013008, 9654772277

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Surge in Covid death toll continues as 121 die of virus

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

THE CAPITAL Sunday recorded 121 new Covid deaths — the fifth time in the last 11 days that the daily number of deaths has crossed the 100-mark. This pushed the death rate based on the last 10 days data to 1.69%, above the national fatality rate of 1.46%. While the death toll stands at 8,391, as many as 6,746 new cases were seen, taking the total number of cases to 5,29,863.

As per the data released by the Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare, Delhi is among the top of 10 states and UTs where 77% of new cases and 76% of new deaths have been reported.

Meanwhile, the number of patients under home isolation in Delhi has reduced by 6.85% in the last two weeks while bed occupancy in the same period has gone up a little — a direct indicator of the rising pressure on the healthcare system with an increase in the number of hospitalisation of Covid-19 cases.

Between November 9 and 21, home isolation cases dipped from 25,321 to 23,587. On November 9, the city had 16,195 beds for Covid patients, out of which 81,810 (50%) were occupied. However, as of November 21, of 17,242 beds, 9,522 (55.22%) are full.

Last Wednesday, top experts from AIIMS and other medical in-



Testing at Nizamuddin Railway Station. 54,893 tests were carried out on Sunday. Amit Mehra

stitutes across the country held a discussion on managing Covid patients in home isolation as a part of the 'National Combined Grand Rounds on Covid-19'.

Highlighting the importance of home isolation, AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria emphasised on how physicians need to look at warning signs: "Home isolation has become a routine practice. Evaluating the patient for the first time is extremely crucial; however, developing strategies to look for red flags are very important."

At present, those under home isolation are provided a pulse oximeter by the Delhi government. As per protocol, a team from each district calls the patient to enquire about his/her health, and to understand if they are facing any problems.

According to doctors, a majority of patients (81%) have mild dis-

ease and are fit to be treated at home, and only 19-20% require hospitalisation, including 5-6% who require ICU care. "A doctor needs to stay in touch with the patient regularly. A large number of patients are now managed in home isolation or via tele consultations... We, as physicians, need to understand the challenges behind home isolation and warning signs of when to shift the patient to a hospital," said Dr Guleria.

Discussing several case studies, experts spoke about the limited role of anti-viral drugs during home isolation. "For instance, data for prescribing remdesivir is insufficient and people in home isolation should not be suggested it... Unfortunately, it is commonly practiced by medical professional in smaller cities," said Prof Dhruv Chaudhary, head, pulmonary medicine, critical care medicine, PGIMS Rohtak.

2 snatch gold chains of journo, wife of ex-Meghalaya DGP, held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

DELHI POLICE has arrested two men for allegedly snatching gold chains of two women — the wife of former Meghalaya Director General of Police, and a journalist — in Southeast Delhi in two separate incidents.

According to police, the snatchers targeted the journalist, who works for *Millennium Post*, on Friday and the other woman on November 11.

DCP (Southeast) R P Meena said, "We received a PCR call from the woman who told us that two bike-borne men snatched her gold chain with a diamond pendant at Amar Colony on Friday.



CCTV footage from Amar Colony shows the two men on a bike

We analysed CCTVs in the area and identified the bike. It was registered in the name of one Gufran (26). Several raids were conducted at Tughlaqabad and he was arrested along with his associate Alok (23) on Friday."

According to police, the accused men confessed to the

crime and said they targeted the woman in the afternoon while she was walking alone. They also confessed to snatching a woman's gold chain in Lajpat Nagar on November 11. Police found that the complainant in the second case is the wife of a former Meghalaya police chief.

The accused allegedly sold the chain to a friend, Vishwanath Das (32), in Chandni Chowk, then helped in melting the jewellery and selling it to other people in the market.

Police said they arrested Das from Chandni Chowk, following which he confessed to accepting stolen gold jewellery and reselling it. Police said they recovered the diamond pendant and melted gold in the case.

CANCELLATION / DIVERSION OF TRAINS DUE TO NON-INTERLOCKING WORK

In order to further strengthen the infrastructure, North Central Railway will undertake the Non-Interlocking work for yard remodeling at Kosikalan Railway Station of Agra Division in connection with commissioning of 4th Line. To execute this work, suitable traffic blocks will be taken upto 29.12.2020. Consequently, The following trains will temporarily be affected on the dates shown against each:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Train Name	Date(s) of Cancellation (from originating station)
02964 Udaipur City - H. Nizamuddin Special Express	20.12.2020 to 28.12.2020
02963 H. Nizamuddin - Udaipur City Special Express	21.12.2020 to 29.12.2020
01841 Khajuraho - Kurukshetra Jn. Special Express	20.12.2020 to 28.12.2020
01842 Kurukshetra Jn. - Khajuraho Special Express	21.12.2020 to 29.12.2020
02919 Dr Ambedkar Nagar - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Special Express	20.12.2020 to 28.12.2020
02920 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Dr Ambedkar Nagar Special Express	23.12.2020 to 30.12.2020
02060 H. Nizamuddin- Kota Special Express	25.12.2020 to 29.12.2020
02059 Kota - H Nizamuddin Special Express	25.12.2020 to 29.12.2020
DIVERSION OF TRAINS	
DIVERTED VIA REWARI-ALWAR JN.-MATHURA JN	
Train No. & Train Name	Date (from originating station)
02264 H. Nizamuddin - Pune Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
02716 Amritsar Jn. - Hazur Sahib Nanded Special Express	29.12.2020
DIVERTED VIA REWARI-ALWAR JN.-JAIPUR-KOTA	
02432 New Delhi - Trivandrum Central Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
02414 H. Nizamuddin - Madgaon Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
02918 H. Nizamuddin - Ahmedabad Jn. Special Express	29.12.2020
02926 Amritsar Jn. - Bandra Terminus Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
DIVERTED VIA GHAZIABAD - MITAWALI - AGRA CANTT	
02618 H. Nizamuddin - Ernakulam Jn. Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
00762 H. Nizamuddin - Renigunta Jn. Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
02026 Amritsar Jn. - Nagpur Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
02626 New Delhi - Trivandrum Central Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
00764 Amritsar Jn. - Hyderabad Decan Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
02780 H. Nizamuddin - Vasco da Gama Special Express	28.11.2020 to 29.12.2020
DIVERTED VIA MATHURA JN.-ALWAR JN.-REWARI	
02263 Pune - H. Nizamuddin Special Express	27.11.2020 to 28.12.2020
DIVERTED VIA KOTA-JAIPUR-ALWAR JN.-REWARI	
02925 Bandra Terminus - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	27.11.2020 to 28.12.2020
02431 Trivandrum Central - New Delhi Special Express	26.11.2020 to 27.12.2020
02413 Madgaon - New Delhi Special Express	27.11.2020 to 28.12.2020
DIVERTED VIA AGRA CANTT-MITAWALI-GHAZIABAD	
06527 KSR Bengaluru - New Delhi Special Express	26.11.2020 to 27.12.2020
02025 Nagpur - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	27.11.2020 to 28.12.2020
02617 Ernakulam Jn. - H. Nizamuddin Special Express	26.11.2020 to 27.12.2020
02625 Trivandrum Central - New Delhi Special Express	26.11.2020 to 27.12.2020
00761 Renigunta Jn. - H. Nizamuddin Special Express	27.11.2020 to 28.12.2020
Please join us on Note : For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in	
 Security Helpline No. 182	 NORTHERN RAILWAY visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in
Integrated Helpline No. 139	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

Photo Courtesy: Northern Railway



PARTY HEAT

WITH THE Kerala government's new gay law triggering serious criticism against the party, the CPI-M central leadership intervened on Sunday. The leadership pointed out that the party has recently criticised such moves by the central government and asked the state leadership to review the decision. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was advised that such moves would be seen as the party walking into "BJP's trap". Vijayan then issued a statement in English, which the leaders circulated in the media on Sunday evening. Sources in the state party said the government is likely to let the law – which now requires the assembly's ratification in six months – to be lapsed.

VALLEY CONTEST

MINORITY AFFAIRS Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, the BJP's choice to launch their campaign in the first District Development Council (DDC) elections in Jammu and Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370, has been travelling the length and breadth of the union territory over the past three days. Launching the BJP's campaign from Kupwara, the minister has held four big public meetings and several smaller ones in Kupwara, Baramulla and the outskirts of Srinagar town. The election is being seen as a litmus test for the BJP, which, sources said, is planning to send its big guns to campaign this week. Naqvi, who returned from Kashmir on Friday, is to soon head back for more campaigning. The minister has claimed that contrary to expectations, the polls are likely to see a good turnout with Kashmiris wanting to participate in the political process..

DEADLINE MATTERS

THE LOK Sabha Secretariat has asked MPs to send their detailed bio-profile for publication of "Who's Who: Seventeenth Lok Sabha". The members are required to send their bio-data by Monday. However, about 32 first-time members and 70 re-elected/previous members are yet to send their updated bio-data. In a communication to the members, Lok Sabha Secretary General Snehlata Shrivastava has them to send their bio-profile by the due date so these can be included at the first-proof stage of the publication. "Otherwise, a suitable modified bio-data as available in the Affidavit with the Election Commission of India and from previous Who's Who publication of the Lok Sabha Secretariat will be used," she said.



Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan celebrates the 'Gopashtami' festival at his residence in Bhopal on Sunday. ANI

‘Gau cabinet’ meets; MP considers cow cess for gaushalas

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, NOVEMBER 22

ON A day when he chaired the first meeting of the recently appointed gau cabinet, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Sunday urged people to contribute towards gaushalas through a small cess the state is considering. He also said that in a bid to make gaushalas self-reliant, children in anganwadis of the state will be given cow milk procured from the gaushalas. Chouhan chaired the first meeting of the gau cabinet virtually from his Bhopal residence. At least five cabinet ministers, head of the departments and 14 cow experts from across the country had connected via video conferencing. Chouhan subsequently flew to Agar Malwa to celebrate gopashtami at the cow sanctuary in Salaria. Addressing a gathering there, Chouhan said, "We are working on a proposal that will enable us to recover some small amounts from the people in the form of a small tax that will enable us to have enough funds for the up-keep maintenance of gaushalas."

He said care will be taken to ensure that the cess does not create additional burden on the common man. He added that cow milk is like "amrit" and children suffering from malnourishment will be given milk that will increase the sale of milk and benefit gaushalas. The Chief Minister said he will ensure that Madhya Pradesh sets an example in cow protection in the country and that the government will make complete use of cow dung, milk and cow urine. An action plan will be made for protection and promotion of four native breeds found in MP -- Malvi, Nimari, Kankatha and Gaolo, he said. Gobar gas plants will be installed in villages and connections will be given to homes there, the Chief Minister said.

Yogi gifts cows to 11 Mirzapur families

Lucknow: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday gifted cows to 11 families in Mirzapur who have malnourished children. The Chief Minister, who offered puja to the cows at a cow shelter on the occasion of Gopashtami, said: "There are more than 5 lakh cows in various cow shelters at present, and more than 65,000 cows have already been given to farmers." A state government spokesperson said giving cows to the families would serve the dual purpose of preserving cows as well as providing nourishment to under-nourished children. ENS

Eye on 2024, Nadda to begin 120-day nationwide tour in Dec

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

WITH AN eye on improving the party's Lok Sabha tally in 2024, BJP president J P Nadda will embark on a 120-day nationwide tour from next month, focusing on areas where the party did not do well in the 2019 elections. Nadda will begin his tour in the first week of December and Uttarakhand will be the first state on his itinerary, BJP general secretary Arun Singh told reporters. December 5 is the likely date for beginning the tour. Singh said the BJP president will visit every state, hold virtual meetings with heads of all booth



BJP president J P Nadda

units, the smallest organisational entity in the party, and meet every party MP and MLA besides its senior leaders, including district chiefs, in each state. He will also visit some booths to interact with ground workers, he said. "The BJP president will be the only chief of a national party who would be going to the states and addressing even booth and mandal leaders," Singh said. Ahead of the 2019 election, Nadda's predecessor—Home

Minister Amit Shah—had identified around 115 seats in states where the party machinery was weak. The BJP made considerable improvement in its performance in these constituencies in the polls after Shah went on an extensive tour. Singh said the BJP would be working hard and taking all measures to see to it that it wins the seats where the party had lost in the last Lok Sabha polls. For this, he said, the party would also take all programmes of the Narendra Modi government to all parts of the country. In fact, the BJP-ruled states will give a presentation to Nadda on various aspects of their work, including implementation of

central government schemes and on to how to further raise awareness about them. With assembly elections in four states – West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Assam – set to be held in the first half of next year, Nadda will also review the party's preparedness, Singh said. He will spend three days in big states and two in others. During his tour, the BJP chief will interact with allies and hold public programmes, Singh said. He will speak with personalities from different fields in the respective areas. Apart from assessing activities, Nadda will discuss future strategies with the core group members of the respective states.

PM lays foundation for 23 rural drinking water projects in UP's Vindhyachal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 22

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday laid the foundation of 23 rural drinking water schemes in Sonbhadra and Mirzapur districts of Vindhyachal region of Uttar Pradesh via video link and praised the state BJP government of continuing with the development work despite the Covid pandemic. "Despite the coronavirus pandemic, this (rural drinking water) scheme will ensure that the road to development is not affected. Uttar Pradesh is also an example... As compared to the perception of Uttar Pradesh earlier and the predictions made, the way in which projects are getting implemented one after the other, the image of the UP government and its officials is



PM Narendra Modi addresses people virtually during the foundation stone-laying programme on Sunday. PTI

changing completely," the Prime Minister said, praising Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "The way the fight against coronavirus is being fought in UP.. Migrant labourers were given employment, they were taken care. This is not an ordinary job that in such a big state, so many things are being done on all the fronts. UP has done *kamla* (wonders). I would like to congratulate the people of the state, its government, and Yogi's team," Modi said.

The Prime Minister also praised Adityanath for bringing down encephalitis cases and said that the success of the state government in containing the disease "is being discussed far and wide". "For saving lives of innocent children, each and every citizen of UP is blessing the entire team of Yogi Adityanath," PM Modi said. The Prime Minister said that despite resources, the regions of Vidhyachal and Bundelkhand

became deprived of development work for long and invoked poet Rahimdas. "Poet Rahimdas had said '*jaa par vipadaa parat hai, so aavat yehi desh*' (a person facing difficulty comes to this place). The reason for this belief was the abundant resources and possibilities present here... For decades after Independence, if any area had fallen prey to neglect, then it was this area. Be it Vindhyachal or Bundelkhand, this entire area despite having resources became an area of scarcity. Despite having so many rivers, this area was identified as the most thirsty and drought-affected area. This was the reason, which forced many people to migrate from here," the Prime Minister said. The Rs 5,555-crore Har Ghar Nal Yojna would benefit around 40 lakh people in over 3,000 villages of the region, Modi said.

Despite Khattar appeal, farmer outfits firm on march to Delhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 22

DESPITE AN appeal from Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar to call off their march to Delhi on November 26 to protest the Centre's new Farm laws, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) said Sunday that protesters from the state will enter the capital from five sides and come prepared for a long haul with extra clothing and food supplies. "On November 26, we will enter Delhi from five sides, including four from Haryana and one from Uttar Pradesh. From Haryana, we shall enter Delhi from Ambala road, Rohtak road, Gurgaon road and Agra road, and from Bareilly road in UP. The biggest march will be on Ambala road. For this, we are touring Haryana and asking people to join this protest," BKU's Haryana president Gurnam Singh Chaduni said. "Whatever modes are available with the people, be it scooter, motorcycle, car, tractor-trolley, anything that they have, they can bring to participate in this agitation," he said.



Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar

Earlier, Khattar urged farmers to not be "misled" by the Opposition, and "have faith" in the state government. Citing the rising number of Covid infections and revenue loss of about Rs 10,000-12,000 crore this year due to the pandemic, he said "this is not the year of protests". Haryana's roadways and other employee unions, too, have announced a statewide agitation on November 26. Meanwhile, state officials said they are looking at the possibility of reimposing the lockdown in the wake of a fresh surge in infections. However, Chaduni called it "another play" by the government to "scuttle the agitation". "When we do a rally, corona awakens. The government had been using the coronavirus as an opportunity to pass the three draconian legislations and scuttle the farmers' agitation," Chaduni said.

Railways plans to restart services in Punjab with freight trains

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUDHIANA, NOVEMBER 22

THE RAILWAYS is looking to restart operations in Punjab from November 23 with freight trains running at a limited speed, a statement released on Sunday said. This came after Punjab farmers suspended their agitation against the contentious farm laws for 15 days. The Northern Railways said

in a statement that a tentative plan for restoration of train services has been formulated. As per the plan, freight trains will start running from November 23 with a maximum speed of 60kmph in view of safety and security considerations. The plan is subject to track safety clearances. The railways is looking to run 17 pairs of trains from the evening of November 23 evening till November 29, as per the schedule.

ADVERTORIAL



Fight Against Pollution

SK Systems Manufactures World-Class Equipment for Air Handling and Air Pollution Control Systems

AN ENGINEERING graduate from BITS, Pilani, Ajay Bhargava, Managing Director, SK Systems, joined SK Group as Director-Sales in the year 1992 and went on to become its Managing Director in the year 2004. Before his joining, the company was mainly working in cement, ceramic, steel, textile and other general industries, but he started exploring the business in other sectors, too, namely Automobile, Fertiliser, Flour Mills, Rice Mills, Oil Sector, Thermal Power plants and Hydro Power plants etc. and achieved tremendous success in the same. Today, the company is a renowned name in the field of Air Handling and Air Pollution Control Systems / Equipment and is associated with reputed companies in both private and public sectors.

Over the years, the company has seen multifarious growth through our dedicated efforts during the past 18 years and, consequently, the group's turnover has increased from about Rs. 4.00 Crores in the year 2002 to about Rs. 40.00 Crores in the year 2020. In the company's 40-year-long existence, what kind of major projects has it been associated with in the past? Since its inception, SK Systems has executed more than 5000 projects in small, medium and large capacities pertaining to Air Handling and Air Pollution Control Systems and Equipment for numerous industries throughout India, such as in Automobile, Cement, Steel, Fertilizer, Chemical etc., both in Public and Private Sector.



Ajay Bhargava, Managing Director

Some of the prominent customers in Public Sector are BHEL, NHPC, NTPC, THDC, IOCL, NEEPCO etc and that in Private Sector are Jindal Group, Jaypee Group, Gujarat Ambuja Group, Grasim Group, Tata Group, Thermax, Andritz Hydro, Thyssenkrupp, Isgec, Dawat Foods, etc. In Rice and Flour Mill Sector, the company is counted as one of the leaders for the supply of Centrifugal Fans and Dust Collectors for their aspiration/pollution control applications and most of the companies in Delhi-NCR and also in north-eastern region are their customers. In recent years, the company has also developed special expertise in executing Ventilation and Air Conditioning projects for surface/underground Hydro Electric Power Projects. Few such projects are 800MW Koldam HEP in H.P. & 520 MW Tapovan HEP in Uttarakhand of NTPC, 800 MW Parbati HEP Stage-II in H.P., 45 MW Nimmo Bazgo in Leh, 60 MW Chutak HEP in Kargil & 300 MW Kishanganga HEP in Bandipura of NHPC and 1000 MW Karcham Wangtoo HEP in H.P. of Jaypee Group etc. The company has executed a similar project in Bhutan also for 720 MW Mangdechhu HEP through BHEL, Bhopal and, presently, even two projects are under execution directly for 1200 MW HEP of PHPA-I & 1020 MW HEP of PHPA-II. Based on its performance, the company had received a "Best Vendor Award" from Hydro Division of BHEL, Bhopal in the year 2018. The company had received Rastriya Udyog Award for its outstanding services, achievements and contribution to the Industry in the year 1994. The company had also received an Award for being Leaders in Project Engineering of HVAC Systems from Business Sphere Group in the year 2018. What kind of products does the company manufacture? SK Systems manufactures wide range of Centrifugal and Axial Flow Fans, Limit Load Fans, Evaporative Air Cooling Units, Pulse Jet Bag Filters and Cyclonic Type



Dust Collectors, Acid Fume Scrubbers, Auto Viscous Filters, Pre & Fine Filters, Pre-fabricated Ducts and other allied Equipment which are used in various Air Handling and Air Pollution Control applications such as in Pressurization & Ventilation Systems, Evaporative Air Cooling Systems, Heating Ventilation & Air Conditioning, General Supply & Exhaust Systems, Mill Motor Ventilation Systems, Dust Extraction & Collection Systems, Fume Extraction & Scrubbing Systems, Mill Hood Exhaust Systems, Weld Fume Exhaust Systems, Aspiration Systems etc.

How do you ensure quality factor of your engineering equipment?

Believing in the conjecture of preferring Quality over Quantity, the company has always laid immense stress on following stringent quality guidelines. To achieve and maintain quality standard for its entire range of products, every detail and facet is compared with the superlative products of Indian as well as the Global market. All this is done to ensure high level of satisfaction and contentment among our customers. In order to achieve the supreme quality of every product and design, following objectives are kept in mind: A. Conforming our own assertions of quality standards in tandem with those prevalent in the global market. B. Adhering to contractual requirements of all the customers. C. Following pertinent codes as maintained by quality assurance plan. D. Complete involvement of all employees in every venture. To uphold the strategic norms of Quality Adherence, the company has also implemented Quality Management System as per ISO:9001:2015 for Design, Manufacture, Supply, Erection & Commissioning of Air Handling & Air Pollution Control Systems and Equipment. The company is also equally concerned with the Environment and Health and Safety of its workers and, accordingly, implemented Environment Management System as per ISO 14001:2015 and Occupational

Health & Safety Management System as per ISO 45001:2018.

Your company is a shining example of Vocal for Local initiative. What are your thoughts on this new initiative?

Not only now but right since its inception, the company has always been vocal to develop various products indigenously. Accordingly, on the recurring demand, the Engineering department of the company has developed special fans as an import substitute for BHEL for their Turbines and have been supplying the same to them and also to various Thermal Power Plants for more than 30 years now. Also, instead of becoming an agent of any foreign company or entering into any joint venture with them, the company has always preferred to either buy a technology from overseas to manufacture any new product or develop the same through its own R&D efforts in India.

What are your views on the severe air pollution problem of Delhi-NCR?

The above problem is mainly due to the stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana and western parts of UP coupled with the ongoing construction work in Delhi-NCR region. We have been watching for the last 3-4 years that in spite of knowing the main cause, enough has not been done to control the same. Measures for controlling this menace are started only when the problem starts, whereas it should be done much in advance so that it can be kept as low as possible. Awareness programmes and development works of controlling measures should happen on a continuous basis. Recently, we have seen that due to the Air Pollution, the Govt has decided not to allow any new manufacturing industry to come up in Delhi, which we feel is not necessary as Air Pollution from all such industries is generating through its processes such as grinding, buffing, polishing, cleaning, cutting, welding, painting, material handling etc, and suitable technologies / equipment such as Pulse Jet Bag-filters, packed bed / Venturi scrubbers etc are very much available for controlling the same as per prevalent norms of CPCB. Firstly, I believe that awareness should be generated amongst industries to implement such systems in their respective industries on an immediate basis and, secondly, monitoring and implementation of various norms of CPCB should be done strictly and on a uniform basis in the entire NCR Region. In fact, we would vouch for its implementation in the entire country.

What is the vision and mission of your company?

SK Systems nurtures a vision to stand tall in the realm of Engineering by offering the best of Engineering Services, better standard of equipment and performances through updated Technologies and Management Principles. The aspiration of the company is not to seek financial accrue but to meet out superlative standards of Engineering Services by all means.

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BRIEFLY



Tarun Gogoi

ASSAM

Tarun Gogoi's health remains 'very critical'

Guwahati: The health condition of former Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi remained "very critical" on Sunday although he responded to a longer duration of dialysis, state Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The Congress veteran's health condition deteriorated on Saturday afternoon, following multi-organ failure and he became unconscious with difficulty in breathing. Sarma said the doctors had initially planned for four hours of dialysis, but they could continue for six hours. "We can say this is a positive sign," he told reporters at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital. **PTI**

MAHARASHTRA

Comedian in judicial custody till December 4

Mumbai: A court Sunday remanded comedian Bharti Singh and husband Harsh Limbachiyaa, who have been arrested by the NCB following seizure of ganja, in judicial custody till December 4. The court will hear their bail pleas on Monday. The NCB sought Limbachiyaa's custody for questioning but did not seek Singh's custody and told the court that she may be sent to judicial custody. Defence lawyer Ayaz Khan argued that there is no question of custodial interrogation as the alleged substance recovered is lesser than the 'small quantity' as prescribed under law. **ENS**

UTTARAKHAND

Governor tests positive, asymptomatic

Dehradun: Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya tested positive to Covid-19 on Sunday. She is asymptomatic and has isolated herself under medical supervision. On Saturday, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari had held a courtsey meeting with Maurya at the Raj Bhavan in Dehradun. Maurya was on a week-long leave in Agra and returned Friday. A statement said she has not come into contact with any secretariat staff in the last couple of days. **ENS**

GUJARAT

Man beats youth to death for 'raping' daughter

Ahmedabad: A 30-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly beating to death a 19-year-old youth who has been booked for raping the former's five-year-old daughter in Bharuch, police said Sunday. The 19-year-old man had allegedly lured the child, his neighbour, to his house on Friday and raped the minor inside a bathroom. The child, police said, was rescued by the youth's elder sister. After the minor's parents came to know about the assault, her father allegedly nabbed the youth and beat him up with a wooden stick. **ENS**

Swap with Indonesia: India to host G-20 Summit in 2023

PM stresses on reforms in multilateral organisations for faster post-Covid recovery

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

INDIA IS set to host the G-20 summit in 2023, instead of 2022 — the 75th year of Independence. Indonesia will assume G-20 presidency in 2022 after a swap with India, Indonesian foreign minister Retno Marsudi said, adding that the change of plan was agreed considering that Indonesia would also chair the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2023. "India also has had the same request to change the G-20 presidency in 2023," the Indonesian minister said. "We look forward to our next meetings in Italy in 2021, Indonesia in 2022, India in 2023 and Brazil in 2024," the G-20 Riyadh Summit Leaders Declaration said. Meanwhile, Prime Minister

PM Modi speaks during G-20 Riyadh Summit, via video conferencing, in Delhi. **PTI**

Narendra Modi reiterated the importance of reforms in multilateral organisations to ensure better global governance for faster post-Covid recovery at the G-20 Summit hosted by Saudi Arabia. The agenda of the second day of the summit focused on building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future with a side event on safeguarding the planet. An official statement by the

MEA said that the Prime Minister underscored the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals aimed at "leaving no one behind". With the changing situation in the wake of the pandemic, the Prime Minister said the country has adopted the 'Self Reliant India' initiative, and will become an important and reliable pillar of world economy and global supply chains based on its competence and dependability. At a global level, India also took the initiative of establishing institutions such as the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. Addressing the side event — 'Safeguarding the Planet: The Circular Carbon Economy Approach', Modi said India is not only meeting its Paris Agreement targets, but also exceeding them. "Reiterated the importance of reforms in multilateral organiza-

tions to ensure better global governance for faster post-Covid recovery," Modi tweeted.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said the G-20 countries should take the lead in tackling climate change, follow the guidance of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and push for the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

A G-20 declaration said the leaders "are committed to leading the world in shaping a strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive post-COVID-19 era". On terrorist financing, the G-20 declaration said, "We support the Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Terrorist Financing policy responses detailed in FATF's paper on COVID-19, and reaffirm our support for the FATF, as the global standard-setting body for preventing and combating money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing."

Fireman injured in anti-Bru clashes dies; toll now 2

DEBRAJ DEB

AGARTALA, NOVEMBER 22

A FIRE Services personnel who suffered serious injuries during the anti-Bru resettlement protests in Tripura died Sunday at a state-run hospital, taking the toll from Saturday's clashes to two.

One protester had died on Saturday after the police opened fire on activists of the Joint Movement Committee, which had blocked a National Highway in North Tripura district. The joint forum of Bengali and Mizo organisations clashed with the police while protesting the resettlement of Bru refugees in Kanchanpur sub-division.

Seven protesters and 15 police and Fire Services personnel suffered injuries.

Meanwhile, the state government ordered a magisterial inquiry into the police firing and announced Rs 5 lakh as compensation for the family of the deceased.

UP: Two-day RSS meet begins; 'love jihad' on agenda

Lucknow: Public contributions for Ram Temple construction and "love jihad" were among the topics discussed at a National Executive Committee meeting of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) that began Sunday in Prayagraj.

The two-day meeting for the eastern Uttar Pradesh region was attended by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath along with Sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat and Sarkaryawah Suresh "Bhaiyaji" Joshi, sources said.

The minutes of the meeting were not released. Sangh sources said that besides outreach for contributions to Ram Temple construction and "love jihad", issues such as environment conservation and the RSS's role in village development for the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign were discussed.

Five sessions of the meeting were conducted on Sunday. **ENS**

As Kerala brings in new gag law, recalling SC rap on another 5 years ago

SOFI AHSAN

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

KERALA GOVERNOR Arif Mohammad Khan on Saturday approved an ordinance by the state government that provides for jail term for any communication or publication, including social media or cyber post, that is deemed "threatening, abusive, humiliating or defamatory". In 2015, the Supreme Court in its landmark judgment on Section 66A of the IT Act had struck down a similar provision of the Kerala Police Act for being violative of the right to freedom of speech and expression and for its vagueness.

Section 118 (d) of the Kerala Police Act provided for imprisonment of up to three years for any person convicted of causing "annoyance" to any person "in an indecent manner" by "statements or verbal comments or telephone calls or call of any type or by chasing or sending messages or mail by any means".

The apex court, in the Shreya Singhal case ruling, said that what it has said about Section 66A would directly apply to the provision "as causing annoyance in an indecent manner suffers from the same type of vagueness and overbreadth..."

Section 66A criminalised sending of a communication — via computer or a communication device — which could be said to be "grossly offensive, has menacing character" or false information intended at "causing annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, injury, criminal intimidation, enmity, hatred or will" or any electronic mail or email messages intended at "causing annoyance or inconvenience or to deceive or to mis-

lead" the recipient.

Section 118A, which was added to the Kerala Police Act as part of the amendment cleared by the Governor on Saturday, provides for a similar punishment on conviction as that of Section 66A and Section 118(d) but is not restricted to communication made through a computer resource or a communication device, as it explicitly states "through any kind of mode of communication", and is not restricted to annoying someone, like Section 118 (d).

It says "whoever makes, expresses, publishes or disseminates... any matter or subject for threatening, abusing, humiliating or defaming a person or class of persons, knowing it to be false and that causes injury to the mind, reputation or property of such person or class of persons or any other person in whom they have interest" shall be punished with imprisonment extending up to three years or with fine extending to Rs 10,000 or with both.

The bench of Justices J Chelameswar and R F Nariman in the ruling on Section 66A had noted that none of the expression used in it are defined.

Terms such as "threatening, abusing, humiliating or defaming" are not defined in Section 118A either but Section 2 of the Kerala Police Act states that the words and expressions not defined under the said law shall have the meanings as defined in the Indian Penal Code or Code of Criminal Procedure.

Out of four actions criminalised under the latest amendment by Kerala, only defamation is clearly defined in the Indian

Penal Code.

"Quite obviously, a prospective offender of Section 66A and the authorities who are to enforce Section 66A have absolutely no manageable standard by which to book a person for an offence under Section 66A," the court had said, while holding the provision to be unconstitutional and vague. Concluding that Section 66A takes within its sweep pro-

tested speech and speech that is innocent in nature, the court had said that is liable "therefore to be used in such a way as to have a chilling effect on free speech".

The then Additional Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta — who is currently Solicitor General — had argued that the fact the provision is capable of being abused is not a ground to test its validity and had assured the court that the government was committed to free speech and the provision would be used only "when excesses are perpetrated by persons on the rights of others".

However, the court had observed that an assurance from the present government even if carried out faithfully would not bind any successor government.

In the Shreya Singhal case, the court had noted that the provision is not aimed at defamatory statements at all as for something to be defamatory, injury to reputation is a basic ingredient.

Section 66A does not concern itself with, it said. However, Section 118A in particular encompasses both defamation and injury to reputation and mentions them explicitly.

‘Hurt sentiments’: MP may act against kissing scenes in web series

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, NOVEMBER 22

A DAY after a BJP youth leader called kissing scenes shown in 'A Suitable Boy', a web series based on the novel by Vikram Seth, a way of promoting "love jihad", Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra Sunday stated that the state government is examining the scenes and considering action.

Mishra said in a video message shared on Twitter, "A Suitable Boy series on an Over-the-top (OTT) platform is highly objectionable. Kissing scenes have been shot inside a mandir with background bhajan in it. There are several of these shots which I feel hurt the sentiments of people."

He said he has instructed police to examine the scenes and what actions can be taken against the directors and producers of the series.

Mishra's statement comes a day after BJP youth leader Gaurav Tiwari submitted a written complaint to SP, Rewa, Rakesh Kumar Singh. "Within a



A BJP youth leader had called kissing scenes in A Suitable Boy a way of promoting 'love jihad'

single episode the Muslim boy is seen kissing the Hindu girl thrice. And all the three times, the kissing scene is shown in the Shiv Mandir located in Maheshwar Ghat," the complaint stated, adding that it is a plot to promote "love-jihad". Gaurav has demanded stringent action against Monica Shergil, VP Content, Netflix and Ambika Khurana who holds the designation of Director of Public Policies.

A senior police officer said, "We will have to look closely at the content and the objections to ascertain if it is liable for further action."

‘Retrograde’: IMA slams move to allow Ayurveda practitioners to perform surgery

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

PUNE, NOVEMBER 22

THE INDIAN Medical Association has come down heavily on the government move authorising some Ayurveda practitioners to perform surgical procedures, describing it in a strongly-worded statement as "retrograde", "uncivil" and "foul play".

The apex medical body urged the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM), the Ayurveda regulatory body under the AYUSH Ministry, "to develop their own surgical disciplines from their own ancient texts and not claim the surgical disciplines of modern medicine as their own".

A November 20 notification by CCIM authorised post-graduate practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda be trained to perform surgical procedures.

IMA president Dr Rajan Sharma said the body condemns the "uncivil" ways of the CCIM "to arrogate itself to vivisect Modern Medicine and empower its practitioners with undeserving areas of practice".

"Corrupting Modern Medicine by mixing with other systems and poaching the disciplines of Modern Medicine through back door means is certainly foul play of first order," the IMA statement said, describing the move as a "retrograde step of mixing the systems".

AYUSH Ministry Secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha said the notification does not amount to any policy deviation or any new decision. "It streamlines the existing regulation relating to post graduate education in Ayurveda with respect to the specified procedures. Further, the notification does not open up the entire field of surgery to Ayurveda practitioners and specifies a set of surgical procedures. It outlines that not all post-graduates of Ayurveda can perform these procedures. Only those specialised in Shalya and Shalakyas are allowed to perform these surgical procedures," Kotecha said.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav greets father Mulayam Singh Yadav during his 81st birthday, in Lucknow on Sunday. **Express**

GULMARG LAND SCANDAL

Arguments on charges against Lt-Gen's Advisor begin today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

AFTER A fresh indictment by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), the Special Judge (Anti-Corruption) Baramulla is set to hear on Monday the final arguments on framing of charges against Baseer Ahmad Khan, Advisor to J&K Lieutenant Governor, in the 2009 Gulmarg land scandal.

The case involving the top functionary in the current government has grabbed attention, especially because the ruling BJP has called its government's action to nullify Roshni Act "a surgical strike against the corrupt of J&K". The Gulmarg land scandal is one of the high-profile cases where top officials were booked for allegedly violating the Roshni Act to transfer state land to private persons.

In June this year, Special Judge (Anti-Corruption) Naseer Ahmad Dar had directed the ACB to fur-

ther investigate the case. Last month, the agency filed a report, indicting Khan once again in the case.

In 2009, the State Vigilance Organisation — now ACB — had registered a case against 20 people, including Khan, the then Baramulla Deputy Commissioner, and six other top bureaucrats, for allegedly misusing their official positions to transfer state land in Gulmarg, earmarked for development of tourist infrastructure, to private parties. This, the agency had said, was in violation of the J&K State Lands (Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants) Act, 2001 or Roshni Act.

Khan was arrested on September 23, 2013 on charge of corruption and granted bail the same day. He went on to become Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir. He was given an extension by the current government after superannuation. Subsequently, he was named

Advisor by the Centre in March this year.

The new indictment by the ACB left red faces in the administration, which has been claiming success in its fight against corruption, especially after the abrogation of J&K's special status last year. However, the government has maintained a complete silence on the issue.

Though the Roshni Act was scrapped by the then Governor Satya Pal Malik soon after central rule was imposed in J&K in 2018, the J&K High Court in its judgment last month called the manner in which ownership of state land was transferred under this law "loot to own". The court transferred the probe to CBI and specifically asked it to "fix the responsibility and culpability of the persons who were at the helm of affairs..." The current government has announced that it would implement the court order and initiated steps to retrieve the land.

HAMZA KHAN

JAIPUR, NOVEMBER 22

TWENTY-TWO days after he set out on a yatra to Dandi in Gujarat seeking better terms for Urdu teachers, Thakur Shamsher Bhalu Khan (45), an Urdu teacher and son of former Congress MLA Bhalu Khan, called off his march on the border district of Udaipur late on Sunday, following a meeting with Rajasthan Waqf Board Chairman Khanu Khan Budhwali.

"We have reached a nine-point agreement and invited him to meet Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasra in Jaipur on Monday. Following the meeting, he has called off his Dandi yatra," Budhwali told *The Indian Express*. Khan is expected to arrive in Jaipur Monday.



Thakur Shamsher Bhalu Khan (white turban) began his yatra on November 1

Khan's march united several Muslim organisations and brought out the growing discontent among a section of Muslims against the Ashok Gehlot-led Congress government. Several Congress MLAs also wrote to the Chief Minister and Education Minister over issues raised by

Khan, who claimed that over 130 former and current MLAs and nearly 200 organisations have extended their support to him.

For several years now, the Urdu teachers in Rajasthan have been making several demands, including regularisation of madrasa teachers — currently employed on a contractual basis by the Minority Affairs Department — and more recently, for teaching Urdu and appointment of teachers for the same for primary classes under the Education Department.

What acted as a catalyst were two government orders by Primary Education Director Saurabh Swami on September 2 and September 5. The orders state that only one third language can be taught, between classes 6 and 8, and only one teacher can be ap-

pointed for the same in a school. The 2004 state policy had empowered district education officers to administer primary education in minority languages but the September 2 order ostensibly altered this provision.

Frustrated by the "cold shoulder to Urdu teachers, language and community", Khan decided to undertake a Dandi march on November 1.

Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasra earlier said, "There is no third language in classes 1-5 anywhere in India, but only between classes 6 and 8. If primary school itself had Urdu, then why would the madrasas have opened? Some people are unnecessarily creating confusion."

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Declared ‘dead’, Covid patient back home after kin cremate body of another man

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 22

IN A case of mistaken identity due to the blunder of hospital authorities, a 75-year-old Covid-19 patient in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district was declared dead last week, and his family cremated another man's body that was handed over to them. Shibdas Banerjee was admitted to Balrampur Basu Hospital in Khardah on November 4, and declared dead on November 13. On Friday, his family was told that he was alive, while they were preparing for his "shraddha" ceremony. A four-member inquiry committee has been set up and the district health department has initiated a probe. "The inquiry committee's report has been sent to the state health department. Necessary action will be taken," said district Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Tapas Roy. According to officials, the body that was cremated was that of 75-year-old Mohinin-o-han Mukherjee. He was admitted to the hospital on the same day as Banerjee. On November 7, he was transferred to a Covid hospital in Barasat. However, the Khardah hospital sent the Barasat facility Banerjee's medical reports, resulting in the case of mistaken identity. When Mukherjee died, the Barasat hospital authorities informed Banerjee's family and handed over the body to them. The family saw the body from a distance, and it was wrapped in protective layers as is mandated in case of Covid deaths. As a result, they did not realise the blunder. After Banerjee recovered on Friday, the hospital staff called Mukherjee's family, saying he was ready to be discharged. When they saw a different man, they raised an alarm and the blunder came to light. Banerjee's family was then informed that he was still alive. The family arrived at the hospital late at night and took him home.

HATHRAS WOMAN'S DEATH

CBI takes 4 accused to Gandhinagar for brain mapping, polygraph test

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, NOVEMBER 22

A TEAM of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing the alleged rape and murder of a 19-year-old Dalit woman in Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh, has taken the four accused in the case to Gandhinagar for brain-mapping and polygraph test. The team took the accused, who were lodged in Aligarh jail in Uttar Pradesh, to Gandhinagar on Saturday and held discussions with officials of the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL). The date for conducting the tests is not yet decided. An official of the Gandhinagar-based FSL told *The Indian Express*, "The CBI officials came for a discussion on the polygraph

The team took the accused to Gandhinagar Saturday. Date for conducting the tests is not yet decided

and brain-mapping test of the accused for which a date will be decided soon. The accused were not brought to the FSL today." The woman died during treatment at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital on September 29. The Uttar Pradesh government had come under fire over the manner in which the victim's body was cremated and the way her family was treated by local police, following which the case was transferred to the CBI.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 22

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Sunday night arrested former Karnataka minister Roshan Baig, who shifted allegiance from the Congress to the BJP last year, in connection with the Rs 4,000-crore I Monetary Advisory (IMA) Group ponzi scheme in which he is alleged to have received several crores of swindled funds. Baig, who was arrested after over seven hours of questioning, was produced at the home of a special CBI judge, who remanded him in 14 days' judicial custody, sources said. More than 40,000 investors, mostly from the Muslim community, were duped of their savings — to the tune of Rs 4,000 crore — by the ponzi scheme operated by the IMA Group of arrested businessman Mohammed Mansoor Khan.

Baig's name emerged when the scam surfaced nearly 18 months ago and Khan fled the country before being arrested and brought back from Dubai in July 2019 by the Bengaluru crime branch police. In a video released while he was in hiding, Khan had claimed that several state politicians and officials had coerced him into paying bribes, causing the IMA's



Roshan Baig

downfall. One of the persons, who he claimed had received nearly Rs 400 crore, was Baig, who was the then Congress MLA from Shivajinagar constituency in central Bengaluru. During investigations in mid-2019, police found documents in which a key associate of Khan had recorded payments made to politicians, policemen, and government officials. It showed Baig as a key recipient of funds. Despite being named by Khan, Baig had managed to evade arrest in the early days of investigations by a Special Investigation Team of the police set up by the Congress-JDS alliance government that was in power until July 2019. Baig crossed over to the BJP along with 16 other Congress and JDS MLAs in July 2019 and helped the BJP form a government under B S Yediyurappa by ousting the Congress-JDS coalition. Soon after coming to power, the BJP handed over the IMA scam case to the CBI in August 2019. An Excel document in which Khan and one of his firm's finance directors, Naveed Ahmed, maintained details of bribes they paid to people in government to keep

their ponzi scheme afloat is one of the key documents that the CBI used to track the trail of the alleged illegal payments made by the firm. "Names of several people are mentioned as receiving payments — ranging from Rs 400 crore to a politician to Rs 30 crore to a police officer. The investigations have not been able to find trails for all payments seen in the records kept by the official of the firm. In the cases of some people a trail has been found," a source familiar with the probe had said earlier. Baig, a seven-time MLA, was denied a BJP ticket for the bypolls held for the Shivajinagar constituency in December 2019 on account of his links to the IMA scam. The CBI has chargesheeted two senior IPS officers — Hemant Nimbalkar, an inspector general of police, and Ajay Hillori, a superintendent of police — and three other policemen who gave the ponzi scheme clearances. The police officers are alleged to have received bribes in excess of Rs 30 crore. A promotee IAS officer, B M Vijayshankar, who was arrested and charged for receiving a bribe of Rs 1.5 crore as the Bengaluru Urban Deputy Revenue Commissioner for clearing ponzi scheme, committed suicide a few months ago. Several officials from the revenue department have been chargesheeted. The Enforcement Directorate is also investigating the scam.

Odisha revises school merger decision

AISHWARYA MOHANTY
BHUBANESWAR,
NOVEMBER 22

FOLLOWING PROTESTS by the opposition in the Assembly, the Odisha government Sunday revised its decision on merger of schools, specifically for scheduled areas. Areas declared scheduled areas under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution with a preponderance of tribal population have a separate legal and administrative framework. Three districts in the state fall completely under the scheduled areas while nine others fall partially under it. Clarifying the government's

stance, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash said closing down schools was never the intention. "In scheduled areas, only schools with less than 15 students will be merged with other schools. However, if anywhere any student faces difficulties, they can approach the district administration or the ministry with their grievances and their concerns will be looked into," Dash said. "A separate fresh list will be prepared again to ascertain the exact number. The number of such schools with less than 15 students will be around 3,000," he added. On Saturday, Opposition parties, including BJP and Congress, had raised the issue and accused

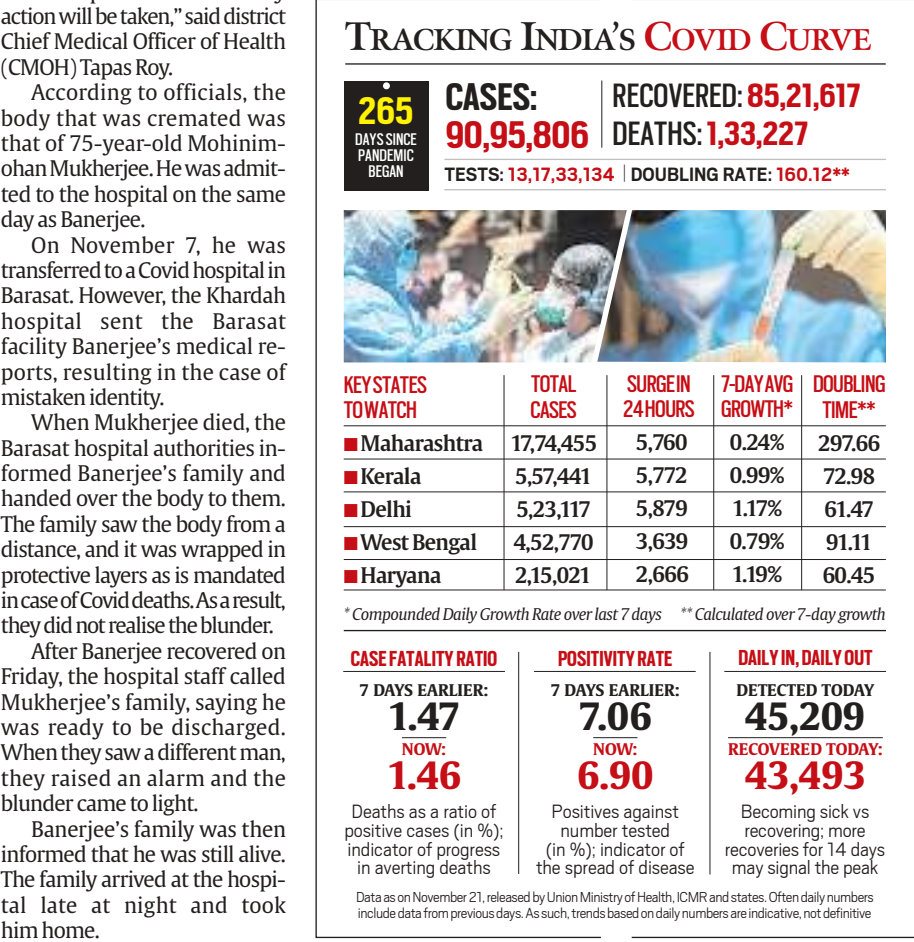
the ruling BJD of depriving students of their right to education. Government chief whip Pramila Mallick had said the merger is important to rationalise resources. In March, the education department issued a notification for merger of 11,517 schools with low enrolment. The process remained incomplete due to the lockdown. Earlier this month, the department issued a follow-up to the notification, asking district administrations to expedite the process for 8,000 schools in 15 districts. The merger is being undertaken under NITI Aayog's Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education programme.

Vacancies unfilled, minorities panel has only one member

ESHA ROY
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

THE SEVEN-MEMBER National Commission for Minorities (NCM) is down to just one member. While five posts were lying vacant since May, the vice-chairperson, Manjit Singh Rai, retired on October 25. The NCM is mandated to have seven members, including a chairperson and vice-chairperson, with a member each from the Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi and Jain communities. "There has been some delay in filling the vacancies because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the process is underway," said Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi. The ministry recommends the names to the Prime Minister's Office. This isn't the first time that vacancies haven't been filled in the NCM — in 2017, all seven posts remained empty for over two months. The NDA government faced criticism for not filling vacancies in the commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, backward classes and minorities. The same year, the Delhi High Court sought the Centre's response on a plea against the government's "inaction" in clearing appointments to the NCM. "It is true that the Commission, even with all its members, is not always effective. But it is nevertheless a representation for minorities and an important instrumentality of the government in a democracy that gives them agency, and when the NCM lies vacant, they feel excluded. The NCM is in charge of ensuring that the Prime Minister's 15-point programme is implemented and the programmes for minority communities are actually functioning," said Wajahat Habibullah, who was the NCM chairperson in 2011-2014. "In the past, the Commission has investigated matters of communal conflict and riots. I have visited sites of such conflict to investigate. The 2011 Bharatpur communal riots were investigated by the Commission. In 2012, a team was sent to Assam to investigate the Bodo-Muslim clashes,

and their findings were submitted to the government. Yet now, there is clear targeting of a particular minority in Uttar Pradesh for instance, but the Commission hasn't said a word about it so far, which is shocking," said Habibullah. "In 2004, the standing committee on social justice and empowerment, headed by Sumitra Mahajan, had made specific recommendations to strengthen the NCM. One of the issues was the insufficient investigative powers that the NCM has... But these recommendations were never implemented by the then UPA government. Whichever government is in power, the reports tabled by the minority commission in Parliament are never really taken up or debated," said former Vice President Hamid Ansari, who was also NCM chairperson. Section 13 of the NCM Act mandates that the annual report, "together with the memorandum of action taken on the recommendations contained therein", as well as the reasons for non-acceptance of the recommendations, if any, be tabled before Parliament annually. Sources said these reports have not been tabled in Parliament since 2010. "Even when I took over in 2006, these reports were no longer being tabled. And I had to take up the matter with the minorities minister and revive the practice. It is not accidental that the government is reluctant to scrutinise," said Ansari, who investigated the Nandigram incident in West Bengal during his tenure. "The Commission is meant to act on complaints that it receives. Most of the complaints that we receive are regarding service matters, where an individual may feel that he has been terminated or passed over for promotion because of his religion. We also get complaints of property disputes," said B Anand, NCM Secretary. Former NCM members said there has been a shift in the kind of members appointed to the body. While past appointments included former chief justices, civil servants, academicians etc, the recent appointees were mostly "social activists" with links to the BJP, they said.



CROSSWORD 4283

ACROSS

1 Deathly pale going out to play Hamlet? (4,3,4)

9 It shows the head turned towards you (7)

10 He makes one cross at times (5)

11 Sort of oil lamp needs trimming (4)

12 Intended to put one's name in a legal document (8)

14 Kingdoms about to be given charity (6)

16 Bags of money (6)

18 It rarely turns out like this in books (8)

19 The story's only part of the whole picture (4)

22 Temporally secures a levy we hear (5)

23 Penalty for a swindler is to be put in prison perhaps (7)

24 On which games are won by the over-forties (6,5)

DOWN

2 Smooth down or up (5)

3 Transport over a distance (4)

4 He'd caught the fish, having leaned over (6)

5 I've entered inebriated to have a good time (4,2,2)

6 Is there at the start, and finishes (7)

7 Sort of writing that may be highly polished (11)

8 Piece of expertise - guarded by private industry (5,6)

13 Bar from society (8)

15 This piece needs rewriting to make it clear (7)

17 Summary of new prices (6)

20 Coming before a superior (5)

21 Ruin a French party (4)

Solutions Crossword 4282: Across: 1 Handel, 4 Strange, 9 At once, 10 Payphone, 12 Ha-ha, 13 Happy, 14 Clap, 17 Nuts and bolts, 20 Leaning tower, 23 Odds, 24 Score, 25 Talc, 28 Dead heat, 29 Bolero, 30 Delicate, 31 Tenses. Down: 1 Heathers, 2 Neophyte, 3 Each, 5 Sharp corners, 6 Rapt, 7 Noodle, 8 Exempt, 11 Landing craft, 15 Easel, 16 State, 18 Sweaters, 19 Precious, 21 Loaded, 22 Detail, 26 Chic, 27 Love.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

I am no more ___ than my talents require - Oscar Levant (6,_,7)

SETAE

NETFUL

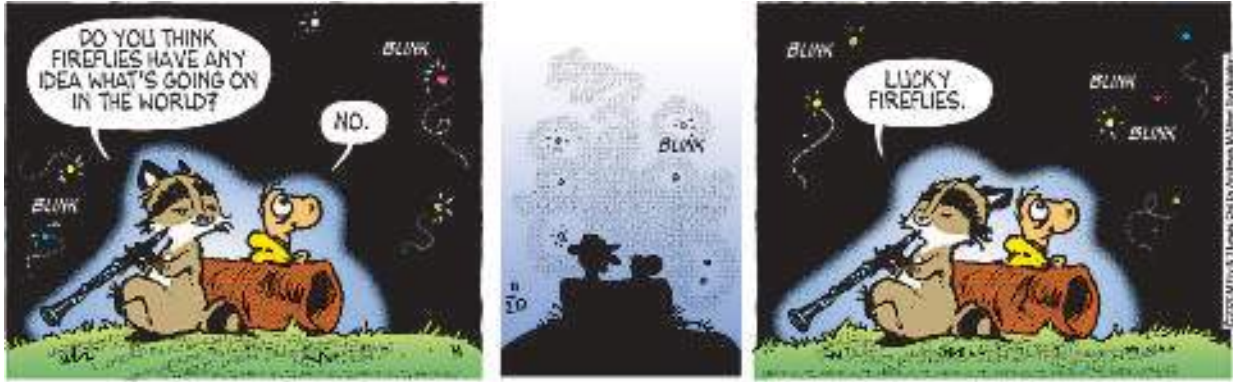
EILTT

EORBHM

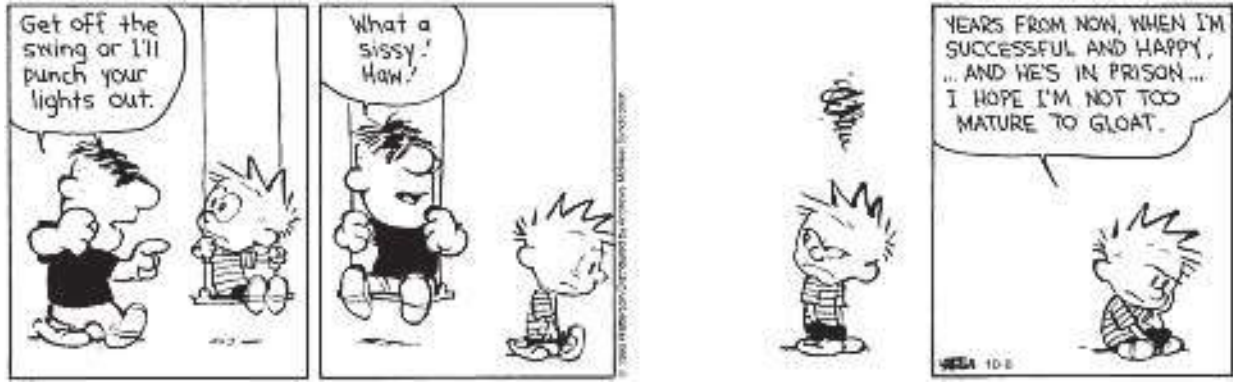
Answer: I am no more **jumble** than my talents require - Oscar Levant

SOLUTION: TEASE, TITLE, FLUNT, HOMER

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4301

Difficulty Level 4s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy;
3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;
5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4300



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Recent emotional wobbles are bound to cast a slight shadow over your financial affairs for a few days, but could inspire you to ever greater heights of achievement. See this as a good thing, for if your affairs are kept out of the glare of public scrutiny, you'll be free to manage them as you think fit.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

On a material level your horoscope talks of the need to manage domestic spending much better than in the past, but the real message is psychological. You should permit yourself to be undervalued and taken for granted no longer. It's about time you be free to manage your share of respect.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Your relationships should be going through a relatively lively patch, and your hopes will be fulfilled as long as you follow certain ground rules; it is absolutely necessary to sympathise with others' predicaments and to do your level best to help them achieve their aims.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

The Moon puts you in a very strong position, which should be a morale-booster for you. It indicates that your emotions might be slightly more unsteady than usual, but that should be something that you're more than happy to live with. There might be a cost, but one you can afford.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

This is an ideal moment to throw yourself into new affairs with a total commitment, not only to fulfilling all your responsibilities, but to completing them as well as you can. With a little extra thought, you might even overcome a major long-term obstacle in a few days' time.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You may promote professional and worldly ambitions ruthlessly today. You have a chance to gain in responsibility, authority and prestige, which is not to be lightly ignored. But don't imagine that doing the best for yourself means doing other people down. It doesn't.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Last week's conflicts and strains should now be calming down. It seems certain that the causes of any friction lie in the past, so personal problems may now be settled much more effectively than once seemed possible. You can now face the future with confidence.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Romantically you have every reason to keep yourself to yourself but, in other respects, it looks as if collaboration is necessary. Even at work there'll be a social dimension which will soon be impossible to ignore. The message has to be that co-operation is the only way forward.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Close companions may expect that you continue to provide them with support and assistance, but you may actually do them a good turn if you defy their hopes and insist that they start doing certain things for themselves. Also, if you feel trapped in the past then there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Life should still be relatively secretive. Just why you are reluctant to confess your feelings is your business, but you can rely on an increase in your confidence, with good consequences all round, within a few days. You should feel better once news from the past has arrived.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

It is a marvellous moment for finally letting other people know how you feel. There's an interesting link between emotional and intellectual regions of your chart which will lend your words an appealing emotional intensity. When your natural perfectionism comes out, all you can do is your best.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You could be on the move again, even if only in your imagination. In the ideal world, you'd be travelling to foreign parts. If you're stuck where you are, try to introduce a note of something distant or adventurous. There might be something profoundly attractive about people from cultures very different from your own.



IRON IN VELVET

Kerala government must withdraw social media ordinance. It violates Constitution, arms police with a chilling new weapon

THE KERALA GOVERNMENT'S decision to amend the law to make allegedly “threatening or abusive or humiliating” social media posts punishable by a jail term crosses many red lines — and walks a path which the Supreme Court has clearly flagged as unconstitutional. By pushing through an ordinance that makes such a draconian change, the Left government not only adds to the steady state encroachment of free speech and individual liberties but it also sets a flagrant example of overzealous policing. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has defended the amendment in the name of the damage done to “women, transgender people” and families who are the targets of scurrilous attacks on online media platforms. The argument ignores the fact that there are enough provisions in the IPC that can address such violations. Indeed, many of these are being weaponised by police across states, be it Maharashtra or Uttar Pradesh. More worryingly, Kerala's move is a reflection of a saviour complex that allows states and politicians to invoke a range of ruses — from the protection of the weak, to the aggrieved sentiments of communities, to national security and fake news — to arrogate more power to themselves to regulate and restrict free speech. It is an attempt to smuggle in the iron fist in the velvet glove of noble intentions.

But the Supreme Court has called out such attempts previously. In 2015, the apex court struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which gave the government power to arrest and imprison an individual for allegedly offensive online posts. The court ruled that as it did not distinguish between speech that was merely “offensive or annoying” and that which was guilty of inciting a disruption of public order, Section 66A was “liable to have a chilling effect on free speech”. The same judgment also declared as invalid Section 118 (d) of the Kerala Police Act, which prescribed a jail term for those who caused annoyance to others by “indecent” statements, comments, calls or messages. In effect, the new ordinance tries to resurrect a section struck down as unconstitutional by the apex court.

Despite the guarantees in the Constitution, the Indian political class, Left, Right, even Centre, riding on the ballast of a hyper-polarised politics, increasingly looks at free speech, dissent and even legitimate criticism as an exercise in bad faith, and projects it as an attack on democratically elected authority. As a result, existing laws are being weaponised to arrest journalists and citizens for a tweet or a slogan or a Facebook post, when institutions of a mature democracy should have the broad shoulders to shrug off such comments. That the avowedly progressive Left government in Kerala — seen by many of its ardent admirers as a last outpost of liberal values — also decides to strike a blow against liberty is a sign of an endemic intolerance to dissent, cutting across ideological lines. The Pinarayi Vijayan government, a strident critic of state excesses elsewhere in the country, must hold itself up to those same standards — and withdraw an ordinance that does not pass the constitutional test.

MANY MORE BANKS

RBI panel proposal to allow large NBFCs to convert to banks is welcome. Need for better supervision mechanisms is urgent

INDIA HAS NO balance of payments problem. Nor is it constrained any longer by endemic shortages of food, fuel and other essential raw materials. Even government finances are on the mend, with the goods and services tax regime stabilising and the worst of the COVID lockdown-induced revenue shortfalls over. But there is one unresolved crisis — of a broken banking system — that can hold back economic growth. Public sector banks (PSBs), in the last five years, have seen their share in total advances and deposits fall from 74-76 per cent to 60-65 per cent. But these are still far too high and also worrying, given the accumulation of bad loans, both past and prospective. The Centre cannot keep recapitalising PSBs. While there are well-run private sector banks, they cannot pick up the slack from the vastly reduced lending capacity of PSBs.

The solution is simple: India today needs more banks. It is in this context that the recommendation by a Reserve Bank of India (RBI)-appointed internal working group to allow non-banking financial companies (NBFC) with asset size of Rs 50,000 crore or more to convert to banks, is welcome. Such NBFCs could include those controlled by large corporate houses, subject to their having a minimum of 10 years of successful operations and the promoters being “fit and proper”. If the panel's suggestions are accepted, many NBFCs — like Bajaj Finserv, Aditya Birla Capital, L&T Finance, M&M Financial Services and Cholamandalam Investment & Finance — would qualify. Their lending books are already bigger than many banks. The integrity and reputation of the promoters in these cases, too, isn't under question. If becoming banks gives them greater access to low-cost public deposits and thereby enables more lending, that is good for the economy's growing credit requirement.

Converting established NBFCs into banks is different from permitting large corporate/industrial houses in general to set up banks. The RBI panel has rightly adopted a cautious approach in this regard. Banking as a business involves deploying others' money. India's past history is replete with instances of business houses using banks as captive fund pools for financing other group entities and related parties. Licences should, hence, be issued selectively and preference given to those with a proven track record in running NBFCs as independent, arm's-length businesses. Banking regulations should ensure adequate safeguards against “connected lending”, though one mustn't forget that recent scams have been more about PSBs and so-called professional-promoted entities (Yes Bank and Global Trust Bank). The need for better supervision mechanisms is as urgent as the need for more banks, small and big.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



JESSICA SEDDON AND ASHOK GULATI

IF YOU WERE being forced to consume poison — and to pay for it — how would you react? Not well, for sure. It sounds abstract, far-fetched, but this is one of the dynamics at play behind air pollution in Delhi and the Indo-Gangetic plains at large.

People in this highly-polluted airshed are choking toward a slow death. As winter dawns, the wind slows, temperatures drop, and suspended particulate matter (PM) accumulates. The more-than-enough pollution in Delhi and surrounding cities from congested traffic, dust, construction, waste-burning and power generation accumulates and gets a top-up from the burning of paddy stubble in Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh. This top-up varies daily — from 1 to 42 per cent of the total pollution, as per SAFAR's reading from October 24 to November 19. But it is, in general, a big chunk of the poison, as growing research using a range of technologies and methods, from satellites to ground monitoring to chemical analysis, concurs.

Agriculture's contribution to air pollution runs even deeper than what happens between crop seasons. The Indo-Gangetic plain is also one of the world's largest and rapidly-growing ammonia hotspots. Atmospheric ammonia, which comes from fertiliser use, animal husbandry, and other agricultural practices, combines with emissions from power plants, transportation and other fossil-fuel burning to form fine particles. The precise share of these “second particulates” (secondary because they are formed by multiple direct, or primary, emissions reacting in the atmosphere) has not been extensively studied for Indian cities but findings from China with similar emission patterns suggest that they can account for a quarter to a third of particulate matter pollution even in urban settings.

To be sure, agriculture alone is not the full story. The post-Diwali PM 2.5 levels of 1,970 in Vivek Vihar to 1,073 in Mandir Marg in Delhi (against a safe value of 60) were clearly a cocktail of many sources. It is important to note that agriculture is a victim of pollution as

The regime of subsidies is the main reason why there is stubble in the first place

Free power — and consequently, ‘free’ water, pumped from the ground — is a big part of what makes growing rice in these areas attractive. Open-ended procurement of paddy, despite the bulging stocks of grains with the Food Corporation of India, adds to the incentives. Subsidies account for almost 15 per cent of the value of rice being produced in Punjab-Haryana belt.

well as its perpetrator.

Particulate matter and ground-level ozone (formed from industrial, power plant, and transportation emissions among other ingredients) cause double-digit losses in crop yields. Ozone damages plant cells, handicapping photosynthesis, while particulate matter dims the sunlight that reaches crops. Agriculture scientist Tony Fischer's 2019 estimates of the two pollutants' combined effect suggest that as much as 30 per cent of India's wheat yield is missing (*Sage Journals, Outlook on Agriculture*). Earlier, B Sinha *et al* (2015), in *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics Discussions*, found that high ozone levels in parts of Haryana and Punjab could diminish rice yields by a quarter and cotton by half.

But the irony of agricultural pollution is that taxpayers are essentially paying for it through a system of subsidies that actually motivates the very behaviours that drive the agricultural emissions that they breathe.

Much of the policy attention has focused on how to change the disposal of paddy stubble, but our current system of subsidies is a big reason that there is stubble on these fields in the first place. Free power — and consequently, “free” water, pumped from the ground — is a big part of what makes growing rice in these areas attractive. Open-ended procurement of paddy, despite the bulging stocks of grains with the Food Corporation of India, adds to the incentives. Subsidies account for almost 15 per cent of the value of rice being produced in Punjab-Haryana belt.

Similarly, the roots of rising ammonia pollution lie in the way fertiliser is used. Fertiliser, particularly urea in granular form, is highly subsidised. It is one of the cheapest forms of nitrogen-based fertiliser, easy to store and easy to transport, but it is also one of the first to “volatilise,” or release ammonia into the air. This loss of nitrogen, the main point of fertilising in the first place, then leads to a cycle of more and more fertiliser being applied to get the intended benefits for crops. There are ways to reduce the nitrogen loss, and pollution consequences, but they are not as cheap,

easy, and subsidised as the basic granules.

We have to stop paying for poison. An important element to correct in the policy matrix is the policy of subsidies on power, fertilisers and procurement. We need to shift the nature of support to farmers from input subsidies to investment subsidies, say for the conversion of paddy areas in this belt to orchards with drip irrigation, vegetables, corn, cotton, pulses and oilseeds, that consume much less water, much less power and fertilisers and don't create stubble to burn.

A diversification package of, say, Rs 10,000 crore spread over the next five years, equally contributed by the Centre and states, may be the best way to move forward in reducing agriculture-related pollution. States' savings on power subsidies and from reducing water table depletion could pay for most of the package. The approach to diversification has to be demand-led, with a holistic framework of the value chain, from farm to fork and not just focused on production. The role of the private sector in building value chains will be critical.

On the fertiliser front, instead of massive subsidisation of urea to the tune of almost 75 per cent of its cost, it would be better to give farmers input subsidy in cash on per hectare basis, and free up the prices of fertilisers completely. This would be in a crop-neutral way that would make agriculture demand-driven and also save the country from high costs of carrying excessive stocks of rice and wheat. Government procurement of paddy from farmers burning stubble in their fields may also be restricted.

Taken together, these measures could double farmers' incomes, promote efficiency in resource use, and reduce pollution — a win-win solution for all. The Modi government has already undertaken bold agri-marketing reforms. It is time to reform the input subsidy regime and stop paying for poison.

Seddon is Fellow, Chadha Center for Global India at Princeton University, and Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIR

POWER IN THE AIR

IAF has enhanced India's deterrent and coercive posture in Ladakh



ARJUN SUBRAMANIAM

AFTER ALMOST TWO decades, the wider citizenry has been exposed to several facets of how India's armed forces are deployed in warlike conditions in Eastern Ladakh. The deliberate and decisive deployment of the Indian Army, with its entire range of combat and engineering capabilities including tanks, towed heavy artillery guns, special forces and hardy troops in protective winter gear, has sent a strong message to the People's Liberation Army (PLA). An even more deterrent signal has been the willingness of the Indian Army to occupy tactically advantageous heights along the north and south banks of Pangang Tso. It has forced the Chinese to reevaluate their strategic game-plan, which was expected to unfold by the time winter set in. This strategic pause has helped the Indian Army dig in along the LAC and consolidate its deterrent posture.

However, what has slipped under the radar is the massive effort by the Indian Air Force in enabling, supporting and complementing this effort, both in real terms as well as coercive posturing. Never has so much load and so many personnel been flown into Ladakh by the IAF, not even in 1962. The skies over Ladakh now reverberate with the sound of Sukhois, MiG-29s, Rafales, C-17s, C-130s, Chinooks and Apaches as Leh emerges as among the busiest IAF airfields. Images of Special Forces training with aviation elements of the Army and the IAF in the rugged terrain bear testimony to the improving synergy between the two services.

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For decades, the airspace over Ladakh has remained muted with only the bare minimum transport and helicopter support being undertaken for sustenance, stocking and casualty evacuation. Lulled and even intimidated for decades by the strictures imposed on it by the various border protocols and confidence-building measures, Sub-Sector North and Eastern Ladakh were literally quasi no-fly zones for IAF fighters. Whatever little fighter flying comprised mainly of Combat Air Patrols over Siachen and some familiarisation in other parts of Ladakh.

The government seems to have realised two important facets of any future limited conflict scenarios across the LAC, particularly in Ladakh. The first is given the dense and almost mirror-image ground deployments of the Indian Army and the PLA, force-on-force engagements are not likely to lead to any decisive outcomes that could result in an alteration of status quo for either side. With human capacity significantly diminished by altitude and terrain, air power can cause significant psychological degradation in an adversary. The Kargil conflict was a case in point.

Second, given that the PLA's capacity to absorb punishment in a limited but high intensity conflict is untested in recent times, the ability of airpower to cause significant attrition and destruction of combat potential must be factored in. This is essential if a weaker power (India) is to seize the initiative early on in a conflict to shape a desirable outcome. Given the sparsely populated battle-

space, both precision attacks and area bombing are not likely to cause any collateral damage, thereby allowing airpower to operate without any major shackles.

Modern air power is all about targeting and targeting is all about building a proper intelligence mosaic. The principal medium to create this mosaic is space and the platforms used are imaging, infrared, communication and navigation-enabling satellites. It will take decades for India to match China's superiority in this realm. While India has wisely chosen not to engage in a space race with China, there is a need to accelerate the military segment of India's space programme. The creation of a Defence Space Agency is a step in this direction. In the meantime, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and other air-based surveillance systems need to fill the gap. Space-based communication and signal intelligence satellites are key to create an electronic orbit (order of battle) of the adversary.

Whatever transpires on the ground during the coming weeks, the aerospace segment of deterrence, intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance must act as the strategic establishment's eyes and first responder in any future responses along the LAC, particularly in Ladakh. Air and space power are extensions of the same continuum and that ought to be reason enough to invest more effort and resources in sharpening them.

Subramaniam, a retired Air Vice Marshal, is the author of India's Wars

NOVEMBER 23, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ALLYING WITH FARMERS THE FARMERS' AGITATION in Western India is poised to enter a new phase with Opposition parties proposing to launch a sustained protest in which students have been asked to boycott classes. Meanwhile, Gujarat Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki has given an open invitation to the farmers' leader for talks. His Maharashtra counterpart A R Antulay has appealed to the Union agriculture minister Rao Birendra Singh to increase the prices of sugar and onion. He has also asked the Centre to direct the National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation to increase onion purchase and allow exports on behalf of the Maharashtra Cooperative Marketing Federation. Solanki

said he was prepared to invite the Union agriculture minister and arrange a meeting between him and the farmers' leader.

ASSURANCE FROM UP UP CHIEF MINISTER V P Singh has said that he has no apprehension about farmers in the state going on a Western India-like stir. He said that it has been made clear to farmers that the government is on their side. Singh also said that the ban on export of khandasari that was placed during the festive season has been lifted.

BREZHNEV VISIT PRESIDENT BREZHNEV'S VISIT to India is expected to lead to an easing of differences be-

tween India and the Soviet Union. Moscow's concern is on many points, particularly Afghanistan. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has been telling foreign dignitaries that the Soviet Union must withdraw from Afghanistan. Moscow is unhappy over India's “unofficial stance” that the Soviet Union must set a date for the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan.

RAJIV'S PLANS RAJIV GANDHI, ELDER son of the prime minister, is undecided on whether he wants to contest elections, according to UP Chief Minister V P Singh. The CM added that personally he would welcome such a decision.

9 THE IDEAS PAGE

A world to win

The time has come to rally around a new idea for the world — a democratic global government that will not be held hostage to war and narrow national sovereignty



SUDHEENDRA KULKARNI

“I PLEDGE TO be a president who seeks not to divide, but to unify; who doesn’t see red states and blue states, only sees the United States of America.” Thus spoke Joe Biden soon after defeating Donald Trump and becoming the 46th president of the US. May he succeed in his difficult mission.

The US is not unique in being severely polarised. Corrosive social and political divisions are also apparent in India, Pakistan, France, Turkey, Brazil, Ethiopia — indeed, in every country to a lesser or greater degree. The antidote to polarisation is reform of government and state institutions in a way that they work for all citizens without discrimination and injustice. Societies are healed when governance becomes fair and compassionate.

The larger question the 21st century is posing with increasing urgency is: How is our divided world going to be united and healed? Not since the end of the Cold War three decades ago has the world been as fractured, and as besieged with uncertainty, as it is today. Indeed, there are fears of a new cold war breaking out if US-China relations grow icier. The intensifying rivalry between the world’s largest and second-largest economies is not the only cause for worry. The militaries of the world’s most and second-most populous nations — China and India — have been engaged in a tense standoff for the past seven months. Nearby, the armies of two other nuclear-armed countries — India and Pakistan — have remained in an endless state of confrontation. Elsewhere, West Asia has seen four externally instigated civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. A “hot war” of a different kind is being waged by the greedy and reckless rulers in Brazil, who have literally set on fire parts of the Amazon forest, the world’s largest sink for atmospheric carbon dioxide. There is also a crisis looming over nuclear disarmament. Time is running out for the extension of the only remaining nuclear weapons control pact between the US and Russia — the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty — which is set to expire on February 5, 2021.

We must add to this list many other pressing challenges — ensuring affordable availability of the COVID vaccine to the entire global population; making the world economy inclusive, equitable and sustainable, with complete eradication of poverty as the foremost goal; achieving time-bound climate action to protect the planet; and stopping the militarisation of oceans, outer space and other global commons. If we do so, two questions inevitably confront us. Do we have leaders with a global vision, and not just a vision limited to making their own respective nations “great”? Are national governments showing adequate commitment to international cooperation, so essential to tackle problems that are common to many or all nations? The answers are obvious, and deeply disquieting.

Without effective global governance, the world faces the real danger of lurching towards more disorder, divisions and even

Wars. Here are some radical ideas to avert that danger.

First, if non-discriminatory and justice-promoting governance is the remedy to heal the fissures within nations, the same is also necessary for creating a more united, safer and better world. Therefore, the concept of establishing a democratic world government must be brought to the centre of global discourse and action.

Second, nations and nation-states will, of course, continue. But the paradigm of exclusive and paramount national sovereignty has become the greatest barrier to human unity and fraternity. When national sovereignty is invoked to threaten peace, well-being and development of historically inter-connected societies and regions, it becomes a menace to humanity. Therefore, in the age of globalisation, we must embrace the virtues of shared sovereignty, in which connectivity (physical, digital, cultural and people-to-people) takes priority over the fetish of territoriality. This will also make it possible for the world to create reliable new structures for collective global and regional security.

Third, militarisation of international disputes must be criminalised under the new laws of global governance. Before cynics dismiss it as impractical, they should consider this: Haven’t nation-states outlawed and criminalised violence by communities and individuals within their jurisdiction? If so, can humanity not rise to the next level of law-governed and trust-based coexistence? Yes, it can.

Fourth, a natural corollary of the above is that the world community must compel all nations, especially big and powerful ones, to not only destroy all their weapons of mass destruction but also steeply reduce their military expenditures.

Fifth, the United Nations has become incapable of discharging its mandate due to its well-known structural defects. It must be reformed and strengthened to gradually evolve into a future world government body. As a key element of UN reforms, permanent membership of its security council must be abolished as it is repugnant to the tenet of equality of all



C R Sasikumar

If non-discriminatory and justice-promoting governance is the remedy to heal the fissures within nations, the same is also necessary for creating a more united, safer and better world. Therefore, the concept of establishing a democratic world government must be brought to the centre of global discourse. Second, nations and nation-states will, of course, continue. But the paradigm of exclusive and paramount national sovereignty has become the greatest barrier to human unity and fraternity. When national sovereignty is invoked to threaten peace, well-being and development of historically inter-connected societies and regions, it becomes a menace to humanity.

nations. Furthermore, nations that wage offensive wars or have failed to resolve disputes with their neighbours should stand disqualified/suspended from UNSC membership.

Sixth, there is a strong case for making governance more broad-based and participatory. In our increasingly inter-connected and inter-dependent world, technology and mobility have made it possible for artists, cultural workers, educators, mediapersons, writers, scientists, innovators, entrepreneurs, professionals, environmentalists, young people, women and other previously disempowered communities, peace activists and spiritual seekers to have meaningful conversations and collaborations transcending national barriers. They are creating an ever-expanding reservoir of shared knowledge and wisdom capable of addressing the most complex challenges before the world. Therefore, their empowered participation, and ending the monopoly of professional politicians, in global governance is a must.

Lastly, it is futile to expect most national governments and political establishments to embrace either the idea or the imperatives of global governance. This is because they have become prisoners of sectional interests and outdated patterns of thought and action. In human history, people alone have been the ultimate change-makers. History takes a new turn whenever multitudes swing into action inspired by new dreams and troubled by an awareness that old beliefs and systems are a hurdle to the fulfilment of their vital needs and aspirations.

Hence, the time has come to rally the people of all nations, races and religions around a New Idea of the World. It is the idea that our globalised human family needs a new democratically governing body to address the chaos and troubles caused by myopic, self-centred and unaccountable national governments. Bringing such a body into existence is not going to be easy. But then which transformative human endeavour has ever succeeded easily?

The writer was an aide to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Priti Patel, the home secretary, is a bully. Her defence is that she had not the wits about her to notice. If she had any shame, Patel would resign from a high-profile, high-pressure job” — THE GUARDIAN

Water bomb in the Himalayas

Chinese dam projects on the Brahmaputra are a threat to lives and livelihoods downstream



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT AND VIJEY GANESH R S

WITH INDIA-CHINA relations hitting its lowest point since the 1962 war, border infrastructure has come under intense scrutiny. The construction of several dams along the Yarlung (Brahmaputra) river on the Chinese side has been a repeated cause for concern for Indian officials and the local people, whose livelihoods and security depend on the river.

The Brahmaputra is a perennial river, with several peculiar characteristics due to its geography and prevailing climatic conditions. Inhabitants along the river have to deal with two floods annually, one caused by the melting of the Himalayan snow in summer and the other due to the monsoon flows. The frequency of these floods have increased and are devastating due to climate change and its impact on high and low flows. These pose a concern for the population and food security in the lower riparian states of India and Bangladesh. The river is in itself dynamic as frequent landslides and geological activity force it to change course very often.

As India and China continue to grow demographically as well as economically amid increased consumption among its citizenry, both nations face water constraints. China, which is home to close to 20 per cent of the world’s population, has only 7 per cent of its water resources. Severe pollution of its surface and groundwater caused by rapid industrialisation is a source of concern for Chinese planners. China’s southern regions are water-rich in comparison to the water-stressed northern part. The southern region is a major food producer and has significant industrial capacity as a consequence of more people living there.

China has an ambitious plan to link its south and north through canals, aqueducts and linking of major rivers to ensure water security. In pursuit of these goals, China, being an upper riparian state in Asia, has been blocking rivers like the Mekong and its tributaries, affecting Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It has caused immense damage to the environment and altered river flows in the region. China sees these projects as a continuation of their historic tributary system as the smaller states have no means of effectively resisting or even significant leverage in negotiations. Chinese projects in the Himalayas have only recently begun to operate amid protests from India.

India is severely water-stressed as well. In summer, a vast majority of urban areas face water shortage. Similar to China, India has 17 per cent of the world’s population and 4 per cent of water. While a majority of India’s population reside in the Gangetic plains, the southern and western regions

experience harsh and dry summer and the rainfall is scarce and erratic in the eastern coast. As in China, an equally ambitious north-south river-linking project has been proposed in India, though it has come under criticism for potentially disturbing fragile ecosystems.

There are now multiple operational dams in the Yarlung Tsangpo basin with more dams commissioned and under construction. These constructions present a unique challenge for Indian planners. First, they will eventually lead to degradation of the entire basin: Massive amounts of silt carried by the river would get blocked by dams leading to a fall in the quality of soil and eventual reduction in agricultural productivity. Second, the Brahmaputra basin is one of the world’s most ecologically sensitive zones. It is identified as one of the world’s 34 biological hotspots. This region sees several species of flora and fauna that are endemic to only this part of the world — the Kaziranga National Park houses 35 mammalian species out of which 15 are listed as threatened in the IUCN conservation list. The river itself is home to the Gangetic river dolphin, which is listed as critically endangered.

Third, the location of the dams in the Himalayas pose a risk. Seismologists consider the Himalayas as most vulnerable to earthquakes and seismic activity. Landslides resulting from earthquakes pose a significant threat — the 2015 Nepal earthquake and the resultant landslides wiped out several dams and other facilities. The sheer size of the infrastructure projects undertaken by China, and increasingly by India, poses a significant threat to the populations living downstream. Close to a million people live in the Brahmaputra basin in India and tens of millions further downstream in Bangladesh. The projects in the Himalayas threaten the existence of hundreds of thousands of people.

For both India and China, the Brahmaputra presents a geopolitical opportunity as damming this perennial river would result in water security in an era of unprecedented shifting climate patterns. This security extends beyond water, as there is the potential to significantly change the flow rate during times of standoffs and high tensions. In fact, during the 2018 Doklam border standoff between India and China, China stopped communication of water flow levels from its dams, effectively rendering India blind to floods during the standoff.

There are alternate solutions to solving the water crisis. Both sides must cease new constructions on the river and commit to potentially less destructive solutions. Building a decentralised network of check dams, rain-capturing lakes and using traditional means of water capture have shown effective results in restoring the ecological balance while supporting the populations of the regions in a sustainable manner. It is in the interest of all stakeholders to neutralise this ticking water bomb.

Jaffrelot is senior research fellow at CERI-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris, and professor of Indian politics and sociology at King’s India Institute. Ganesh is a student of politics and governance at Sciences Po Paris



DIPA SINHA AND RAJENDRAN NARAYANAN

THE EFFECTS OF the lockdown and the resultant economic crisis continue to disproportionately impact the poor and informal sector workers. Since the lockdown, the Government of India (GoI) has announced relief packages under the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) and Atmanirbhar Bharat. However, numerous studies have shown their inadequacy. *The Economist* referred to India’s lockdown as the “stingiest”.

What is more worrying is that even the few measures such as free grains to those having ration cards as per the National Food Security Act (NFSA) are coming to an end this month. While there have been reports hinting at continuing the provision of free grains, it is yet to be announced. In this context, the Right to Food campaign in partnership with several civil society organisations initiated “Hunger Watch”, a rapid survey across 11 states (~3,500 households) from mid-September to mid-October. The objective was to assess the situation of hunger among vulnerable groups, as well as to take immediate local action to support those in extreme need. To this end, we focussed on the conditions among marginalised communities such as Dalit/Adivasi households, daily-wage workers, households with single women, aged or disabled and so on. The survey was conducted through physical visits to the households by local researcher activists and 41 per cent of our sample reported having a monthly income of less than Rs 3,000

The wide net of hunger

Hunger, nutrition are worse than before lockdown. PDS must be universalised

pre-lockdown compared to only 2.4 per cent more than Rs 15,000. One-third of them were daily wage workers.

Although there is an improvement in the current situation compared to what it was during the peak of the lockdown in April-May, it is still much worse than it was before the lockdown in February-March. Widespread hunger continues even now. This was seen across the board, irrespective of the income levels.

Not only did these households start off very poor, but they also face precarious conditions with 27 per cent saying that they had no income in the month before the survey (compared to 43 per cent with no income during April-May). Out of those who didn’t have any income in April-May, 87 per cent continue to have no income. One in three respondents reported members having to skip meals “sometimes” or “often”. To cope with reduced income and food insecurity, people have reduced their food consumption and compromised on food quality. More than half the respondents said their current consumption of rice/wheat was less than what it was pre-lockdown. The situation was even worse in the case of dal; almost two-thirds say their consumption of pulses reduced. Based on the 2011 National Sample Survey, a recent paper by Raghunathan, Headley, and Herforth, published in the *Food Policy* showed that between 63 and 76 per cent of rural Indians could not

afford nutritious diets. Further, based on leaked consumption expenditure survey from 2017-18, S Subramanian, showed that consumption declined uniformly across the entire cross-section of rural India. Taken together, these studies suggest that affordability of nutritious diets might have worsened before the lockdown and got further exacerbated since. Indeed, the statistics from our survey comparing the food situation before lockdown and in October indicate about 71 per cent of our respondents reported that the nutritional quality of food worsened. Two-thirds of households reported that the quantity of food consumption either decreased somewhat or decreased a lot and 73 per cent reported that their consumption of green vegetables decreased.

Given that Indian diets are already known to be quite poor on average, such a reduction in consumption of foods is not only a reflection of the current levels of deprivation but also can be expected to have serious health and nutrition effects in the longer term.

The contribution of a well-functioning Public Distribution System (PDS) along with cash-support measures through social security pensions cannot be overstated in this context. Among the Hunger Watch respondents, 70 per cent had some kind of a ration card. Of those who had a ration card, 93 per cent said that they received free rations at least once (two-thirds said they received free rations

every month). While on the one hand, it is heartening to see that at such a time when all else seemed to fail, the PDS seems to have come to the rescue for many, it is also daunting to imagine what the situation would be if even this support is missing. The PDS gives only 5 kg of foodgrain per head each month at subsidised prices and as part of COVID-relief, an additional 5 kg for free and 1 kg pulses for the entire household. The demand for ration cards amongst those who didn’t have one was also high.

Although it has been over six months since the Supreme Court gave directions that school meals should continue even though schools are closed due to the pandemic, less than half the anganwadi children (47 per cent) and 63 per cent of school children said that they were getting some sort of dry rations and/or cash support in lieu of the meals.

All indications show that an economic revival will take some time — support is required during this period to at least prevent starvation. There is no better time to universalise PDS. In addition, to resuscitate demand, MGNREGA needs to be strengthened along with an urban employment programme. We cannot pretend we are back to normal.

Sinha teaches in Ambedkar University Delhi and Rajendran teaches in Azim Premji University, Bangalore. They are both associated with the Right to Food campaign

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOUND WANTING

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Fighting smarter’ (IE, November 20). The COVID-19 pandemic in India is an almost nine-month-old public health emergency. Despite the fact that the Delhi government, the Centre, the HC and the SC have taken cognizance of the matter months ago, the city crossed 5 lakh cases, and the death toll per 24 hours has recently gone up. The government’s act of balancing lives and livelihood has not been enough, given the woefully inadequate health system’s capacity.

L R Murmu, Delhi

EC’S CHALLENGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Shadow in Bengal’ (IE, November 20). The culture of violent elections in West Bengal was nurtured by the Left parties during their long rule. Mamata Banerjee has continued the practice more aggressively. The BJP is not averse to such a culture and has been retaliating with increasing vigour. The Election Commission will face its greatest challenge when elections take place next year in Bengal.

Y G Chouksey, Pune

ASEAN CHANCE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Partnership in progress’ (IE, November 20). The countries in Southeast Asia could do very little in their individual capacity to restrain the rising influence of the assertive big brother in the region. ASEAN has been able to restrain the big bully to an extent,

IDEAS ONLINE

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● THE DIRTY TRUTH ABOUT ODF: PRAGYA AKHILESH

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by actively engaging with it in multiple formats. India, or any other power for that matter that has stakes in the region, should engage more closely with the bloc for tangible outcomes both in the economic and strategic spheres.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

BANKING WOES

This refers to the editorial ‘Rescuing the bank’ (IE, November 2020). The banking business is not like other regular business enterprises. It is the people who lend money to the bank to enable them to run their business. The Reserve Bank and the government need to step in and protect the depositors. They need to understand their lives are at stake, as we can see in the PMC Bank case, among others.

Melville X D’Souza, Mumbai

10

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA, ASSAM MINISTER OF FINANCE, HEALTH; CONVENOR, NORTH-EAST DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

NRC, CAA no longer the discourse... Issue now is conflict of cultures, this claim of Miya identity

Sarma says the Bihar poll results will have a positive impact for BJP in both West Bengal and Assam, argues that his problem is not with Assamese Muslims but the ‘threat’ to composite Assamese culture, remains hopeful of Naga peace talks, and claims he has ‘no personal ambition left’. The session was moderated by Associate Editor Liz Mathew

LIZ MATHEW: Do you think that the Bihar Assembly election result will influence the polls in Assam next year?

We should not see the Bihar Assembly election result in isolation. It should be seen along with the bypolls in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Manipur. If you look at the country's map, from east to west and south to north, people have reiterated the Lok Sabha verdict once again. This reiteration is more vocal. The Bihar result is a continuation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lok Sabha victory. Although one state election doesn't have a direct impact on the other, people's faith in PM Modi will have a huge impact in Assam and Bengal elections. The results have led to a positive psychological effect on the *karyakartas* in both Bengal and Assam.

LIZ MATHEW: In the Bihar polls, the AIMIM spoke about the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC). Do you think this issue holds appeal in the Assam Assembly elections given that the state has a large Muslim population?

The Assamese Muslim community will vote for us. But so far as Muslims who have migrated from Bangladesh at different stages of time (are concerned), they are not going to vote for the BJP. So, what they think and do is an activity to be noticed by the Congress and All India United Democratic Front. We are continuing our development work because the government is for all.

LIZ MATHEW: So, does this mean that in the coming days the BJP will try to consolidate Hindu votes in Assam?

It is not a Hindu-Muslim (matter). It is a fight between two cultures. The so-called migrants — Bangladeshi Muslims — have started a new concept in Assam. They call it Miya culture, Miya poetry... Miya language... We have to protect the composite Indian culture and more particularly Assamese culture... And Assamese Muslims are firmly by our side.

LIZ MATHEW: Assam witnessed widespread protests against the NRC and CAA. How will this affect the polls?

There were protests against the NRC and CAA. But after that, many things have changed in the landscape of Assam. There is currently not too much talk about the NRC and CAA. These issues are no longer a part of the main political discourse of Assam. But if somebody from Delhi comes and asks someone about which side of the NRC and CAA they are on, then people have to tell something. But in the political landscape or the build-up to the election, nobody is talking about these issues. I don't think these will be a political issue. Of course, some (political) parties (or leaders) may mention it in their speeches. I think things have already taken a different turn — a conflict between cultures, the development work done by our government.

ABHISHEK SAHA: At least two new political formations (the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti and the Assam Jatiya Parishad) have made the CAA and NRC their main planks.

These two formations had declared their intention to form a political party about five to six years back. In the context of Assam, I don't think somebody can think of getting any seat or percentage of votes talking about the CAA and NRC. A lot of rumours were spread during the CAA agitation. People were told that a lot of Bangladeshi would come. They were also told that 500 trucks were lining up at the Bangladesh border. But people have seen that all these things have not happened in the last one year. I think if somebody tries to raise this issue, it will boomerang on them. I meet many people. Nobody is talking about the NRC or CAA. So these two political formations will also eventually dedicate only two minutes for these issues. Then they will attack the BJP on other fronts.

TORA AGARWALA: The representatives of the Miya community say that they are not asserting an independent or a separate culture, but that they are part of the greater Assamese culture. What is your opinion on that?

In Assam, many people have come in the last 1,000 years. Seven hundred years ago, my forefathers themselves migrated here... So, everybody has assimilated into the bigger cultural landscape. Nobody has tried to assert an independent culture. They (Miya Muslims) say that we want respect and space within the greater



WHY HIMANTA BISWA SARMA

A versatile politician, Sarma is BJP's chief troubleshooter in the North East. With Assam going to polls next year, Sarma is expected to play a crucial role in BJP campaign to retain power

Assamese culture. In Assam, the practice since 500 years ago, which was started by Mahaprabhu Sankardev, is that you assimilate into a broader Assamese culture and we will pick up your positive elements. But here is a community which has distorted Assamese language and created a language called Miya... It is not an independent culture, they distorted Assamese poetry and started Miya poetry... So it is aggression. They tell people that they want to assert their identity. What is the need to assert identity? That means you want to aggressively counter Assamese culture by encroaching on land of our monasteries... We will not accept this type of assertion. This is not acceptable to us.

ESHA ROY: The Naga peace talks seem to have hit a roadblock for many months now. There have been reports that the Union government has now agreed to discuss the Constitution and separate flag that the National

Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) has been demanding. Is it true? If not, how is the government planning to take the talks forward?

I will not go into the details about the flag and constitution. But I would like to say that the NDA government's policy is maintaining the integrity of the nation. That is what we saw in Jammu and Kashmir... However, the Naga issue is a very complex issue. These issues need to be resolved for larger peace and stability of our region. Under the supervision of (Union) Home Minister Amit Shah, a team of officers are engaging with Mr Thuingaleng Muivah (the general secretary of the NSCN). The discussions are positive and both sides have realised that they need to accommodate each other. But, at the same time, we should not

expect a dramatic outcome. This will take time and will be discussed in a friendly atmosphere. There is no breakdown of the Naga peace talks.

There are some proposals and counter-proposals. The Home Ministry is in touch with the Manipur civil society, and Assam and Arunachal Pradesh governments. We have to ensure that any Naga solution does not create another counter-agitation in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh or Manipur.

ABHISHEK SAHA: How successful has Assam been in managing the Covid-19 crisis?

Our doctors, paramedics, nurses and the government have done a commendable job in combating Covid-19. We have seen almost 2,10,000 positive cases. In a state like Assam, this is a huge number. Yet, today, our recovery rate is 97.45 per cent. Our mortality rate is just 0.45 per cent. We have completed 5 million tests. Assam has shown the way as to how by testing, tracking and isolating, you can combat Covid-19. In the meantime, we have celebrated Durga Puja. We are also holding political activities for the Bodoland council polls, where thousands of people are attending political rallies. In spite of all this, our positivity rate is just below 1 per cent. So, I think Assam has done a commendable job... From September 1, we have seen a steady decline. At some point in time, our active cases per day were about 36,000. Today, our active cases per day are just 200.

ABHISHEK SAHA: Why is the government opposed to madrasa education?

In 1955, the Assam government had published an education rule where they made two provisions. They created a set of schools called high madrasa, where a student could appear for general subjects. But they were also allowed to study a subject based on the Quran and can score 200 marks in that. This has created an imbalance as other students are not able to give answers on the Bible or the Bhagavad Gita.

An opportunity was given only to a class of citizens to study their holy scripture and then score marks. So, my opposition is because you have to establish parity. Either you allow the Bhagavad Gita or Bible so that other students also score 200 marks, or remove the Quran.

I think introducing the Bible or Bhagavad Gita will not be easy because Assam has a composite culture and there are many small religions. So the best way to establish parity is to remove the subject on the Quran. We are doing that this month. The Cabinet note is already in circulation and in its last stages of approval.

Then, we have another set of madrasas which impart deep religious or theological knowledge. And we give equivalence of Standards 10 and 12 (to them). This is not correct. Many students after completing Standard 10 ask whether they will be able to study medicine or engineering. The decision to send them to the madrasa was taken by their parents. This was not an informed choice of the student. A study conducted by Gauhati University found that 90 per cent of the students want to study medicine and engineering and do not want to study in madrasas. But at that stage, they realise that the doors are already closed. So, we have decided to convert these institutes into seats for general education. Now, 600 madrasas will be closed (down). In these madrasas, we are going to impart modern education. This (is not to) save any finance. We will keep spending Rs 300 crore because we are not going to take anybody out of service... The madrasa education is opposed by the student themselves.

LIZ MATHEW: But the Constitution gives rights to minorities to run educational institutions...

All private madrasas will continue. We are not touching them. It is a part of their constitutional right. And we respect that right... But these articles (in the Constitution) do not direct the government to run religious education. The minorities have the right to run educational institutions. But they don't have the right to impose their holy scriptures or literature on the government.

KABIR FIRAQUE: You have spoken about the clash of two civilisations and greater Assamese culture. You said that Assamese Muslims are on your side. So, in your vision of two civilisations, where do you place Assamese Muslims? And in the greater Assamese culture, where do you place Miya Muslims and Bengali Hindus?

Bengali Hindus are not distorting Assamese poetry... They are not saying that Bengali is an Assamese culture. They are saying we have a distinct culture. We have

We requested 20 per cent re-verification in six border districts and 10 per cent in other districts. If this presents same picture, we are going to accept the NRC

Assamese culture.

KRISHN KAUSHIK: When the Assam NRC panel submitted its report, the government contested it, amidst rumours that it had excluded more Hindu than Muslim names. What was the reason for rejecting it? What will be different in a new NRC?

We are not opposing or questioning the NRC. We are questioning certain processes adopted by (NRC) coordinator Prateek Hajela. He adopted certain procedures and misled the Supreme Court. First, the NRC did not delete more Hindu names than Muslim. It put 5,56,000 Hindus and almost 11 lakh Muslims in the doubtful list. But that is not our concern. Our concern is that in the bordering districts of Assam there is a tremendous growth in population, which is disproportionate to any other Muslim- or Hindu-dominated district in the state. So, we had requested Mr Hajela to recheck 20 per cent of sample data from the officer of a neighbouring district. But he rejected the re-verification. We had produced documentary evidence before him. We also informed the Central government and brought to their notice that many fake documents were annexed along with the NRC applications... So, we just requested 20 per cent re-verification in six border districts and 10 per cent re-verification in other districts. If the re-verification presents the same picture, we are going to accept the NRC....

TORA AGARWALA: Every time the CAA issue comes to the fore, Assam erupts. Now with Covid-19, the issue has taken a back seat. But when the CAA comes into focus again, how do you plan to prevent violence?

You saw (anti) CAA protests on December 29 (2019). But after that, you saw BJP rallies in support of the CAA. And you also saw the kind of people who came out and supported the Home Minister's move on the amendment of the CAA. Of course, on the issue of the CAA, there will be a set of people who will keep on opposing and there will be another set who will say that the CAA is important for Assam. Having said that, I do not think that in Assam people are currently discussing the CAA. We have been able to largely convince the people that the CAA is not anti-Assamese and that it will not harm Assamese culture. I do not know whether there will be protests or not.

TORA AGARWALA: The Baghjan Oil Field was on fire for months. This has adversely affected the environment even in the neighbouring areas. There is a lot of discontent regarding it on the ground...

I am of the view that it should have been contained much earlier. If you cannot control the blowout on time, then people will resist new drilling. So, economically and environmentally, we have to search for technology and alternative mechanisms so that blowouts are contained immediately. We are in touch with the local people in Baghjan. We have started various development activities. And I think that public anger is softening because they saw that Oil India Limited worked day and night to contain the blowout. But the impact on the environmental is there. We need to ensure that this does not happen again.

ANANT GOENKA: What is your view on social media platforms having the power to control content?

First, as a country, we cannot oppose the free flow of information. But this should not become a source of misinformation. I am not in a position to suggest a way but the government or an independent authority must see to it that social media is not misused for supplying misinformation. I think gradually we can think of an independent mechanism, out of the government's control, to see that social media contents are not harming society, individual reputation or national interest.

LIZ MATHEW: With the Assam Assembly elections approaching, are you going to see you in the top position?

I have been in the Assembly from 2001. So, I have already requested the party that I do not want to contest this election. I have done a lot for my state in the last 20 years. So, now I am at the party's disposal. Whatever they decide, I will be fine with it... I don't have any personal ambition left. I have got enough love and affection from the people. It might have been an ambition 10 years back. But now, it is no longer an ambition. I am in a flow. Let's see what happens.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Private madrasas will continue. Minorities have right to run educational institutes. But they don't have right to impose their holy scriptures on govt

no issue as long as you are saying that Bengali Hindus follow Bengali literature and culture... But Miya culture is distorting Assamese language... Bengali Hindus are not in confrontation with Assamese culture... So as long as you don't clash with our civilisation, we have no issue.

Today, Assamese Muslims are being exploited. They do not have any representative in the Assembly or any parliamentary constituency... Nobody talks about them or their plight... So, the BJP is strongly on the side of the Assamese Muslim community. We have already ordered for their census and announced a Development Council for them. We have allotted Rs 100 crore for their development.

KABIR FIRAQUE: If Miya Muslims agree to live as a separate culture, would the greater Assamese society accept them?

Where is the question of us accepting or not accepting them? The Constitu-

tion of India gives them that right. You are already in the Assembly. You have already said that Bengali is your mother tongue in the Census... But now you are saying that Bengali is not your mother tongue and that you have a Miya language. Is there a language called Miya language in any dictionary? At some point in time, they (Miya Muslims) will say that their poetry is the real Assamese poetry or their culture is the real culture because they are gaining a majority. So, ours is a defensive mechanism. We are not on the offensive. We apprehend that at some point in time the Miya language will become the official language of Assam... So, the problem is the aggressive attitude. If they want to stick to their own culture, who is going to oppose them?... Do not try to mainstream your culture and impose it as the real



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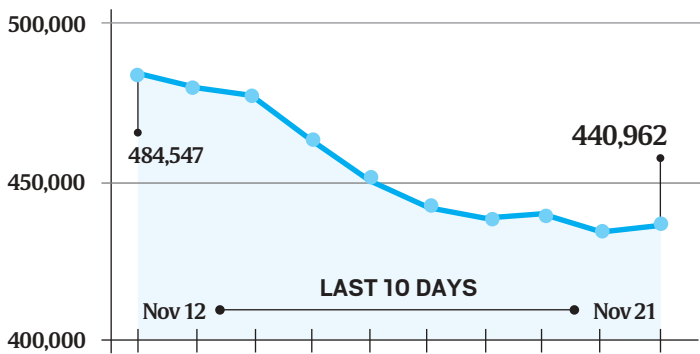
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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

INDIA ACTIVE CASES

440,962



Note: The Nov 21 figure in this graph is based on the government update on Nov 22

INDIA TOTAL CASES
9,095,806

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on Nov 22

WORLD TOTAL CASES
58,344,477

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on Nov 22

Scientists probe cell membrane defence against coronavirus

TO INFECT a human cell, the novel coronavirus needs to first bind to the cell membrane using its spike protein. The cell membrane is thus the cell's outermost line of defence against the coronavirus. Researchers are now investigating what treatments could make the membrane more resistant to virus entry. Cell membranes serve as a barrier between the cell's interior and its surrounding environment. In themselves, they host many activities necessary for cell function. They are just a few nanometres thick.

Researchers from Virginia Institute of Technology and the US Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) are using neutron scattering to investigate how the cell membrane and the virus impact each other. By determining how the coronavirus penetrates the cell membrane, scientists can develop treatments that hinder this process. Many researchers are exploring ways to combat the virus by targeting its spike proteins, but fewer are paying attention to the site where the infection process begins: the cell membrane.

The new research looks to estab-

lish a molecular understanding of the membrane properties that allow viral entry, how membranes change when in contact with the virus, and what membrane modifications could inhibit the infection process. The team is using ORNL's liquids reflectometer (LIQREF) to examine the conformation of membranes and viral spike proteins, as well as the effects of certain therapeutic candidates. With the instrument, scientists can measure the trajectories of neutrons as they interact with different biological materials. They then use this information to determine how a sample is organised at the molecular level.

The researchers performed their experiments with a membrane model that closely mirrors the shape and composition of cell membranes within human lungs. They measured how the membrane's properties change when exposed to either melatonin or azithromycin — commonly available products that are currently being investigated as possible treatments for mitigating Covid-19 symptoms.

Source: Oak Ridge National Laboratory, US Dept of Energy



PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

EXPERT EXPLAINS



DR GAGANDEEP KANG

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

How surprising are the findings announced by Pfizer, Moderna and Russia that their respective vaccines have over 90 efficacy%?

All these vaccines offering protection at a high level was surprising because, with mucosal infections, you usually see less protection than for infections at other sites. Influenza vaccines, in a good season, offer about 60%, and this can be much lower when the strains are not matched. If we look at enteric (intestinal) infection vaccines, they can be 85-90% protective, but not in all parts of the world. With parenteral (non-oral) vaccines for a mucosal infection, one example we have is the polio vaccine — you can give an injectable polio vaccine, and it's pretty good at preventing disease, but it doesn't really protect against the mucosal component, which is infection of the enteric tract.

I don't think we expected these vaccines to perform as well as they are. As we follow them for longer, the efficacy is not going to be maintained... These are early results, when the immune response has just been made. That said, for a reasonable timeframe, I don't think the rates are going to decline incredibly.

What does it mean to have an efficacy rate of over 90%?

Let's start with a very simple design, which is a 1:1 randomisation. This means half the people will get the vaccine and the other half will get a placebo. If we're looking at a vaccine trial with 20,000 people in this design, 10,000 would be vaccinated and 10,000 would not.

Let's say 10% of people would normally get the infection with a very high attack rate. So, of the 10,000 people who have not received the vaccine, 1,000 people will get the disease within a defined period. Now, we also have 10,000 people who have received the vaccine. In them, if the vaccine does not work at all, we will get 1,000 infections, because 10% will get infected. If a vaccine has 50% efficacy, 500 people will get the infection and, if it has 90% efficacy, only 100 people will get infected.

After the information released by these firms, what questions remain?

Will it work in younger people? Will it work in people who are immunocompromised? Are these vaccines you can give to pregnant women? What would their safety record be? How long does protection last? What does the immune response look like? What is the B-cells component [a B-cell is a type of white blood cell that helps create antibodies against a pathogen while it is infecting the body]? What's the T-cell component (T-cells are types of white blood cells that are part of the body's long-term immune response against a virus,

EXPLAINED THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Where are we in vaccine hunt?

The last two weeks have seen a string of encouraging results from coronavirus vaccine trials. What do these findings mean, what questions remain, and what does India need for a mass vaccination exercise? One of India's leading medical scientists addresses these issues in an interview to PRABHA RAGHAVAN



Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccine Phase 2 trials in Pune. Even with successful candidates, availability is likely to be limited initially. Arul Horizon/File photo

actively seeking it out to destroy it?

We have some of this data from the phase 2 studies, but the detailed look at immunology so far is in small numbers. It's good to see validation of the vaccines in different populations, but we also need to learn more about the safety issues — RNA, for instance, is very inflammatory. We saw there were more reactions in the people who got the highest dose in the Moderna trial, for example, and that dose is not being used for further studies.

The efficacy information released by these companies are just headline numbers in press releases. We haven't seen the actual data, so we can't say what protection looks like. Companies are going to have to publish this data and submit it to the regulators.

Earlier, experts said a vaccine with 60-70% efficacy was desirable. How desirable is this cut-off now?

If you have 90% efficacy, and it lasts six months versus having 60% efficacy that lasts 10 years, which one would you pick? We can't make decisions based on press releases. It's encouraging information, but we have to wait for the full datasets, analyse them, and then decide how we want to move forward.

It is about the performance characteristics of the vaccine and the goals you are trying to achieve.

If we look at other vaccines... In the case of the oral polio vaccine, immune responses in low — and middle-income countries are much lower than for injectable polio vaccines. But, a decision was made to go with oral polio vaccines, because they are much easier to deliver to the population.

You wound up using more doses of oral polio vaccine, but you still got to the same goal of trying to eliminate the disease from the country. Now, we are trying to eradicate it by combining oral and injectable vaccines.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines don't seem feasible for developing countries. What sort of vaccine would be better suited for India?

A good vaccine for India is an affordable vaccine that can be made in large numbers and delivered easily — preferably as a single dose. It should give long-term protection — I would like lifetime protection. We don't know this will happen, but one dose eases the burden on the immunisation programme, because you don't have the problem of needing to track the person down for the second dose.

We don't have a vaccine as expensive as the AstraZeneca vaccine (Covishield) in our programme at the moment, and that's at \$3 a dose — the lowest price announced. It still means you need \$6 just for the vaccine and more to deliver it in campaign mode. If you're talking \$10 per person per set of vaccination, that already makes it the most expensive vaccination program this country has ever had — at the individual, per person, cost and not just in terms of the number of people that would need to be immunised.

If we're talking about national programmes and immunising everybody in the country, we are going to need something under a dollar a dose, preferably under 50 cents. These are the kinds of things second-wave candidates should be aiming for.

THE EXPERT

DR GAGANDEEP KANG, Professor at Christian Medical College-Vellore, is one of India's leading medical scientists. Dr Kang's work on vaccines includes a key role in development of India's indigenous rotavirus vaccine. She is the first Indian woman inducted as Fellow of the Royal Society. She was recently Chair of an ICMR panel on Covid-19 drugs and vaccines.

How soon can a first-wave vaccine be realistically expected in India?

The first-wave vaccines that are going to come out quicker than others [globally] are the two mRNA candidates and probably AstraZeneca's.

Concerning ramping up of manufacturing with AstraZeneca — though we've heard about how they're going to make hundreds of millions of doses (of Covishield) — [Serum Institute of India CEO] Adar Poonawalla said this month we have 40 million doses and, in subsequent months, we will have more. That's not the message we got 3-4 months ago, when we were told about hundreds of millions of doses being made every month.

I think initial availability is going to be limited and the trickle will become stronger as production increases... we are not really going to have serious amounts of a vaccine even with the successful candidates for another three to five months.

That's time to get logistics for delivery together, because I don't think we are as ready as we should be... I don't think I've heard enough about the planning to know most problems have been anticipated and the rollout will be smooth and as high volume as is being projected.

What more should we know to get a sense of how government is geared up?

You would need to start communicating with groups likely to be vaccinated early. The government could put out a plan telling us this is how sequencing of vaccination is going to be done — in not just the big broad term of "these are the 3-5 categories (of priority groups that will get the vaccine first)", but also how they are going to operate within states.

The big picture is at the Centre but, at the state level, there has to be a delivery mechanism and clarity. We hear you're going to have healthcare workers, but is it private or public healthcare? What's the sequence? How do you break down healthcare workers? And, in our country, can you deliver to all healthcare workers around the country at the same time or will some states be prioritised?

We've never seen this scale of activity before, so it would be reassuring to have a public plan for how this is actually going to be done.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, both mRNA, need to be stored at different, low temperatures. Is it possible to develop an mRNA vaccine that can be stored at warmer temperatures?

Every mRNA vaccine is different... Gennova Biopharmaceuticals (which is also working on an mRNA vaccine) is planning to make a vaccine that can be stored at 2°C to 8°C. CureVac [of Germany] is also working on a 2°C to 8°C formulation. Even Pfizer is planning to modify its formulation, but it will take them a couple of years to get to that point, which is not surprising, because Moderna has been in the mRNA game for a long time, while BioNTech and Pfizer's tie-up was fairly recent. It takes time to develop these more stable formulations.

EDITED EXCERPTS

Longer version: www.indianexpress.com

Rise of a cleric: how did Khadim Rizvi become so influential in Pak?

The Islamist cleric died on Friday. His ability to arm-twist govts stands out even in Pak. A look at his meteoric rise, and what next for his movement

ZEESHAN SHAIKH

MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 22

PAKISTAN'S HARD-TALKING, expletive-spouting Islamist cleric Khadim Rizvi died on Friday. His meteoric rise in Pakistan's military-dominated political landscape and his power to bring governments to their knees, all in the span of less than a decade until his sudden death, are unique even by the standards of how much the country's history has been shaped by radical Islam under the benign and enabling gaze of its army.

Rizvi's abrupt death has created confusion and speculation about its cause, although indications are that it was likely a case of Covid-19. Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP), his movement and later a political party, has grown so much and proved itself useful so many times that Pakistan's permanent power wielders are unlikely to let it wither away.

What made him different

The sheer street power that Rizvi commanded made him different from the other extremists who have risen to prominence in Pakistan over the last three decades. He was not a Deobandi like the Taliban, nor an Ahle Hadees like Lashkar-e-Toiba's Hafiz Saeed. Rizvi was a Bareilvi. Most Bareilvis are viewed as middle-of-the-road, moderate Sunni Muslims. Half of Pakistan identify as

Bareilvi, whose practice of Islam is suffused more with Sufi traditions prevalent across South Asia, than with the Saudi Wahabism that reigns over *jihadi tanzeems*.

But Bareilvis, like every other sect of Muslims, also have strong views about perceived blasphemy. Rizvi channelised the common belief among a majority of Pakistanis that there is no forgiveness for blasphemy, weaponised it for his political ends, and turned it into raw street power. He did not have to indulge in terrorist violence, yet was more successful than any other extremist group in getting his way with those in power too.

At the very least, he forced successive governments to perish the thought of reforming the draconian blasphemy laws. And he was repeatedly able to target and undermine civilian governments.

In this way, he was a counterpoint to Saeed and other jihadists who had been tagged as global terrorists by the international community. Their work was secretive and across borders. Rizvi, on the other hand, was out there, harnessing religion across the country without setting off large-scale violence. Plus he had no links with militant Islamists in Afghanistan or with IS or al-Qaeda. More importantly, he was a populist who knew the pulse of the average conservative Sunni Pakistani.

But like the others, he was also a natural



Khadim Hussein Rizvi was head of Tehreek-e-Labbaik, a movement and later a political party. AP/File photo

ally of the Pakistan military which uses religious extremism for its own agenda. For a week immediately preceding his death, Khadim had summoned his followers to march on Islamabad in protest against French President Emmanuel Macron's stand in favour of free speech and the cartoons of Prophet Mohammed. In his speeches at the protests, Rizvi also launched scathing attacks against former PM Nawaz Sharif who had accused Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa of conspiring with the judiciary to oust him. Rizvi accused Sharif

of working to the agenda of outsiders.

Rise from nowhere

Rizvi literally came out of the blue. His launchpad was the 2011 assassination of Salman Taseer, the Pakistani politician who was then Governor of Punjab province, by his bodyguard. Rizvi was then an unknown government-employed cleric in Lahore. He took up the cause of Taseer's assassin Mumtaz Qadri, lauding him for killing a man who had come out in support of Asia Bibi, the jailed Christian woman accused of

blasphemy. The government served Rizvi several warnings over his utterances before finally sacking him. After this, he threw himself into a campaign in support of blasphemy laws and for the release of Qadri. The PPP government was then considering a repeal or reform of the draconian laws, but had to shelve this.

After Qadri was hanged in February 2016, Rizvi and his supporters swarmed Islamabad and sat on a dharna on the day of his chelun, the 40th day after death. There was tearing and rioting. Three people died. The protestors demanded the recognition of Mumtaz Qadri as a martyr, the conversion of his Adiala Jail cell into a national heritage site, the execution of Asia Bibi, the removal of Ahmadis and other non-Muslims in key posts, and the assurance that the blasphemy laws would not be diluted. The protests were held under the banner of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Ya Rasoolullah (TLYRA).

A widely circulated video of Rizvi weeping at the funeral, and putting his turban at the feet of Qadri for not being able to save him, cemented his leadership of the movement, whose declared aim was to safeguard the blasphemy laws. He left Islamabad with a warning to Sharif that he would return, which he did in November 2017, when he and thousands of his followers sat-in on an arterial road between Islamabad and Rawalpindi, paralysing life in both cities for nearly a month.

The trigger for the protest was an attempt to reform the election laws, which Rizvi alleged was aimed at diluting the anti-Ahmadi provisions. Finally the Pakistani Army, which had refused to use force to

evict the protestors, brokered a deal that was effectively a total surrender by the government. Not only was the amendment rolled back, the Law Minister also resigned after issuing an apology. A senior military officer was seen distributing money to the protestors, which was explained away as ticket money for going home.

When the TLP contested the 2018 general elections, it positioned itself as the guardian of Hurmat-e-Rasool (Prophet Muhammad's honour) and the custodian of blasphemy laws. It polled 4.21% of the votes countrywide and emerged the fifth largest party, better than the performance of LeT chief Hafiz Saeed's party. It also won three seats in the Sindh Provincial Assembly.

After that, the TLP carried out periodic protests, paralysing the government in November 2018 with a huge sit-in in Islamabad demanding the execution of Asia Bibi after she was acquitted by the Supreme Court. The government signed an agreement with the TLP that she would not be allowed to leave the country as it was believed she would do after the acquittal.

What now

After Rizvi's death, his son Saad Rizvi has been appointed as the head of the TLP. The leaders of other parties, such as the Sunni Tehreek Pakistan, or the Jamiat Ulema e Pakistan, are also likely to see an opportunity — either to revive their own outfits to ride the current wave of Bareilvi religious extremism and political activism, or to try and take over the leadership of the movement that Rizvi has left behind. Either way, they will need powerful benefactors.

TOPOF THE
WORLD

General Angus Campbell

AUSTRALIA
Defence chief
vows changes
after damning
Afghan report

AUSTRALIA'S TOP military official said on Sunday the country's defence force must 'own' a recent report on soldiers committing crimes in Afghanistan and pledged changes to ensure that atrocities do not happen again. The report, published on Thursday after an inquiry into the conduct of special forces personnel in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2016, found that senior commandos forced junior soldiers to kill defenceless captives in order to "blood" them for combat. Defence Force Chief General Angus Campbell said Sunday he would be held to account to ensure the report was dealt with thoroughly. **REUTERS**

AFRICA
Ethiopia PM
gives Tigray 72
hrs to surrender
regional capital

ETHIOPIAN PRIME Minister Abiy Ahmed gave Tigrayan regional forces 72 hours to surrender before the military begins an offensive on the regional capital of Mekelle. "We urge you to surrender peacefully within 72 hours, recognising that you are at the point of no return," Abiy said in a message posted on Twitter on Sunday evening. Tigrayan forces could not immediately be reached for comment. A military spokesman said advancing Ethiopian troops plan to surround Mekelle with tanks and may shell the city to force surrender. **REUTERS**

UNITED KINGDOM
Britain aims to
ease Covid curbs
by Christmas

THE BRITISH government said on Sunday it was working with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ease Covid-19 restrictions over Christmas to allow families to get together. Cabinet Minister Michael Gove discussed the issue with the first ministers of the devolved administrations Saturday, the government said, and they agreed it was important for families and friends to meet in a careful way, while recognising it would not be a normal festive period. **REUTERS**

After Pennsylvania court defeat, Trump faces new pressure to concede election

'Strained legal arguments without merit,' judge says of case; more GOP lawmakers call for concession

ANDY SULLIVAN
WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 22

AFTER A scathing court setback in Pennsylvania, US President Donald Trump faces increased pressure from his fellow Republicans to drop his effort to overturn the presidential election and concede to Democrat Joe Biden.

Since Biden was declared the winner two weeks ago, Trump has launched a barrage of lawsuits and mounted a pressure campaign to prevent states from certifying their vote totals.

So far, attempts to thwart certification have failed in courts in Georgia, Michigan and Arizona.

On Saturday, Matthew Brann, a Republican federal judge nominated by former President Barack Obama, dismissed a similar effort in Pennsylvania, writing that the case amounted to "strained legal arguments without merit and speculative accusations."



Trump at the White House on Friday. Since Biden was declared the winner two weeks ago, Trump has launched a barrage of lawsuits and mounted a pressure campaign to prevent states from certifying their vote totals. *Reuters*

For Trump to have any hope of remaining in the White House, he needs to eliminate Biden's 81,000-vote lead in Pennsylvania. The state is due to begin certifying its results on Monday.

Trump's lawyers vowed a quick appeal, but lawyers who opposed him in court say he is out of time.

"This should put the nail in the coffin on any further attempts by President Trump to use the federal courts to rewrite the outcome of the 2020 election," said Kristen Clarke, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Some of Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress are now

breaking ranks.

Republican Senator Pat Toomey said the ruling closed off any chance for a legal victory in Pennsylvania and called on Trump to concede the election.

Liz Cheney, a member of the Republican leadership team in the House of Representatives, earlier called on Trump to respect "the sanctity of our electoral process" if he does not succeed in court.

Biden got 6 million more votes than Trump in the Nov. 3 election, and also prevailed 306-232 in the state-by-state Electoral College system that determines who will take the oath of office on Jan. 20.

He has spent the past several weeks preparing to take office, though Trump's administration has refused to provide funding and security clearances to do so.

Critics say Trump's refusal to concede have serious implications for national security and the fight against the coronavirus, which has killed nearly 255,000

Americans.

In order to remain in office, Trump would somehow need to overturn election results in at least three large states — an unprecedented feat in US history.

More recounts

A recount in Georgia only affirmed Biden's win there, and officials certified the result on Friday. Trump's campaign said late Saturday it would request another recount.

In Wisconsin, election officials have criticised Trump volunteers for slowing a partial recount.

With recounts and lawsuits coming up short, Trump is now pressuring Republican-led state legislatures to throw out the vote totals and declare him the winner.

"Hopefully the Courts and/or Legislatures will have... the COURAGE to do what has to be done to maintain the integrity of our Elections and the United States of America itself," he wrote on Twitter after the Pennsylvania ruling. **REUTERS**

Erdogan: Turkey sees
itself as part of Europe

REUTERS
ISTANBUL, NOVEMBER 22

TURKISH PRESIDENT Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday that his country, an official candidate for European Union membership, sees itself as an inseparable part of Europe but will not give in to attacks and double standards.

"We see ourselves as an inseparable part of Europe... However this does not mean that we will bow down to overt attacks to our country and nation, veiled injustices and double standards," Erdogan said in a speech to the members of its AK Party.

Turkey's drilling activities in a disputed part of the eastern Mediterranean have raised tensions with the EU as Turkey locked in a dispute with and Greece and Cyprus over the extent of their continental shelves and hydrocarbon resources.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said this month that Turkey's rhetoric on Cyprus was aggravating tensions with the EU and Ankara had to understand that its behaviour was "widening its separation" from the bloc.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

The EU will discuss Turkey's pursuit of natural gas exploration in contested waters in the eastern Mediterranean at their next summit in December, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Thursday.

"We do not believe that we have any problems with countries or institutions that cannot be solved through politics, dialogue and negotiations," Erdogan said.

Erdogan said that the EU should keep its promises regarding the migrants issue. He was referring to a 2016 deal under which Ankara curbed migrant entries into Europe in exchange for financial help and visa-free travel in the Schengen region.



GUATEMALA'S CONGRESS BUILDING TORCHED

A protester waves a Guatemalan flag as a part of the Congress building burns in the background in Guatemala City on Saturday. *AP*

■ Hundreds of protesters broke into Guatemala's Congress and burned part of the building Saturday amid growing demonstrations against the legislature for approving a budget that cut educational and health spending.

■ The amount of damage to the building was unclear, but the flames initially appear to have affected legislative offices, rather than the main hall of Congress. Protesters also set some bus stations ablaze.

■ Discontent had been building over the 2021 budget on social media. People were angered because lawmakers approved \$65,000 to pay for meals for themselves, but cut funding for Covid-19 patients and rights agencies, among other things.

52 yrs later, IBM sorry for firing trans woman

MARIA CRAMER
NOVEMBER 22

IN AUGUST 1968, Lynn Conway, a promising computer engineer at IBM in Sunnyvale, California, was called into the office of Gene Myron Amdahl, then the company's director of advanced computing systems.

Amdahl had been supportive when he learned that she was "undertaking a gender transition," Conway wrote in an account, but the company's chief executive, Thomas Watson Jr., was less tolerant.

That summer day, Amdahl had grim news.

"I was fired," Conway wrote. Fifty-two years later, Conway was called back to speak with IBM



Lynn Conway in 2006

supervisors. This time, the setting was a virtual meeting witnessed by other company employees.

They watched last month as Diane Gherson, IBM's senior vice president of human resources, told Conway that while the company now offered help and support to "transitioning employees," no amount of progress could make up for the treatment she had received decades ago.

Conway, 82, was then given a lifetime achievement award for

her "pioneering work" in computers, a company spokesperson said. "It was so unexpected," Conway said in an interview, adding that she recalled blinking back tears. "It was stunning."

The apology was made four months after the Supreme Court ruled that a person could not be fired for being gay or transgender.

Conway was hired at IBM in 1964. She was on the verge of a breakthrough — working on the architecture team of a project centered on creating a computer that would work at top speed — when she began undergoing medical treatments. In early 1968, she told a supervisor that she was undertaking a gender transition.

Her direct supervisors wanted her to stay at the company and came up with a plan:

She would take a leave from IBM, complete her transition and return as a new employee with a new identity, Conway said.

But company executives were alarmed, she said. Conway said she later learned that IBM executives feared "scandalous publicity" if her story got out.

After she was fired, Conway underwent gender confirmation surgery and began rebuilding her career. She worked at Memorex in 1971, and in 1973, she was recruited by Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, where she developed computer chip design methods that would eventually be used by tech companies worldwide. In 1985, she became a professor of electrical engineering and computer science at the University of Michigan. **NYT**

Nawaz Sharif's
mother dies at 91

Lahore: Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's mother Begum Shamim Akhtar died in London on Sunday. She was 91.

Begum Akhtar was not well for the last one month or so, according to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party sources.

She had travelled to London in February last year and had been living with Sharif and her grandchildren.

The party said her body is likely to be brought back to Lahore on Monday and buried next to the grave of her husband Mian Sharif at the Jati Umra Raiwind residence of the Sharif family. Nawaz Sharif, who has been declared an 'absconder' by a Pakistani court, is unlikely to return to the country to attend the last rites of his mother. **PTI**

G20 says it will strive
for fair global access
to Covid-19 vaccine

DAVIDE BARBUSCIA
& MARWA RASHAD
DUBAI/RIYADH, NOVEMBER 22

LEADERS OF the world's 20 biggest economies vowed on Sunday to spare no effort to supply Covid-19 drugs, tests and vaccines affordably and fairly to "all people", reflecting worries that the pandemic could deepen global divisions between rich and poor.

The pandemic and prospects of an uneven and uncertain economic recovery were at the centre of a two-day summit under the chairmanship of Saudi Arabia, which will hand the G20 presidency to Italy next month.

"The Covid-19 pandemic and its unprecedented impact in terms of lives lost, livelihoods and economies affected, is an unparalleled shock that has revealed vulnerabilities in our preparedness and response and underscored our common challenges," the final communique said.

G20 nations will work to

"protect lives, provide support with a special focus on the most vulnerable, and put our economies back on a path to restoring growth, and protecting and creating jobs for all."

On vaccines, tests and treatments, the leaders said: "We will spare no effort to ensure their affordable and equitable access for all people."

The world's economy has experienced a sharp contraction this year as measures to contain the spread of the virus have curbed transport, trade, and demand across the planet.

The meeting was held by video link, like many such gatherings this year. Saudi Arabia's King Salman said in his closing remarks that the group had "adopted important policies that will achieve recovery all the way to an economy that is resilient, sustainable, inclusive, and balanced."

G20 leaders said that while global economic activity has partially picked up thanks the gradual reopening of some economies, the recovery is uneven, uncertain and subject to risks. **REUTERS**



Supporters of the Pakistan Democratic Movement in Peshawar on Sunday. *Reuters*

Pak Opp alliance holds
massive rally despite
ban on gatherings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PESHAWAR, NOVEMBER 22

PAKISTAN'S NEWLY-FORMED alliance of 11 Opposition parties on Sunday held its massive anti-government rally in Peshawar despite a ban imposed by the city administration owing to a spike in Covid-19 cases and security threats, with top coalition leaders predicting that the Imran Khan government will "have to go home by January".

The fourth power show by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was held despite the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's warning that it may lodge cases against the PDM leaders if a spike in Covid-19 cases was witnessed in the province after the rally. The alliance earlier held three massive back-to-back gatherings in Gujranwala, Karachi and Quetta.

Addressing the gathering, Pakistan People's Party leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari vowed that January will be the incumbent government's "last month in power" and the people will decide how Pakistan will be governed.

"They will go home in January," he said. "Time is near when you, the people, would hold this selected government and its selectors responsible for current crises..." he said.

On criticism over PDM's decision to went ahead with the rally despite the government ban, Bilawal said the government "only remembers Covid when they want to stop our rallies and your protest".

"They don't remember Covid when it comes to regularising medical staff or increasing salaries," he said.

In his speech, PDM chief and Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (Fazl) leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that all political parties agree and it is the movement's "clear stance" that the Imran Khan government came to power through a "rigged election". He said that the people have "rejected the rigged government".

China to launch Moon
probe, seeking first lunar
rock retrieval since 1970s

RYAN WOO
BEIJING, NOVEMBER 22

CHINA PLANS to launch an unmanned spacecraft to the Moon this week to bring back lunar rocks in the first attempt by any nation to retrieve samples from Earth's natural satellite since the 1970s.

The Chang'e-5 probe, named after the ancient Chinese goddess of the Moon, will seek to collect material that can help scientists understand more about the Moon's origins and formation.

The mission will test China's ability to remotely acquire samples from space, ahead of more complex missions.

If successful, the mission will make China only the third country to have retrieved lunar samples, following the United States and the Soviet Union decades ago.

Since the Soviet Union crash-landed the Luna 2 on the Moon in 1959, the first human-made object to reach another celestial body, a handful of other countries including Japan and India

have launched Moon missions. In the Apollo programme, which first put men on the moon, the United States landed 12 astronauts over six flights from 1969 to 1972, bringing back 382 kg of rocks and soil.

The Soviet Union deployed three successful robotic sample return missions in the 1970s. The last, the Luna 24, retrieved 170.1 grammes of samples in 1976.

China's probe, scheduled to launch in coming days, will try to collect 2 kg of samples in a previously unvisited area. **REUTERS**



THEY WERE KILLED IN THE 79 AD ERUPTION OF MOUNT VESUVIUS

Pompeii's ruins yield scalded bodies of rich man and slave

ELISABETTA POVOLEDO
ROME, NOVEMBER 22

EXCAVATIONS AT a suburban villa outside ancient Pompeii this month have recovered the remains of two original dwellers frozen in time by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius one fateful morning nearly 2,000 years ago.

The unearthing of the victims — whom archaeologists tentatively identified as a Pompeian landowner and a younger enslaved person — offered new insight into the eruption that buried the ancient Roman town, which has been a source of fascination since its rediscovery in

the 18th century. The finding is an "incredible font of knowledge for us", Massimo Osanna, departing director of the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, said in a video issued by the Culture Ministry on Saturday.

For one thing, the two were dressed in woolen clothing, adding credence to the belief that the eruption occurred in October of 79 AD rather than in August of that year, as had previously been thought, Osanna said.

Using a method refined by Italian archaeologist Giuseppe Fiorelli in 1863 and further honed with modern technology, archaeologists last week made plaster casts of the two newly



The casts of what are believed to have been a rich man and his male slave fleeing the volcanic eruption of Vesuvius nearly 2,000 years ago, on the outskirts of the ancient Roman city of Pompeii. *AP*

discovered victims. That brings the ranks of Pompeii's posthumous effigies to more than 100.

Archaeologists posit that the two victims had sought refuge in an underground corridor before being engulfed by a shower of pumice stones, ash and lapilli.

Pompeii officials believe the older man to have been 30 to 40 years old, and the younger between 18 and 23.

The villa where the discovery was made is in Civita Giuliana, an area about 750 yards northwest of Pompeii's ancient walls, which has already yielded important finds, including a purebred horse with a bronze-plated saddle uncovered in 2018. **NYT**

EXPLAINED
Window
into ancient
Roman life

THE ANCIENT Roman city of Pompeii was buried under 10-20 feet of volcanic ash after the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. The ash kept most of the city, including its inhabitants, entombed and undisturbed until 1748 when the first excavations started. The buildings, art and human remains that are still being found there have given us a window into life in ancient Rome.

13 ECONOMY

OVERDUE PAYMENTS WITH GOVTS, CORPORATES PEGGED AT OVER ₹4 LAKH CR

After slight fall, MSME dues of CPSEs & ministries again mount in last 5 months

AANCHAL MAGAZINE

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

AFTER AN initial push towards clearance of dues for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), overdue payments from states, Centre and corporates have again begun to pile up September onwards. Industry estimates peg the overdue payments to MSMEs at over Rs 4 lakh crore, with experts suggesting that less funds with governments and corporates could be behind the pile-up of dues.

As per government data on MSME Samadhaan portal, the online redressal system for MSMEs, total dues for MSMEs reported by 25 ministries and 79 central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) have nearly doubled in the last four-five months. Pending dues surged in July to Rs 969.19 crore, 72 per cent higher than Rs 561.64 crore of pending dues in May and continued to be elevated in August at Rs 830.36 crore. Total dues in August were reported at Rs 3,527.33 crore, lower than Rs 4,124.34 crore in July, but higher than Rs 2,349.53 crore reported for May.

STATUS OF MSME DUES AS ON SEPT 12, 2020

Reported month	Total dues by close of month	Paid during the month	Pending at the end of month
May 2020 (25 ministries & 79 CPSEs reported)	2,349.53	1,787.89	561.64
June 2020 (25 ministries & 86 CPSEs)	2,553.94	1,905.11	648.83
July 2020 (30 ministries & 108 CPSEs)	4,124.34	3,155.16	969.19
August 2020 (25 ministries & 91 CPSEs)	3,527.33	2,696.97	830.36

All figures in ₹ crore

This data, however, does not reflect actual government dues as there is reluctance among MSME unit owners to wrangle with the government over pending payments as this may have a negative impact on fresh order flows and dues of state governments and state PSUs will be over and above this amount. In addition, corporate sector's payments to MSMEs are still weak, despite the government's nudge to them to clear such payments.

The month-on-month declining trend in capital expendi-

ture (capex) by governments after an initial markup in June could also be reflective of the delayed payments to MSMEs after the initial payment drive, which is adding to the already contractionary cycle, former Chief Statistician of India Pronab Sen said.

"The expenditure numbers are coming down month-on-month since July. Which means rather than stepping up public expenditure, the Centre is actually cutting it down. It could also be reflecting delayed payments

to MSMEs after an initial markup. Almost every state in order to finance their Covid-related expenditure is cutting back on investment. So you are essentially substituting relatively low multiplier activities for high multiplier ones. So that's an additional source of contraction. Both states and Centre are being pro-cyclical. More expenditure is needed to reverse the trend," Sen said.

According to data from the Controller General of Accounts, capex of Centre rose to Rs 33,067 crore in June from Rs 26,900 crore in May and then reduced on a month-on-month basis in July (Rs ₹23,576 crore) and August (Rs ₹22,598 crore) before rising again to Rs 31,389 crore in September.

"In September and October, dues have gone up tremendously. About Rs 4-4.5 lakh crore would be the outstanding dues, out of which maybe Rs 70,000-80,000 crore would be normal, payable dues within the time limit of 45 days. For material supplies, state governments' and state undertakings' dues would be around Rs 2-2.5 lakh crore. Most of the localised contractors deal with states and municipali-

ties. On the balance Rs 4.5 lakh crore, some portion of about Rs 40,000-47,000 crore could be in EMD (earnest money deposit) payments, which is generally 2 per cent of the contract amount and normally exempted for SMEs located within the state. Performance guarantee refunds would be about approximately Rs 70,000-75,000 crore," KE Raghunathan, convener of Consortium of Indian Associations, a representative body for MSMEs, said.

In May, as part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package for dealing with the pandemic, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said steps were being taken to clear dues of MSMEs with only the litigated dues not being cleared and rest all accumulated dues and the incremental dues added for clearance.

MSMEs are under stress and many business owners are resorting to gold loans and property sales to meet the fund crunch. The MSMEs have made representations for removal of capital gains tax on such distress sales and a lower interest rate for gold loans, Raghunathan said.

437 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.37 lakh crore

Amid delays in execution and other constraints, as many as 437 infrastructure projects have been hit by cost overruns of over Rs 4.37 lakh crore, according to the MoSPI report for September 2020



1,663 Total projects worth Rs 150 crore and above monitored by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

924 Projects whose neither year of commissioning nor tentative gestation period has been reported

531 Number of projects that reported time escalation, of which:

- **122:** delayed by one to 12 months
- **128:** delayed by 13 to 24 months
- **160:** delayed by 25 to 60 months
- **121:** delayed by 61 months

and above
■ **43.89 months:** Average time overrun of all projects

₹21,09,236.41 crore: Total original cost of implementation of 1,663 projects

₹25,47,057.52 crore: Anticipated cost of implementation of all projects

₹4,37,821.11 crore: Overall cost overruns, i.e. 20.76 per cent of original cost

₹11,61,524.97 crore: Expenditure incurred on all projects till September 2020, 45.60 per cent of anticipated cost

Source: MoSPI/PTI

Why Tamil Nadu, some southern states have banned online gaming

AASHISH ARYAN

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

TAMIL NADU Governor Banwarilal Purohit last Friday promulgated an ordinance that banned online gaming in the state, with fine up to Rs 5,000 and imprisonment of up to six months.

What constitutes online games and gambling?

The earliest versions of community-based games were gaming arcades which were very popular in the United States and Japan in the early 1990s. These arcades required the gamer to buy in-game time with some chips. From the arcade, the games moved to house consoles, and then further to personal computers.

With the invention of the internet and the arrival of connectivity on personal computers, these multiplayer games saw players hosting gaming parties using local area networks. With the arrival of affordable internet, all the arcade-based multiplayer games moved online. Nowadays, nearly all games are online where users connect their devices to a central server hosted by the gaming company. Most of them are free and just for entertainment.

Multiplayer games such as

Defense of the Ancients, PUBG and Counter Strike, though free for most users, give the option of buying in-game additions to the player's avatar. Other multiplayer card games like Rummy, and Poker require users to invest some money to enter the game and play with other players globally.

Why did Tamil Nadu ban online games?

In the ordinance banning the game, the Governor said that due to online gaming, innocent people mainly youngsters are being cheated and some people have committed suicide. The state has thus decided to ban online gaming to "avoid such incidents of suicide and protect the innocent people from the evils of online gaming". Any form of wagering or betting in the cyberspace by using computers or any other communication device, common gaming houses, and any electronic transfer of funds to distribute winnings or prize money has also been banned.

This effectively means that players in the state will not be able to purchase any add-on for the games they play, go to gaming arcades or participate in online gaming tournaments.

While there has been some debate on whether online games are a matter of pure luck or skill,

the arrival of money has further complicated matters. Most adversaries of online games and gambling have said that since there are no regulations, most players end up spending a lot of money for buy-ing these games.

Critics have also said that since these games are played by kids of all ages, the lack of money to buy these add-on puts different kinds of peer pressure, leading to unpleasant circumstances.

Which other states have banned online games and gambling?

While gambling and betting as a sport are banned across the country, nearly ten states in India such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Sikkim and West Bengal have their lottery systems. These lotteries have very strict controls over the number of tickets printed and the prize money distributed.

Most states, however, are opposed to online gambling or betting as there are very few regulations to control the number of players and the investment that can be made in the game. By banning online games and gambling, Tamil Nadu joined its neighbours Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in banning some form of online games and gambling. Meanwhile, Karnataka too has been mulling a law to ban online games and gambling in the state.

737 MAX return: 24x7 effort underway to clear inventory

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 22

THE FUTURE of Boeing Co's freshly approved 737 MAX is in the hands of nearly 700 workers toiling behind the gray doors of a three-bay hangar at a desert airport in Washington state.

Inside, over an endless 24-hour loop, 737 MAX planes are rolled in for maintenance, and upgrades of software and systems as mandated by the US Federal Aviation Administration in this week's order lifting a flight ban imposed after two crashes, the airport's director said. In front, workers in bright yellow vests inspect the roughly 240 jets stored in giant grids at Grant County International Airport in Moses Lake - more than half of an inventory worth about \$16 billion, as per investment firm Jefferies.

Analysts say clearing the logjam of up to 450 stored jets in total is crucial before Boeing can resume meaningful production of its traditional cash cow - a task complicated by the fact that buyers have in some cases walked away during the grounding.



The Boeing facilities at Grant County International Airport in Washington, US, where roughly 240 grounded 737 MAX aircraft are stored. Reuters

While parked on the tarmac, each jet is fitted with red engine and wheel covers, a windshield screen to block out the sun, and a small generator powering cycles of fresh air and electricity through its systems - the aviation equivalent of life support.

"It's an enormous undertaking," the airport's director, Rich Muller, told Reuters. "But this go-ahead from the FAA has given them a real shot in the arm. It's really energized everyone."

The work at Moses Lake is a cornerstone of a global logistical and financial strategy under way at Boeing to clear a backlog of more than 800 mothballed 737 MAX jets. About 450 are Boeing property, and a further 387 were in airline service before the FAA's grounding order in March 2019. Across the globe, Boeing teams are hammering out delivery schedules, and financial terms, with airlines who last year scaled back schedules and flew old jetliners.

IMF calls for expansion of G20 debt relief framework

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 22

THE HEAD of the International Monetary Fund on Sunday called for prompt and effective implementation of a new G20 framework set up to help the world's poorest countries reach permanent debt relief, but said other countries needed help as well.

"It is critical to operationalize this Framework promptly and effectively," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in a statement after addressing the leaders of the Group of 20 major economies. "Going forward, we must also help those countries not covered by the Framework to address debt vulnerabilities so that their economies can become more resilient."

The debt treatment framework endorsed by G20 leaders on Sunday applies to 73 nations that are eligible for a temporary freeze in official bilateral debt payments.

MARKET WATCH

FPIs NET BUYERS IN NOV SO FAR

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) have pumped in a net sum of Rs 49,553 crore in Indian markets this month so far on back of high liquidity coupled with improving global indicators and clarity after the US presidential elections. **PTI**

LVB merger: Investors may seek legal recourse, unions question DBS Bank selection

GEORGE MATHEW & SANDEEP SINGH

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

SHAREHOLDERS OF Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) who are upset with the draft scheme, announced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), for the merger with DBS Bank are waiting for the final amalgamation plan to be announced by the central bank this week before they decide to take legal opinion. On the other hand, bank unions have questioned the way the RBI selected DBS Bank for the amalgamation.

Interestingly, the RBI sought feedback of the LVB shareholders earlier last week after it came out with the draft amalgamation plan where it decided to write-off the equity shares of the bank to zero. "We submitted our feedback on Friday and are now awaiting for the final amalgamation plan from the RBI," said one of the key shareholders of LVB.

Bankers and industry insiders are also questioning the different approach adopted by the RBI for Yes Bank and LVB. In the case of Yes Bank, while RBI protected the interest of shareholders, in case of LVB, it decided to write it down to zero.

There are some who also raised questions on the way RBI came out with its resolution plan for LVB and announced that it has decided to merge the bank with DBS.

CH Venkatachalam, General Secretary, All India Bank Employees Association (AIBE), said there was no transparency in the selection of DBS Bank for the takeover. "RBI knew about the problems in LVB for the last three years. When we have many Indian banks with financial capacity, why was a foreign bank selected? How were they selected? It's unfair to the Indian public. They are getting LVB for

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PLAN THIS WEEK

■ Shareholders of Lakshmi Vilas Bank are waiting for the final amalgamation plan with DBS Bank to be announced by Reserve Bank of India this week before they decide to take legal opinion
■ Bankers and industry insiders are also questioning the different approach adopted by the RBI for Yes Bank and LVB

peanuts," according to him.

"If they had decided to write down the equity value of LVB to zero, there would have been many banks that would have been interested in acquiring a bank like LVB that has over 500 branches. They could have called for bids from other banks giving them few days to do their due diligence," said a banker who did not wish to be named.

"We have been demanding timely action by RBI on the deteriorating health of LVB and LVB to be merged with a public sector bank. Such a pro-active action was not taken. Now this announcement has come as a shock to the bank customers and general public. This will create panic and doubt in the minds of people about the stability and dependability of banks because people keep their hard-earned savings in the banks," he added.

"The RBI which is responsible to maintain the stability of banks and financial sector cannot escape its responsibility for not taking timely action. Its role should be thoroughly probed," Venkatachalam said, adding that some top management officials of LVB are responsible for the-

INTERVIEW WITH MD & CEO, UNION BANK OF INDIA

'Restructuring requests quite low ... not much traction in retail, seen some in MSMEs'

UNION BANK of India MD and CEO RAJKIRAN RAI says the loan restructuring scheme has evoked a very low response and it may attract only 2-3 per cent, or even lower, of the loan book. In an interview to GEORGE MATHEW, Rai — also the Chairman of Indian Banks Association (IBA) — said, "we're not seeing much stress building up." Edited excerpts:

What's the status of loan restructuring plan approved by the RBI? What has been the response from corporates and retail borrowers?

On the corporate side, we are not seeing much traction. We were initially expecting that 5-6 per cent of our book is likely to seek restructuring. In the last quarter, when we announced the results, our expectation was around 2-3 per cent. It can be lower also. As of now, only 12 corporates approached us for restructuring for an amount of roughly Rs 3,600 crore. Our loan book is around Rs 6.5 lakh crore and out of this, large corporate book may be around Rs 3 lakh crore. Restructuring requests are quite low. In retail, we are not seeing much traction but in MSMEs, we have seen some requests.

For a portfolio of Rs 1,30,000 crore, restructuring of Rs 500 crore is already done. It's not a big number, but in MSMEs, there is some restructuring happening and our expectation is a maximum of Rs 5,000 crore.

Are you expecting a surge in NPAs in the December and March quarters following the withdrawal of moratorium?

It's much different than what we anticipated. We expected a huge restructuring and that's not crystallising. Even the performance of the books comparatively better. For the September and October collection, we did not see much stress building up. This may be because of the steps that we had taken. The six-month moratorium has given a lot of cushion for retail borrowers.



Rajkiran Rai

We have decent collections and there's some stress in MSMEs. Units may go out of business for various reasons. I think the guarantee scheme, especially the government guarantee, would have helped. We don't see any stress in agriculture except for the normal stress. On the corporate side, except for two or three sectors which are majorly impacted, we see almost 90 per cent efficiency levels being reached now. If the court decision happens, December NPA numbers may also include September numbers. We have sufficiently factored in the required provision.

Do you think the banking sector profits will be hit in fiscal year 2020-21 due to the Covid-related issues?

We are very positive about the way things are turning around. Looking at the way collections are improving and corporates are behaving, we do not see a problem. It is too early to give a final conclusion on whether the Covid effect is over and it can still play out.

There're complaints that the majority of genuine MSMEs are not benefiting from the recast schemes launched for them. What's your view?

While the MSME sector is a very large segment, many of them

bank's huge bad loans and action should be taken against them.

As things stand now, shareholders of the bank will get zero compensation as the draft scheme announced by the RBI has proposed total write-off of shares and debentures of LVB. The RBI, which was to announce the final scheme last week, is expected to announce the final amalgamation plan this week.

The bank's market capitalisation, which was nearly Rs 500 crore last Tuesday, fell 40 per cent to Rs 303 crore in two days.

"LVB has been given virtually free to DBS Bank. The draft scheme of the RBI indicates nothing is in store for shareholders," said a shareholder who wrote to the RBI. The central bank had rejected a proposal by DBS Bank for acquiring 50 per cent stake in LVB in 2018. RBI was then against giving a foreign bank higher stake in a bank. LVB promoters hold only around 6.80 per cent stake in LVB.

Depositors of LVB have also turned cautious. While LVB is offering 6 per cent interest on one-year term deposits, DBS Bank's Digibank offers 4.05 per cent on one-year term deposits. On the other hand, the terms of the amalgamation of LVB with DBS Bank have upset stock investors.

DBS established 21 new branches in India in 2019 for a total of 33, but the proposed transaction will add as many as 563 branches, a greater number than that of all other foreign banks in India put together.

LVB's network is focused in south India, with three-quarters of its branches located in three states — Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

"We regard LVB's branches as one of its most coveted residual assets for a foreign buyer and believe the ready-made platform that will enable deeper market penetration is the key draw for DBS," Fitch Ratings said.

are not in the formal structure. There are issues but it is our endeavour to reach out to everyone. In our MSME book, we reached out to every customer who is eligible. We have ensured that all eligible customers are given relief under ECLGS and other schemes.

What's the IBA stand on setting up a bad bank? IBA had submitted a blueprint on the creation of a bad bank to the government.

Somewhat we didn't get much traction on this suggestion. This is an important concept which can be implemented and it will help in big resolutions because these are large NPAs. We can develop a specialised agency which can look at resolutions and NPAs. This is a good idea and hopefully, we would like to take it up again and see that there is a consensus to push this idea. On the bad bank concept, somehow people have felt that feeling that banks will park all their bad assets and nothing will happen there. We need to convince all stakeholders about the purpose ... the action plan and the strategy behind the ARC.

Bank frauds have increased of late, according to the RBI Annual Report. Do you think banks are lax in their risk and system management?

The frauds reported this year are old ones. While these frauds happened five or six years back, they were reported only recently. During the last two years, we had gone for forensic audit and investigation into these accounts. We found fund diversions and other issues. You have to differentiate between when the fraud happened and when it was recognised. In the last four or five years, the governance and system structures have evolved. We have done a root cause analysis and built systems so that lapses will not recur. We have taken all the precautions.

Full interview on www.indianexpress.com

14 SPORT

UNDER THE CLOUD

Facing domestic violence allegations, Zverev gets Djokovic's support

SHAHID JUDGE

MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 22

AFTER DEFEATING Alexander Zverev on Friday, world no. 1 Novak Djokovic posted a peculiar message on social media – peculiar because of the timing. “Always a pleasure sharing the court with you Sasha@AlexZverev. Great ending of the season for you. Best wishes in what awaits you on and off the court. Stay strong.”

At any other time, the tweet would be considered harmless and motivational. But now, as allegations of domestic violence have emerged against Zverev, the Serb's message is arguably tasteless, especially since he's claimed he doesn't know “what happened truly.”

But after exiting the ATP Tour Finals on Friday, the 23-year-old German continued to

claim his innocence.

“What else can I say? I have said everything that I can,” Zverev said. “You know, it's very unfortunate that these kinds of false allegations can put such damage and put the attention away from the sport.”

Last month, a day after Zverev's ex-girlfriend Brenda Patea revealed she is pregnant with his child, another former girlfriend Olga Sharypova took to *Instagram* to claim that he had been physically abusive during their relationship.

The incidents

Sharypova, also 23, was a budding tennis player from Russia. They started dating in September 2018. But the domestic violence would start soon too. “The first time was in Monaco in his apartment,” she told *Racquet Magazine*. “I was going to leave because we had a really big fight. I was standing in the hall-



Alexander Zverev's ex-girlfriend Olga Sharypova claimed that the German had been physically abusive during their relationship.

Reuters

way, and he hit my head into the wall.”

Sharypova later claimed that after another fight during the 2019 US Open, Zverev threw her down “onto the bed, took a pillow, and then sat on (her) face.” Eventually, she fled the hotel, barefoot, with just her phone.

A few weeks later, at the Laver Cup in Geneva, Sharypova claimed they had their worst fight. “In other fights, he was pushing me, shoving me, twisting my arms, choking me. But this was the first time he punched me, really punched me (in the face).” Sharypova added that after the German left the room, she injected herself with insulin in a suicide attempt, which forced Zverev to seek an event official for help.

Zverev's reaction

Since Sharypova went public – though not seeking to press charges because she “doesn't want anything from him” – Zverev has

called her claims “unfounded” and “simply not true.”

At the Paris Masters two weeks back, after finishing runner-up, he said: “I know that there's gonna be a lot of people that right now are trying to wipe a smile off my face but under this mask, I'm smiling brightly. I feel incredible on court... everything is great in my life. The people who are trying can keep trying.”

At the start of the Tour Finals in London, his tone changed, as he read a statement off his phone during a press conference: “We had our ups and downs, but the way our relationship was described in public is not how it was. That's not who I am, that's not how I was raised by my parents.”

ATP's reaction

The tour's governing body has been largely silent. Only recently did it issue a statement.

“The ATP fully condemns any form of violence or abuse. We expect all members of the Tour to do the same, and to refrain from any conduct that is violent, abusive, or puts others at risk,” read the statement as reported by *The Guardian*. “In circumstances where allegations of violence or abuse are made against any member of the Tour, legal authorities investigate and due process is applied, we then review the outcome and decide the appropriate course of action. Otherwise, we are unable to comment further on specific allegations.”

In other words, the ATP will take action only if there's a legal case. However, the governing body is still silent in the case involving former world no. 16 Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia, arrested in May on charges of domestic violence against ex-wife Neka Dorokashvili. A court case is allegedly pending.

The ATP has no specific policy regarding domestic violence.

Waiting to pair in Test hunts

Though the contests against Aussies will start with white-ball cricket, Shami focusing on Test series

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY

KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 22

AFTER ABOUT a week of quarantine in Sydney, the Indian team is now training every day ahead of the contests against Australia. Three ODIs and three T20s will precede a marquee four-Test series. As for Mohammed Shami, he is concentrating more on red-ball cricket.

“We are going to have a long tour starting with the white ball followed by pink and red ball Tests. My focus area has been the red ball and I am working on my lengths and seam movement,” Shami told *bcci.tv*.

The first ODI in Sydney is on November 27, while the first Test in Adelaide, a day-nighter, commences on December 17. Over the past two-and-a-half months, Shami had been playing white-ball cricket in the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the limited-overs leg of the Australia tour will be a sort of continuation.

Length is key

The Adelaide Test will be played with a pink ball, which swings more than its red variant. The next three Tests, in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane respectively, are traditional red-ball encounters. For a bowler, especially a pacer, adjusting lengths will be important.

“I have always felt that once you start pitching the ball at the lengths you desire, you can succeed in different formats. What you need is control. I have done well with the white ball and now spending time in the nets bowling with the red ball. You don't bowl in the same area since both formats are different, but your basics don't change much,” Shami said.

Quick learner

His first tour of Australia in 2014-15 wasn't very successful, although Shami was India's highest wicket-taker with 15 scalps from three Tests. A relative newcomer back then, he was still learning the ropes as regards to handling the red Kookaburra, and his length wasn't consistent. Two years ago, during India's triumphant tour in 2018-19, he took 16 wickets in four Tests and his series average was 26.18 compared to 35-plus in 2014-15. He bowled a lot fuller, swung the ball, and was rewarded. Shami targeted a few batsmen with bouncers, but used it more as a shock weapon.

Some fast bowlers, especially from the sub-continent, tend to get a little carried away on hard and bouncy Australian pitches and resort to an overdose of short-pitched bowling in Test cricket. At 30 years of age, Shami is now one of the senior bowlers in the group and India's chances to a great extent will depend on how he and Jasprit Bumrah perform as a pair.

Then again, even for a bowler of Shami's experience, it's not easy to make an instant switch

from white-ball length to its Test-match equivalent. Little wonder then that he is focusing on red-ball cricket at the moment.

On a high after IPL

It is very likely that the Indian team management will rotate him and Bumrah in the limited-overs matches. However, Shami will go to the Test series still carrying the confidence of a very good IPL for Kings XI Punjab.

He took 20 wickets in the tournament, but more than that number, his bowling in the Super Over against Mumbai Indians was regarded as one of the highlights of the IPL.

“Being able to defend just 5 runs against two most explosive batsmen (Rohit Sharma and Quinton de Kock) is thoroughly satisfying. My performances for KXIP in IPL has given me a lot of confidence and put me in the right zone. The biggest advantage is that I can now prepare for the upcoming series without any pressure. I had worked hard on my bowling and my fitness in the lockdown. I knew that IPL would take place sooner or later and I was preparing myself for it,” Shami said.

He compared it (Super Over) with his hat-trick against Afghanistan in the World Cup last year, which helped India secure a win. “The margin was very less against Afghanistan. I had to get my yorkers right. We were favourites to win and the game had gone right down to the wire. I am glad I could help India win that game and, in the course, also got my hat-trick. Such moments stay with you for a long time.”

A well-rounded attack

Statistics put out by the BCCI show Indian fast bowlers' supremacy over the last two years. Since 2018, Indian fast bowlers have taken 292 wickets in 24 matches at an average of 21.33. The trio of Bumrah (68), Shami (61) and Ishant Sharma (53) have accounted for 182 scalps in the last two years. Shami attributed the success to the “camaraderie” in the bowling group.

“The success of this group is largely because of the camaraderie we share among ourselves. There is no real secret as such but it lies in each other's strengths. We have a common goal and all of us look to collectively achieve that. There is a healthy competition but there is no rivalry within the group... We have a lot of discussion among ourselves. We hunt in pairs.”

Two years ago, Australia sans Steve Smith and David Warner were depleted. They will be at full strength this time and the challenge will be bigger. Shami is game.

“Our fast bowling group can bowl at 140 kph-plus and you need that kind of pace in Australia. Even our reserves are quick; you don't get to see that kind of an attack. We thrive on challenges. We have variety in our spin bowling attack too. We can bowl fast but we are all different, our skills are different.”



Mohammed Shami took 16 wickets in four Tests at 26.18 during India's triumphant tour in 2018-19. *Express file*

From Kohli to Zampa: \$15 vegan food voucher

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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AUSTRALIAN LEG-SPINNER Adam Zampa has provided an insight into Virat Kohli as a teammate and how the India captain is like off the field. Zampa and Kohli shared a dugout for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL this year and talking to *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the tweaker recounted how on the very first day, the skipper made him feel at home.

“It was the first day I arrived [and] he WhatsApped me. I didn't have his number. He made it as if we've known each other forever,” Zampa said. The message was about a \$15 voucher at a vegan restaurant.

“Zamps, here's the \$15 off voucher at a vegan restaurant from Deliveroo. It's a really good restaurant,” it read. The Aussie spoke about how Kohli is a completely different person off the field. “He's absolutely not what you see on the cricket field. He always brings his intensity to training and the game; he



Adam Zampa and Virat Kohli shared a dugout for RCB this year. *Twitter*

loves competition, he hates losing as much as anyone. He probably shows it more than anyone.

“Once he's off the park, he's the most chilled guy. He's watching YouTube clips on the bus, he'll laugh out loud.

“There was a cricket clip recently from *cricket.com.au*, there was a funny run-out, he was laughing about it for three weeks straight. He loves holding onto jokes like that.”

Zampa went on: “He talks about coffee, travelling, food – ‘Zamps, do you want a Beyond Meat burger?’ – because he's a vegetarian himself. He's a really cultured guy. He's good to talk to, good fun.

“One night he took me aside and talked to me about his travels through Nepal. He's always talking to me about his new coffee machine. He's a pretty normal bloke.

“The one thing you take away from spending time with those guys is they're as much of a human being as you are.”

Soon Zampa and Kohli would be opponents during the forthcoming limited-overs series and so far in their duels, the leggie has dismissed the Indian batting great seven times. “I would laugh at it. And really appreciate it. I've got him out seven times, but they're at a good click; the economy is well and truly over six runs per over as well. It'll be interesting now we're closer,” Zampa said.

BRIEFLY

Haaland gets four for Dortmund

Erling Haaland scored four goals and Youssoufa Moukoko became the youngest player in Bundesliga history as Borussia Dortmund beat Hertha Berlin 5-2 to move second. The buildup had been all about Moukoko, who was eligible for his debut after turning 16 on Friday. But Haaland stole the show before making way for the youngster's debut in the 85th minute. “I think he's the biggest talent in the world right now. 16 years and one day, that's quite amazing. He has a big career ahead of him,” Haaland said about Moukoko to *ESPN*. “I'm over 20 years, I'm getting old now. That's how it is.” **AP**

AFI high performance director Hermann quits

Athletics Federation of India's High Performance Director Volker Hermann, whose contract has been extended by the Sports Ministry till the end of 2024 Olympics, has quit from his post, saying he “could no longer meet the self-imposed expectations coming along with the role.” The German was appointed to the post in June 2019 for a term till the end of the postponed Tokyo Olympics in 2021. In September, the ministry extended his contract till the end of 2024 Olympics but AFI sources said he did not sign the new contract. “After one-and-a-half fruitful and inspiring years in India, the day has come when I could not any longer meet the self-imposed expectations coming along with the role of AFI's high-performance director, which is why I resigned from my position three weeks ago,” Hermann wrote on Facebook. **PTI**

Angulo's brace helps Goa hold Bengaluru

Spanish striker Igor Angulo's double strike scripted FC Goa's comeback as they held Bengaluru FC to a 2-2 draw in an Indian Super League encounter on Sunday. Bengaluru, happy to sit back and maintain defensive shape, led till the hour mark with goals from Cleiton Silva (27') and Juanan Gonzalez (57'). Goa brought on Brandon Fernandes and Alberto Noguera, and soon found their way back in to the contest with two goals from Angulo in the space of three minutes. Angulo first cut short the deficit with a neat finish (66') following link-up play between Fernandes and Noguera, then chested a ball into the net for the equaliser (69'). **PTI**

Why Grammy-winner Dua Lipa is in the new FIFA game

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NOVEMBER 22

SOON, YOU will be able to watch pop star Dua Lipa go toe-to-toe with the top footballers; at least virtually. According to a datamine of the FIFA 21's latest update, Dua Lipa will be added to the video game as a playable character.

What's happening?

In a bid to freshen up their long-running series and increase crossover appeal, developers EA Sports added two-time world champion boxer Anthony Joshua and recording artist DJ Diplo when FIFA 21 released last month. And they seem to have double-downed on bringing non-footballing names to the game.

Noted dataminer Blade Johnson went through FIFA 21's code and uploaded the PDFs confirming the appearance of Dua Lipa, as well as numerous other celebrities, as playable characters. *‘Love Is Religion’* – a track from the Grammy-winner's *‘Club Future Nostalgia’* – is already featured on the game's soundtrack.

Several YouTubers, who received an ad-



Pop star Dua Lipa, who will be playable in FIFA 21, got a detailed face scan.

vance update, have uploaded videos where Dua Lipa can be seen playing as a striker for teams such as Liverpool and Real Madrid along with the real-world squads.

The 25-year-old performed at the opening ceremony of UEFA Champions League final two years ago and is also a favourite of England and

Tottenham striker Harry Kane. After scoring a hat-trick against Panama at the 2018 World Cup, Kane was asked to pick a song to play on a Brazilian programme. His response: “I'll go ‘One Kiss’ by Calvin Harris and Dua Lipa.”

Other notable additions?

David Beckham will be the cover athlete for the first time since FIFA 98.

While Beckham's return was first revealed in the aforementioned datamine, the former Manchester United star confirmed it on his Instagram. “23 years later... so proud to be back on the cover...” he wrote. According to reports, three different likenesses of Beckham will be added to the game: rated 87, 89 and 92, charting the 45-year-old's long career.

Who all are getting to the game?

Lipa and Beckham will be joined by Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton. In real life, the 35-year-old played association football along with school schoolmate and eventual England international Ashley Young.

Australian Daniel Ricciardo will be the sec-

ond F1 driver to be added to the game, while NBA will be represented by two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo of Milwaukee Bucks and Philadelphia 76ers Joel Embiid. Other incoming celebrities include DJ Snake, surfer Gabriel Medina, football champ Natalia Guitler, YouTuber Fred and the NFL Baltimore Ravens' Lamar Jackson.

How have the gamers reacted?

Largely with indifference. However, some fans have criticised EA Sports' decision to give Dua Lipa and other celebs detailed facescans and photorealistic likenesses, while younger footballers like Manchester United's Mason Greenwood – who scored 17 goals last season – sport inaccurate, seemingly-random faces.

Others have compared Lipa's addition to the lack of women footballers in the game. While EA introduced playable women footballers in FIFA 16, there haven't been a lot of updates in the five years since. Only marquee names have received facescans, and one can only play international matches and women's club football has been absent.

Atletico in pole position after beating Barca; Madrid slip

Madrid: ATLETICO MADRID delivered a major boost to their hopes of winning La Liga on Saturday by beating Barcelona 1-0 and consigning their opponents to their worst start to a league season in 29 years. Yannick Carrasco finished brilliantly from range after mistakes from Gerard Pique and Marc-Andre ter Stegen left the goal gaping but Barca, and a below-par Lionel Messi, failed to respond at the Wanda Metropolitano.

Instead, Atletico recorded their first league victory over Barcelona in 10 years, which puts them three points ahead of Real Madrid, with a game in hand, and second in the table, level on points with early leaders Real Sociedad. It also leaves their opponents languishing in 10th, with Barcelona's 11 points from their first eight games their worst tally at this stage since the 1991-92 season.

“Like any coach, I am responsible,” said coach Ronald Koeman. “We know we have to improve the results. I continue to trust the players I have.”

And beating Barcelona in La Liga for the first

BARCELONA WOES

11 Barcelona are at 11 points after eight games this season, their worst tally at this stage since 1991/92 season, when they won La Liga.

1 Lionel Messi has scored one out of his last 48 direct free kicks for Barcelona in all competitions (vs Osasuna last July)

Stats: Opta

time since 2010 – before Simeone arrived as coach – and it would wonders for the team's belief and extends what is now a considerable advantage in the table. It also extends Atletico's unbeaten run in the league to 24 matches.

Earlier, a patched-up Real Madrid had to hang on for a draw against Villarreal. **AFP**