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THOSE IDENTIFIED TO BE CONTACTED VIA SMS

# 51 lakh people to get vaccine in first phase, says Kejriwal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 24

FIFTY-ONE lakh people in Delhi — comprising healthcare staff, frontline workers, people with co-morbidities and those aged above 50 years — will be administered Covid-19 vaccine in the first phase, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday.

Addressing a webcast on the rollout of the vaccine, expected early next year, in the national capital, Kejriwal said the administration has identified nearly all the 51 lakh citizens under the "priority category" for vaccination.

The Delhi government's plan is in line with the recommendations made by the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration of Covid-19 (NEGVAC).

Kejriwal said Delhi has made the necessary arrangements to receive and store the vaccine doses in two separate facilities: an existing cold storage facility, and the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, where an area of about 5,000 square metres is being used as a storage centre.

He said 1.2 crore doses are



CM during the webcast

### THE PLAN

609 cold chain points  
3,500 healthcare workers to be involved  
1.15 cr doses can be stored  
1.2 cr doses needed in phase 1

### 2 cr population of Delhi

### PRIORITY CATEGORIES

3 lakh healthcare workers  
6 lakh frontline workers  
42 lakh over the age of 50 / with co-morbidities

### CORONAVIRUS IN THE CAPITAL

	TOTAL CASES	6,20,681	Total	18,770	Vacant	16,019
	HOSPITAL BEDS			1,523		899
	VENTILATORS					
	Daily cases	871	Recoveries	1,585	Deaths	18
	Dec 23	1,063		1,120		37
	Dec 24	7,909*		6,02,388		10,384
	Total					81,22,974

\*Total active cases

needed to cover priority categories in the first phase.

Kejriwal said Delhi has about 3 lakh healthcare workers, 6 lakh frontline workers, and about 42 lakh people who are aged above 50 years or have co-morbidities. "We have identified nearly all of them and the identification work will be wrapped up in a week," he said.

Those identified will be contacted via SMS. "The government will inform them about the time and venue of vaccination," he said.

Over the last few weeks, teams comprising ASHA workers, teachers and civil defence volunteers have been carrying out door-to-door surveys, collect-

ing the names and contact details of those aged above 50 and persons with co-morbidities.

"Right now, Delhi has the capacity to store 74 lakh vaccine doses and this is being augmented. In the next five to seven days, the city will be able to store 1.5 lakh doses," said Kejriwal.

The government has also made a separate plan to ensure medical help in the event of the vaccine triggering any adverse reaction.

Three vaccine candidates — Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, Serum Institute-Oxford's Covishield and the Pfizer's m-RNA vaccine — are in the fray for emergency use authorisation.

## 2 arrested for cheating AIIMS doc

New Delhi: Delhi Police has arrested two men for allegedly posing as personnel from a packers and movers company and taking the household items of an AIIMS doctor, along with Rs 12,000 as delivery charge, and later forcing him to pay Rs 42,000. ENS

### OBITUARY

**Lt Col Shrawan Kumar Misra (Retd)**  
(19-12-1949 to 21-12-2020)

Fraternity of Army Educational Corps expresses profound grief and sorrow on the sad demise of Lt Col Shrawan Kumar Misra (Retd) on 21 Dec 20. He will always be remembered for his selfless and dedicated service to the Corps. We pray to the Almighty to bless eternal peace to the departed soul and give strength to the bereaved family.

**Maj Gen Devesh Gaur**  
Addl DG AE & Col Comdt  
and All Ranks of Army Educational Corps

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## Govt to approach IGI on fliers from UK slipping out

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 24

THE DELHI government will approach IGI Airport authorities over five Covid positive passengers from the United Kingdom going untraceable after landing in the national capital on Tuesday. While three were later found in Delhi, two were traced to Punjab and Andhra Pradesh respectively.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain told reporters that he came to know about the fliers slipping out from the airport from the newspapers. *The Indian Express* had on Thursday reported that the passengers were brought back to the city on Wednesday. "I saw it in the papers today. Flight operations and security come under the airport authorities. A person should not have moved out despite testing positive," Jain told reporters.

On the role of the Delhi government-appointed nodal officer at the airport, he said, "We are quarantining all those who are testing positive. The matter (of slipping out) will be raised with the airport authorities." A separate institutional facility has also been set up at the Lok Nayak Hospital for fliers from UK testing positive, Jain added.

The Delhi airport is managed and operated by the GMR group-led DIAL and its security is handled by the CISF. CISF DIG (IGI airport) Sachin Badshah said, "The CISF has no role on the arrival side. Personnel just facilitate the arriving passengers." (with PTI inputs)

## MP Gambhir launches 'Jan Raso' canteen



The East Delhi MP at the canteen in Gandhi Nagar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 24

EAST DELHI BJP MP Gautam Gambhir Thursday started a 'Jan Raso' canteen at Gandhi Nagar market to provide food to the needy at Re 1 per plate. He said five to six more canteens will be opened in different parts of his constituency, with the next one to come up in Mayur Vihar.

Stating that the canteen is being run with his own money and that of his NGO Gautam Gambhir foundation, he said: "The Jan Raso will serve nutritious, hygienic food to the needy at Re 1 per plate. A total of 500 persons will be provided food each day; second servings will also be given."

On the menu is rice, daal, vegetable curry, and sweets on special occasions, said an aide of the MP. The canteen will be open from 11.30 am to 3 pm and food coupons can be availed at the entrance.

Keeping social distancing in mind amid the pandemic, the canteen will feed 50 people at a time, said the cricketer-turned parliamentarian. "The token amount of Re 1 is meant to pay wages to staff running the kitchens," he told reporters.

Speaking about the initiative, he said: "I have always felt everyone has the right to healthy and hygienic food irrespective of caste, creed, religion or financial condition. It is saddening to see the homeless and destitute not being able to get even two square meals a day."

While there are various government-run canteens in other states that provide subsidised food, Gambhir said this is the first initiative started without government funding in the capital.

युग पुरुष, उत्तराखण्ड के प्रणेता, जनप्रिय पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री

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# Merry Christmas



## Be The Love And Light This Christmas!



■ PRASHANT SOLOMON

WHEN Jesus was born, a great star appeared in the sky over Bethlehem to herald the coming of Christ. Three wise men from the East saw this star and came on their camels to meet and worship the newborn babe. They found him in a manger and gave him gifts. They recognised this child as a Divine soul.

This year, on December 21, 2020, a sign in the heavens was given as there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Aquarius. The brightest seen since the year 1226. It is also said that this is heralding the Age of Aquarius, which is believed to be a new era where there will be a powerful surge of spiritual consciousness on the planet.

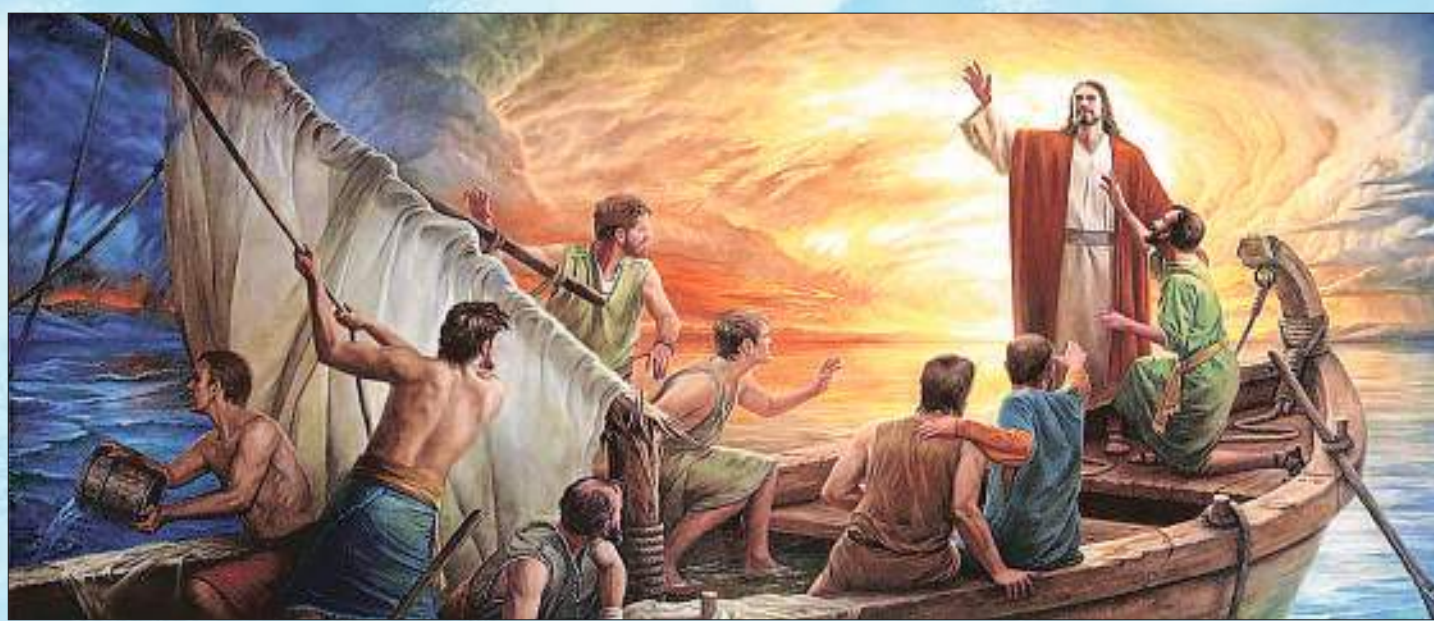
Christmas is a great day to look at the year gone by and process everything you experienced in that particular year. Christmas is a day that we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ but it is also a day that we celebrate the year gone by as we prepare for the coming year ahead. Should Christmas of the year 2020 be any different? Well it is different because the year 2020 has been an unprecedented year!

It started off in a grand way. The beginning of a new decade. Like the years 1717, 1818 and 1919 before it, 2020 is one of those years that comes only once every 101 years, where the first two digits are the same as the last two. The next time this type of year comes by will be in 2121. So right from the beginning, 2020 came with something unique in our collective minds. But what a ride it's been. Nobody could have imagined all the things that would happen.

A global pandemic spread throughout the planet and forced nations to lock down. Covid 19 brought the whole world to its knees. New terms that were hardly of any consequence in our global consciousness last Christmas have been branded into our collective global consciousness like - masks, lockdown, travel bans and social distancing.

We all were forced to stay at home and that left us no choice but to look inwards and introspect. Many people fell into depression, loneliness and sadness. People all around the globe suffered financial challenges because of lost jobs and failing businesses. People got infected and fell sick and hundreds of thousands bid goodbye to this planet and set sail back to the spiritual realms from which we have all come.

But despite all this, there was something interestingly good about the year. 2020 was a great gift to humankind!



Bible about this:

**JESUS CALMS THE STORM** (Luke 8:22-25)

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

In times of crisis, it is natural to be afraid. It is natural to get negative thoughts. But this is the time to pray for faith. For faith leads to perseverance, tenacity and resolutions of the challenges we face.

Christmas is a time to reflect and process the events of the year. What did you learn spending time with yourself? What did you learn about your loved ones and family? Have you counted how many things there are to be thankful for? Going forward, how will you change yourself in order to change the world for the better? We are all very lucky to be living in these highly spiritual and eventful times. This is a year that historians will be writing about for centuries. It is a year that marks the beginning of a new era of humanity.

2020 has been a year unlike no other experienced by anyone alive on this planet.

On this Christmas Day 2020, I bring you good news! We will survive and things will get better. We have all gotten through this together. We remember those who we have lost but we know they are still alive in the spiritual realms, where we will all return someday. But there is no hurry. There is much to do still.

You are not alone! Even if it feels like that sometimes. The ride can be scary but we are in it together. This year has been called by many as the 'Great Awakening'. For many have felt our connection. We are souls who have come here to explore and bring the love and light of God to everyone else.

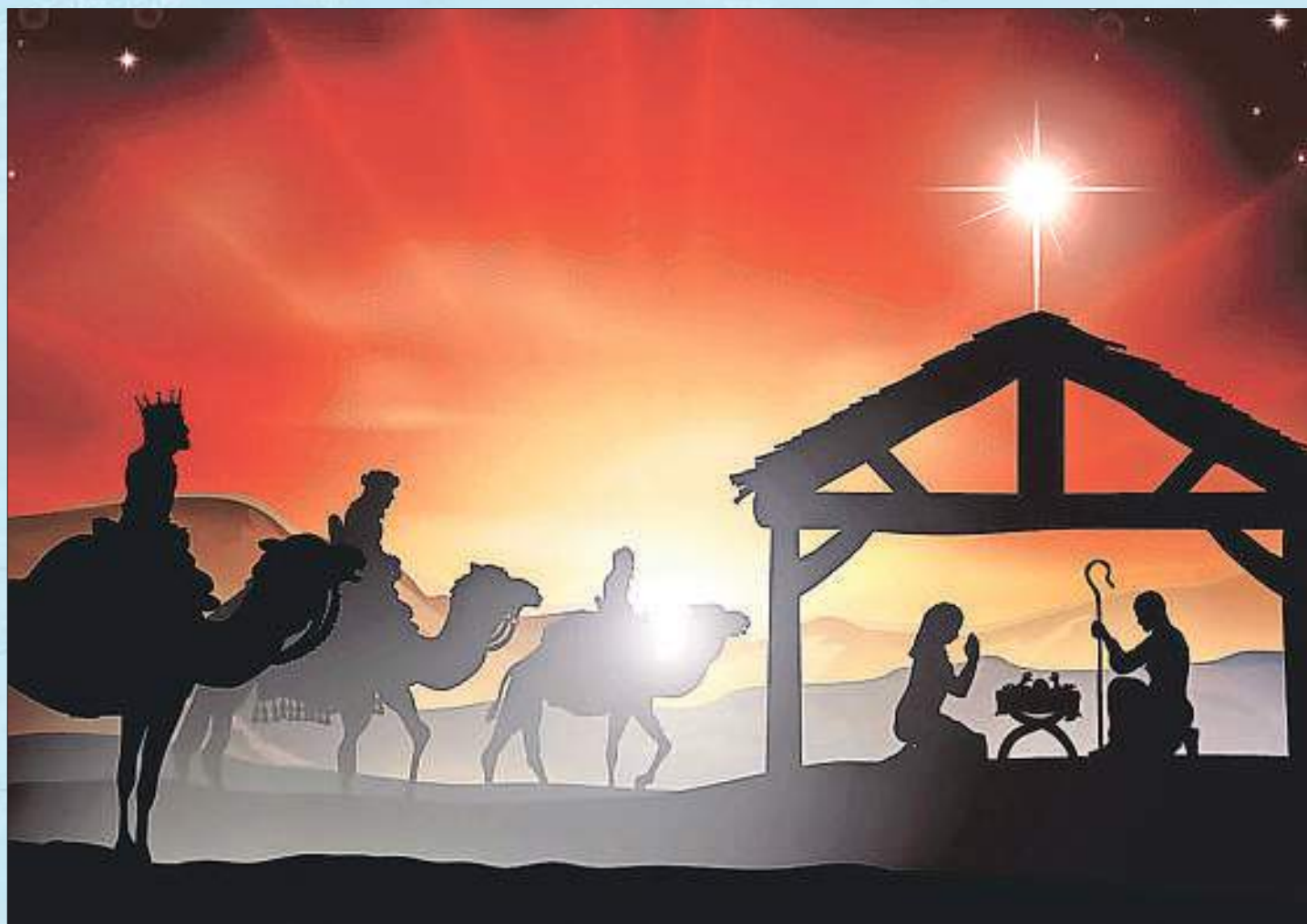
This Christmas let us celebrate the lessons we learned this year. Let us celebrate our connection. This year like never before, we felt connected as a global civilisation. We realised that the important things in life are not connected to material things but they are connected to freedom, to exploring, to seeking, to learning, to loving and to being one world connected together.

Like the star that shone the night of Christ's birth, let your light shine! Let the love and light of Christ be reborn within you! Keep introspecting within and soon like the wise men found the Christ child, we may find the Divine light and love of God within us or the Christ consciousness within us.

Let us be thankful to God to be alive! Let us be thankful that we are all connected! Let us aim to do our bit to make the world a better place. After 2020, we now welcome 2021. In this new year, let us resolve to tackle our individual, local, national and global problems without being afraid and having hope and faith that things will get better.

*Peace be unto you and yours! Be God's Love! Be God's Light!*

*I wish you a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year 2021.*



We all experienced something together as a species. It taught us valuable lessons. It made us realise in the most dramatic and almost cinematic way that the important things in life are our relationships with each other and that we are all literally 'in the same boat'. Videos and social media posts from various platforms popped up showing us how the lockdown affected people's lives in remote corners of the world and this brought a strange type of relief,

joy, happiness and camaraderie. It has shown us that we are quite literally all equally vulnerable and that as the fictional Jack Shephard from the famous TV show Lost says, "If we can't live together, we are going to die alone!"

The virus sees not one's religion, financial condition, gender, political views, nationality, caste, creed or colour. The virus is the great leveler. Not just the virus but many other things that hap-

pened in the world this year strengthened the bond of people all over the world. There were riots, floods, fires, earthquakes, hurricanes in various parts of the world. But despite that, there was hope! For through a mass scale global effort of science despite the odds, the year 2020 has seen both virus and vaccine!

Remember earlier when I mentioned we are all 'in the same boat'? There is a story of Jesus in the

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On home turf, Suvendu says BJP will win over 200 seats

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 24

A DAY after the TMC held a public meeting on his home turf in East Midnapore, BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari led a roadshow in the same area and declared that the saffron party would win more than 200 seats in next year's Assembly polls.

On Thursday, Adhikari covered a five-km distance in his hometown Contai amid huge fanfare. Party leaders Saumitra Khan and Joy Prakash Majumdar and hundreds of party workers attended the roadshow.

"Those who are criticising me should look in the mirror first. They had joined the TMC from other parties. This time TMC will come second. We will win over 200 seats," said Adhikari.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is scheduled to address a rally at Nandigram-Adhikari's Assembly seat till he resigned as MLA recently, in January.

During the road show, Adhikari's followers raised a slogan, "Hare Krishna Hare Hare, BJP ghare ghare" - meaning that the "BJP has entered every home."

# PM at Visva-Bharati: Tagore's vision is essence of Atmanirbhar Bharat mission

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 24

NOBEL LAUREATE Rabindranath Tagore's vision is the essence of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, or self-reliant India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

Addressing a function to mark the centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati University through video conferencing, the Prime Minister said, "Guided by Gurudev [Tagore], Visva-Bharati presented a strong image of Indian nationalist sentiment during Independence. Gurudev wanted humanity to benefit from India's spiritual awakening. Atmanirbhar Bharat vision is also a derivative of this sentiment."

Founded by Tagore in 1921 in Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati is the country's oldest central university. It was declared a central university and an Institution of National Importance by an Act of Parliament in May 1951.

The Prime Minister said the Visva-Bharati University, Banaras Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University, Delhi University, Jamia Millia Islamia University, Andhra University, Annamalai University and several other universities



Prime Minister Modi addresses the gathering during the centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati University. PTI



## Not invited to centenary event at varsity: Mamata

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 24

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said she was not invited to Visva-Bharati University's centenary celebration that was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually.

"I didn't receive any kind of invitation for the programme so how can I attend it?" she said at a press conference.

The BJP was quick to produce a letter of invitation from the university to the Chief Minister, and alleged that she was "disrespecting" Rabindranath Tagore's institution. The BJP also claimed that Visva-Bharati University Vice-Chancellor Bidyut Chakrabarty sent the letter.

Responding to a question in this regard, Chakrabarty said, "Even if the invitation, as you suggest, was sent on Wednesday night, should that be the decorum? After all, she (Mamata) is the chief minister of a state."

came up in the same era and gave momentum to India's thirst for knowledge. "Today, as more and more people are getting good education, we now have to work to build a strong and wise nation - one that is self-reliant," he said.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was present at the event in Santiniketan. Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal joined the programme virtually.

In his speech, the Prime Minister also highlighted Tagore's links with his home state Gujarat, perhaps in a retort to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who has repeatedly said she will not allow Bengal to be turned into Gujarat.

"When I speak about Gurudev, I cannot help but talk about the connection between Gurudev

and Gujarat. He used to frequently visit his elder brother Satyendranath Tagore who was posted there... He stayed in Ahmedabad for a long time. During such a period, he wrote two popular poems. He wrote a portion of Kshudhita Pashan in Gujarat," he said.

"Not only this, Gujarat's daughter Srimati Hutteesingh was married to the Tagore family. When Satyendranath Tagore's wife Jnanadanandini Devi was in Gujarat, she saw women draping the pallu of saree on their right shoulders, which she felt cumbersome and improvised the style bringing the pallu on the left shoulder. Women empowerment organisations can do some more research on this," he said.

# Bengal Cong gets nod for pact with Left

BJP, TMC have same DNA, says Adhir

MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 24

THE CONGRESS high command on Thursday gave the green signal to its West Bengal unit to enter into a seat-sharing pact with the Left parties for the forthcoming Assembly elections to take on the ruling Trinamool Congress and an aggressive BJP. While a section of Congress leaders believe a Congress-Left alliance could end up helping the BJP, the party's state unit was vehemently opposed to any pact with the TMC and had been insisting on a tie-up with the Left.

West Bengal Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury told The Indian Express that the BJP and the TMC have the same "political DNA" and asserted that the Congress and the Left parties "occupy the secular space" in Bengal and still enjoyed the support of a large section of the population who believe in secularism and liberal democracy. He said it is the media which is projecting the fight between the TMC and the BJP.

"The impression (of a straight fight between the TMC and the BJP) has been gaining because of media hype. Because the media is trying to project that only two forces are there. But that is far from the reality and far from the truth. In West Bengal, the Left and the Congress... they occupy the secular space and still enjoy the support of a large section of the population who believe in secularism and in liberal democracy. So certainly we have our own constituents that will be reflected in the coming elections," he said.

On possible division of anti-BJP votes, Chowdhury said, "We have to fight against the BJP and [Chief Minister] Mamata Banerjee both because we have been subjected to persecution by the ruling dispensation in West Bengal. Mamata Banerjee is a regional poacher while the BJP is a national poacher."

Both are well adept in poaching operations in the opposition camps. To that extent, they are very much similar in their approaches," he said.

He said it was not the responsibility of the Congress party to keep the anti-BJP votes together.

"On the one hand, we are subjected to atrocities and persecution by Mamata Banerjee... on the other hand, on the alibi of the BJP... [we have been asked] to ally with the TMC. This cannot be done... because we have been left between the devil and deep sea. We have to carve out our own space because the space has been snatched upon by the Mamata Banerjee government."



## EXPLAINED Battle for survival

FOR BOTH the Congress as well as Left parties, the upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal is a battle for survival. The high-octane campaign by the ruling TMC and the BJP saw the Left getting squeezed out in the Lok Sabha elections and the Congress plunging to two seats. The parties had fought the elections separately. Having decided on the alliance, the two hope to arrest the declining trend and pose a challenge to both the TMC and BJP.

And now she is facing the music. The way Mamata poached our people and dismantled our organisation... the same play is being employed by the BJP. They are identical in their politics of destruction. Both are the same in their attitude. Their political DNA is quite identical," he said.

Asked about Banerjee's move to rally opposition leaders like Sharad Pawar and M K Stalin in her fight against the BJP on the issue of federalism, he said, "Federalism in India is certainly in peril. That is why our Congress chief ministers also extended support to Mamata Banerjee. As far as federalism is concerned, all the Opposition-ruled states are in peril. That is why all have to be united on that account. That is a different kettle of fish."

"Pawarji is a senior leader. He thought it prudent that on the issue of federalism all the states ruled by the Opposition should be united. That is why he has extended his opinion... It is a common issue. There is nothing extraordinary in this approach."

Asked how many seats will the Congress contest, Chowdhury said, "That stage has not come. During the course of discussions, factoring in other considerations like where we are strong and all... we will zero in on the number and choice of seats. Everything has been left to the state leadership... nothing has been imposed on us."

"First of all we have to discuss and decide amongst ourselves that this many seats have to be demanded. Thereafter, we will propose to the Left parties," he said.

# CPM welcomes Cong decision to enter into electoral alliance

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 24

THE CPM on Thursday welcomed the Congress' decision to enter into an electoral alliance with the Left Front in next year's Assembly polls in West Bengal. CPM is biggest constituent of the Left Front in Bengal. Other constituents are- CPI, Forward Bloc and RSP.

The state Congress unit had earlier recommended this move which was also favoured by the Left parties in Bengal.

The two parties had contested the 2016 Assembly polls together in the state but failed to make much of an impact. The alliance won only 76 seats of the state's 294 seats. The Congress won 44 seats and the Left Front bagged only get 32 seats.

However, in 2019 Lok Sabha polls the alliance between both the parties did not materialise resulting in the dismal electoral performances.


Welcoming the move, state CPM secretary Surjyakanta Mishra told mediapersons that the time has come to strengthen the alliance to the grassroots level. "We were anyway holding talks with Congress on the al-

liance and have been organising joint movements. Now, they have formally announced the alliance. Now we have to take it forward. We have to strengthen this unity of secular for democratic forces to the grassroots. We will raise people's issues and together with the Congress we will intensify our movement in the state.

Meanwhile, hours after the announcement, a section of Congress leaders said Chowdhury should be the chief ministerial candidate of this Left-Congress alliance. Congress MLA Nepal Mahata wrote in his twitter handle that Adhir Chowdhury is the Chief Ministerial face of this alliance.


On the other hand, Congress MLA and Leader of the Opposition in state Assembly Abdul Mannan said, "All India Congress Committee has taken the decision on the alliance. Now let it also decide on the chief ministerial candidate."

The Left Front leaders, however, said it is too early to discuss such matters. Forward Bloc state secretary Naren Chatterjee said, "I will not say anything on this. The Left Front Chairman Biman Bose will speak on this."

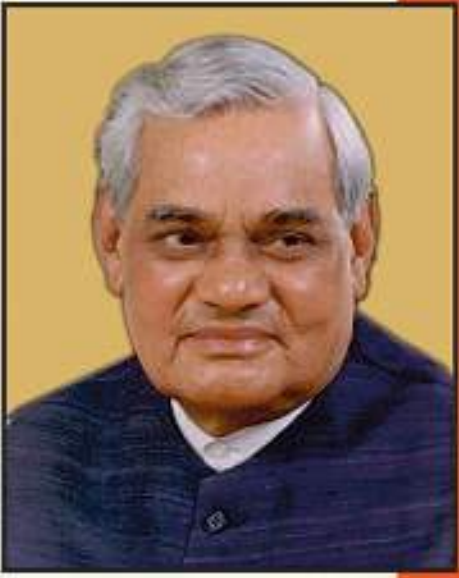


# GOOD GOVERNANCE DAY

## December 25, 2020



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## Pak national among 2 JeM militants killed in J&K gunfight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 24

TWO JAISH-E-MOHAMMAD militants including a Pakistani national were killed Thursday in an encounter with security forces in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said.

The gunfight ensued after the militants fired upon a search team of security forces, drawing retaliation.

Security forces had launched a cordon-and-search operation in Wanigam Payeen in Kreeeri area of Baramulla district in north Kashmir Thursday morning, a police spokesman said.

One of the slain ultras was identified as Abrar alias Langoo who, according to sources, is a Pakistani national. The second militant was Amir Siraj, a resident of Sopore, the spokesman said.

He said the militants were affiliated with JeM.

As per police records, the militants were involved in several terror-related cases, including attacks on security forces and civilian atrocities, he said.

## Cong MLAs meet CM Soren, air grievances

ABHISHEK ANGAD  
RANCHI, DECEMBER 24

FROM COLLECTION of electricity dues that are becoming a burden on the poor to providing more jobs, and conducting panchayat elections on time, a majority of Congress MLAs met Chief Minister Hemant Soren for the first time since the government was formed in Jharkhand and apprised him of problems they face as public representatives.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led government will announce its first year's achievements on December 29.

Sources in the Congress Legislative Party said the party's Jharkhand in-charge, R P N Singh, arranged the meeting.

An MLA who was part of the meeting said: "One major issue was the manner of collection of electricity dues from the poor. The Covid-19 pandemic has already broken their backs, and people in various constituencies are feeling overburdened by notices served by the electricity department on dues. We asked the



Hemant Soren

CM to go a little slow on this."

With pending dues running into nearly Rs 5,600 crore, the Damodar Valley Corporation is carrying out outages in various parts of the state. Recently, the Union Power Ministry wrote to the Jharkhand government and asked it to pay the dues to DVC, otherwise as per agreement the RBI would deduct Jharkhand's money in four equal installments.

At a recent departmental review meeting, Soren had called for self-reliance in power generation.

Another Congress MLA said that there was a problem with the panchayat elections next month. The legislators said works in the panchayats would come to a halt. The discussion came on the back of a letter from Panchayat Raj director Aditya Ranjan to deputy commissioners, stating panchayat polls could not be completed on time due to the pandemic.

## PM to launch DFC section in UP

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 24

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate the largest section of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor at midday on December 29 to launch the operations of one of the largest rail infrastructure projects in India.

The 351-km Khurja-Bhaupur (Kanpur) section of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor is ready and necessary trials and testing have already been concluded. Modi will dedicate to the

nation the new rail freight corridor along with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Along with the section, the PM will also unveil the state-of-the-art Operation Control Centre of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, based in Prayagraj. The centre, with galleries of multiple screens, will keep track of all train movement in real time on the freight corridor and enable seamless planning of operations.

The Khurja-Bhaupur section, after the inauguration, will see a substantial number of freight trains and container traffic diverted to the freight corridor, re-

sulting in not just faster movement of goods but also decongestion of the existing railway line carrying traffic to North India.

As a run-up to the inauguration, work was expedited and trial runs were conducted earlier this month. The first coal-loaded train comprising 59 wagons with tonnage of 4893 tonnes ran for Nabha Power House in Punjab on December 10.

The 352-km section Modi will dedicate to the nation is built at a cost of Rs 5,750 crore, funded by the World Bank. The new stations in this section are Bhaupur,

Kanchausi, Achalda, Ekdil, Bhadan, Makhanpur, Tundla, Hathras, Daudkan and Khurja. Some of the important industrial areas that straddle this section are Aligarh, Khurja, Firozabad and Agra.

Sixty-eight level crossings have been eliminated in this stretch, augmenting speed and safety, the Dedicate Freight Corridor Corporation says. The section has 19 major bridges, 414 minor bridges, seven railway flyovers. A Tata-Aldesa JV was responsible for civil construction, while Alstom has done the systems work.

## Oli decision is Nepal's internal matter: MEA

New Delhi: India Thursday described Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's decision to dissolve Parliament and call for fresh elections as an "internal matter" that is for the country to decide as per its democratic processes.

MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India will continue supporting its neighbour in moving forward on the path of peace and development. "We have noted the recent political developments in Nepal. These are internal matters for Nepal to decide as per its democratic processes," Srivastava said. **ENS**

## Temple runs into construction hiccup: Structural piles not up to mark

AVANEESH MISHRA  
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 24

THE START of the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya has hit another hiccup after tests revealed that structural piles made to bear the weight of the temple did not give desired results, according to Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

The Trust, which was formed

to facilitate the construction of the Ram temple following the Supreme Court's verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit, is now trying to find alternative ways for it.

The team of technical experts that include people from several renowned institutes like the IITs, NITs, the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) in Roorkee, and engineers from companies like Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Tata Consulting

Engineers (TCE) are already facing hurdles in form of loose sand due to water flow on the west side of garbhagrih of the proposed temple.

The foundation design, finalised and submitted by the L&T, comprised plain cement concrete raft resting on about 1200 cement concrete piles going 20 to 40 metres deep and around 1 metre in diameter.

"The drawing was of 1,200 pillars and we did a testing.

Some of the pillars were put underground till around 125 feet and were tested after around 28 days, which is the required time as per engineering norms. We put 700 tonnes of weight on them along with creating an earthquake situation, but the test piles did not give us the desired results. The readings on the machine were not what we wanted... If the pile testing results were just a little different, we would have given a go-ahead

(for the construction work). But they were much different from what we expected," Rai said.

He said with the Saryu river flowing on the west side of the garbhagrih, water and loose sand are present close to where the pillars are to stand. "The structure's strength cannot be ensured on loose sand. That is why the experts are having discussions on how to stop the water from reaching the temple, and make a strong foundation."



ADVERTORIAL

## Christmas is all about celebrating brotherhood and being merry!

This is a festival that knows no boundaries and is celebrated across the globe with a whole lot of cheerfulness and festivities

WITH THE ongoing festive season inching closer to the year-end festivities, two big celebrations are on the cards for many on the occasion of Christmas and New Year. The festival of Christmas rings in the arrival of New Year and merriment. Things are likely to get even more merrier considering that both Christmas and New Year fall on long weekends.

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus whom Christians believe is the Son of God. Celebrated across the globe by Christians and non-Christians alike, Christmas is "one of the most important days of the year for Christians, along with Easter when the death and resurrection of Jesus are ob-



served." The traditions of celebrating Christmas differ from country to country, but they nearly always include "a feast, giving gifts or cards, and enjoying church or public festivities such as singing Christmas carols and songs. Santa Claus is a tradition in many countries of the world."

The season of preparing for Christmas is called Advent and begins on a Sunday about four weeks before Christmas. The Christmas Season (called Christmastide) ends 6 January or the Twelfth Day after



Christmas, in which Epiphany is remembered. In many countries, "the season for retail stores to sell gifts, food, greeting

cards, Christmas trees, and decorations begins almost a month before the Christmas Day."

Since every festival in India is celebrated with great pomp and show, Christmas is no exception. It's a festival that spreads the message of brotherhood and love and is celebrated across the society with great merriment. On this day, people visit churches and cathedrals that are embellished with flowers, colourful lights and other decorations. Folks send Christmas greetings to their friends and families in faraway places. People decorate their homes to the hilt with Christmas trees, wreaths with bright red decorative bulbs, bells and other small trinkets. People hang beautiful star-shaped paper lamps of various colours and sizes outside their homes. And when it comes to celebrating festi-



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No meeting with Ramani in hotel, Akbar tells court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 24

FORMER UNION minister M J Akbar on Thursday told a Delhi court that there was no meeting between him and journalist Priya Ramani in the hotel where she alleges that he sexually misbehaved with her. Akbar made the submission during the final hearing of a criminal defamation complaint filed by him against Ramani, who had accused him of sexual misconduct 20 years ago when he was a journalist. Akbar subsequently resigned as a Union minister in October 2018. Senior advocate Geeta Luthra, appearing for Akbar, said: "The moment a meeting is denied, further questions are not warranted. None of the suggestions are warranted. The meeting in the hotel is denied. What part of the incident has not been addressed? They say complainant has avoided the meeting. When I (Akbar) have denied it, where is the issue of not addressing?" Luthra said that when Akbar has denied the meeting, "there can't be a question of whether sofa was blue or pink... Completely misleading to say that I didn't address." She said, "You (Ramani) haven't proved any date, hotel register, CCTV or ticket of entry in car parking. You haven't proved anything." The hearing remained inconclusive and the court will resume the proceedings on January 4.

HC quashes FIR over 'jungleraj in UP' tweet

Expressing dissent on law and order situation hallmark of a constitutional liberal democracy, says Allahabad HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 24

OBSERVING THAT expressing dissent on law and order situation is a "hallmark of a constitutional liberal democracy" like India, the Allahabad high court has quashed an FIR against a person who had allegedly tweeted that Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath "has transformed the state into a jungleraj in which no law and order prevails". Expressing dissent on the law and order situation in the state is a "hallmark of a constitutional liberal democracy like ours, constitutionally protected under Article 19 of the Constitution", the Bench of Justice Pankaj Naqvi and Justice Vivek Agarwal observed while quashing the FIR. The court was hearing a writ petition filed by Yashwant Singh who had been booked under Section 66-D (offence of cheating by personation by using computer resource) of the Information Technology Act and Section 500 (defamation) of the IPC. The FIR against Singh was lodged at Bhognipur Police Station in Kanpur Dehat district on August 2.

In the FIR, police had alleged that Singh had referred to various incidents of abduction, ransom call and murders in his tweet. In an order passed on November 23 and uploaded recently on the High Court's website, the Bench observed that no offence under the applied sections was made out against the accused and quashed consequential proceedings. "We after analysing the above provisions, qua allegation made in the FIR do not find even remotely a commission of offence under Section 66-D, as said provision relates to cheating by personation," the High Court said. Singh's lawyer, Dharmendra Singh, had told the court, "The right to comment on the affairs of the State is well within his constitutional right envisaged under Article 19 of the Constitution of India. Mere dissent does not amount to criminality. The FIR was lodged mala fide only with a view to coerce the petitioner to stop expressing his dissent against the State government..." The additional government advocate, arguing on behalf of the state government, had opposed the petition.

Tripura: 4 top NLFT leaders surrender, abducted border fence workers return

DEBRAJ DEB  
AGARTALA, DECEMBER 24

SOON AFTER it released three fencing workers abducted from near the Indo-Bangladesh border, the banned National Liberation Front of Tripura suffered a significant blow Thursday when four of its top leaders surrendered before the state police. The surrendered militants are the NLFT-Biswamohan faction's "assistant foreign secretary" Rathan Kalai alias Reuben, "assistant organizing secretary" Joy Sadhan Jamatia alias Jara, "assistant publicity and information secretary" Madhu Ranjan Noatia alias Yafung and "deputy chief of army staff" Kukila Tripura alias

Yarung. Director-General of Police V.S. Yadav said these four were among the top ten commanders of the NLFT. The outfit's Biswamohan faction, based in Bangladesh, is suffering from low cadre strength and is reeling under a financial crisis, the official said. They have laid down two AK-56 rifles, one AK Bayonet, four AK magazines, 119 rounds of AK ammunition, a wireless handset and 1.5 lakh Kyat (Myanmar currency), the DGP said. The surrender came just a day after the return of the border fencing workers. Subhash Bhowmik (48), Subal Debnath (37) and Gana Mohan Tripura (37) were working on an unfenced patch of the border in Dhalai district on December 7

when they were taken away by the militants at gunpoint into Bangladesh territory. Tripura shares an 856-km-long border with Bangladesh, around 67 km of which is unfenced. Assistant Inspector General of Tripura Police, Subrata Chakraborty, said the three persons were released Wednesday due to "continuous operations" by the local police and other security forces as well as the "tremendous pressure" mounted on overground workers of the insurgent outfit. Bangladeshi security forces, too, conducted extensive search operations within their territory, which forced the ultras to release the hostages, the official said. Sources who did not wish to

be named claimed that a ransom was paid to secure the release of the abductees. This was denied by senior police officials overseeing the case. The abducted persons were employed as a work supervisor, a labour contractor and a JCB machine driver. NLFT was formed on March 12, 1989 to fight for a "sovereign Tripura". It was banned in 1997 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and later under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The insurgent outfit suffered a debilitating split in August 2019 when 88 members broke away and laid down arms before the state government. A small faction of the outfit, the Biswamohan group, still remains active.

Terror financing case: Hafiz Saeed sentenced for over 15 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LAHORE, DECEMBER 24

MUMBAI TERROR attack mastermind and banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed was on Thursday sentenced to 15 and a half years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan in one more terror financing case. The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Lahore also imposed a Pakistani rupee (PKR) 200,000 fine on Saeed. The 70-year-old radical cleric has already been convicted for 21 years imprisonment in four terror financing cases of late. "On Thursday an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Lahore sentenced five leaders of Jamat-ud-Dawa, including its chief Hafiz Saeed, in another terror financing case...for 15 and a half years," a court official told PTI. Now, Saeed will have to undergo collective imprisonment of over 36 years in five terror financing cases at the Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore. His punishment will run concurrently in these cases. There are reports that he is given "VIP protocol" in jail. Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist on whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror financing cases. The other four JuD leaders convicted on Thursday are Hafiz Abdus Salam, Zafar Iqbal, JuD spokesperson Yahya Mujahid and Muhammad Ashraf. Each convicted person has also been fined a PKR 200,000.

MEA: India, China agree next round of military talks should be held soon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 24

INDIA AND China have agreed that the next round of military talks should be held soon for working towards an "early and complete" disengagement of troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh in accordance with the existing bilateral agreements and protocols, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday. MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the diplomatic and military talks have helped both sides to enhance under-

standing of each other's positions on the issue. Last week, the countries held another round of diplomatic talks under the framework of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China border affairs. In the virtual meeting, both sides agreed to continue work towards ensuring complete disengagement of troops in all friction points along the LAC in eastern at the "earliest". He was replying to questions on the over seven-month border standoff. FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

TRP scam: BARC's former CEO held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 24

THE MUMBAI police crime branch on Thursday arrested Partho Dasgupta, former CEO of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), from Pune, taking the total arrests in TRP case to 15. This comes days after the Crime Intelligence Unit of the crime branch arrested Ramil Ramgarhia, the former COO of BARC. The police are probing their roles in helping channels like Republic TV in increasing their TRPs. While the police earlier arrested 12 persons involved in helping six channels and filed a chargesheet against them, the fo-

cus has now moved to the WhatsApp chats that the police found on the phones of some of the arrested accused. An officer said, "We found WhatsApp groups that had senior employees of the Republic in it where methods to improve TRPs by various underhand methods were discussed. These arrests are linked to those chats." Dasgupta was arrested from Pune. He will be produced before the court for custody on Friday. API Sachin Vaze, who is investigating the matter, refused to reveal the specific role of Dasgupta on Thursday. In their chargesheet the police have named six channels as paying to give their TRPs a boost.

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1957 Elected to 2nd Lok Sabha
1957-77 Leader, Bharatiya Jana Sangh Parliamentary Party
1962 Member, Rajya Sabha
1966-67 Chairman, Committee on Government Assurances
1967 Re-elected to 4th Lok Sabha (2nd term)
1967-70 Chairman, Public Accounts Committee
1968-73 President, B.J.S.
1971 Re-elected to 5th Lok Sabha (3rd term)
1977 Re-elected to 6th Lok Sabha (4th term)
1977-79 Union Cabinet Minister, External Affairs
1977-80 Founder - Member, Janata Party
1980 Re-elected to 7th Lok Sabha (5th term)
1980-86 President, Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P.)
1980-84 1986 and 1993-96 - Leader, B.J.P. Parliamentary Party
1986 Member, Rajya Sabha; Member, General Purposes Committee

- 1988-90 Member, House Committee; Member, Business Advisory Committee
1990-91 Chairman, Committee on Petitions
1991 Re-elected to 10th Lok Sabha (6th term)
1991-93 Chairman, Public Accounts Committee
1993-96 Chairman, Committee on External Affairs; Leader of Opposition, Lok Sabha
1996 Re-elected to 11th Lok Sabha (7th term)
1998 Atal Ji again became Prime Minister for a period of 13 months from 1998 to 1999.

1999 In 1999 general elections BJP-led NDA won 303 seats out of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha securing a comfortable and stable majority. On 13 October 1999, Sri Vajpayee Ji took oath as Prime Minister of India for the third time.

Advertisement for Maharaja Agarsen Technical Education Society. Includes text: "Maharaja Agarsen Technical Education Society", "Former Prime Minister BHARAT RATNA SH. Atal Bihari Vajpayee", "MATES PARIVAR PAYS ITS RESPECTFUL HOMAGE TO THE VISIONARY LEADER AND SALUTES HIM", "Inaugurating the campus of Maharaja Agarsen Institute of Technology in January 16, 2005. In fond memory of that unforgettable moment".

Advertisement for Lohia Auto Industries. Includes text: "A tribute to the true statesman! Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee (25 Dec 1924 - 16 Aug 2018) Former Prime Minister", "Lohia Auto Industries (LAI), an automobile company that offers traditional and green energy mobility solutions is a part of the diversified business conglomerate, Lohia Global, which has business interests in Manufacturing, Exports, Retail, Real Estate, Energy and Automobiles.", "As CEO at Lohia Auto Industries, Mr. Ayush Lohia provides thought leadership, vision, strategy and roadmap to enable LAI's product and business strategies across national and global markets. He has built a strong portfolio of products, strategically positioned at different segments.", "Mr. Ayush is a true believer of the leadership philosophy of, 'Lead from the front, lead by example'."

Advertisement for Sh. Nand kishore garg. Includes text: "ATUL JI and I shared a very warm relationship whenever we met. I recall one particular incident when he was alone at his residence. Along with my friend Pawan Sharma, I went to meet him. He met me very warmly. I took his hand in my hand and started looking at it. Bemused, he asked me, 'I do not have the luck line in my hand which can make me the Prime Minister'. I responded, I see it clearly and he will definitely be the Prime Minister. He jokingly remarked, that now I am also a fortune teller, to which I said that I have credible information from a close source that the then President Shankar Dayal Sharma ji will invite the single largest party to show strength at the floor and stake claim. Few days later, albeit for a very brief period, Atal ji became the Prime Minister of the country for the first time.", "Sh. Nand kishore garg"





















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## General Elections

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Kurukshetra, Haryana



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- Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

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# Merry Christmas

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## Christmas Brings Communities Together!

CHRISTMAS is one such festival that transcends communities and unites them in one global celebration. Observed with much gusto among people of all faith, Christmas is a hugely popular festival across the globe. On Christmas, people throng to churches and cathedrals in scores to attend prayers and Mass. On this day, people from other communities too visit churches to pay their obeisance to Jesus Christ.

Christmas represents a great way to develop bonds between people in a society. Since there is an underlying feeling of family that comes with celebrating this festival, people always seem to bond well during Christmas. This is just one of the things that is an intrinsic part of Christmas that can help build support for one another.

The season of preparing for Christmas is called Advent and begins on a Sunday about four weeks before Christmas. The Christmas Season (called Christmastide) ends 6 January or the Twelfth Day after Christmas,

in which Epiphany is remembered. In many countries, "the season for retail stores to sell gifts, food, greeting cards, Christmas trees, and decorations begins almost a month before the Christmas Day."

Being a cultural festival, preparations for Christmas start early for most people so that celebrations begin on the eve of Christmas. People usually buy decorations, food, and gifts mostly for children in the family and friends. Some families shop for matching Christmas outfits for everyone. "The common preparations include decorations of the place with Christmas trees, lighting. Before decorations begin, the house must be deep cleaned. The Christmas tree brings the Christmas spirit in homes."

The traditions of celebrating Christmas differ from country to country, but they nearly always include "a feast, giving gifts or cards, and enjoying church or public festivities such as singing Christmas carols and songs. Santa Claus is a tradition in many countries of the world."



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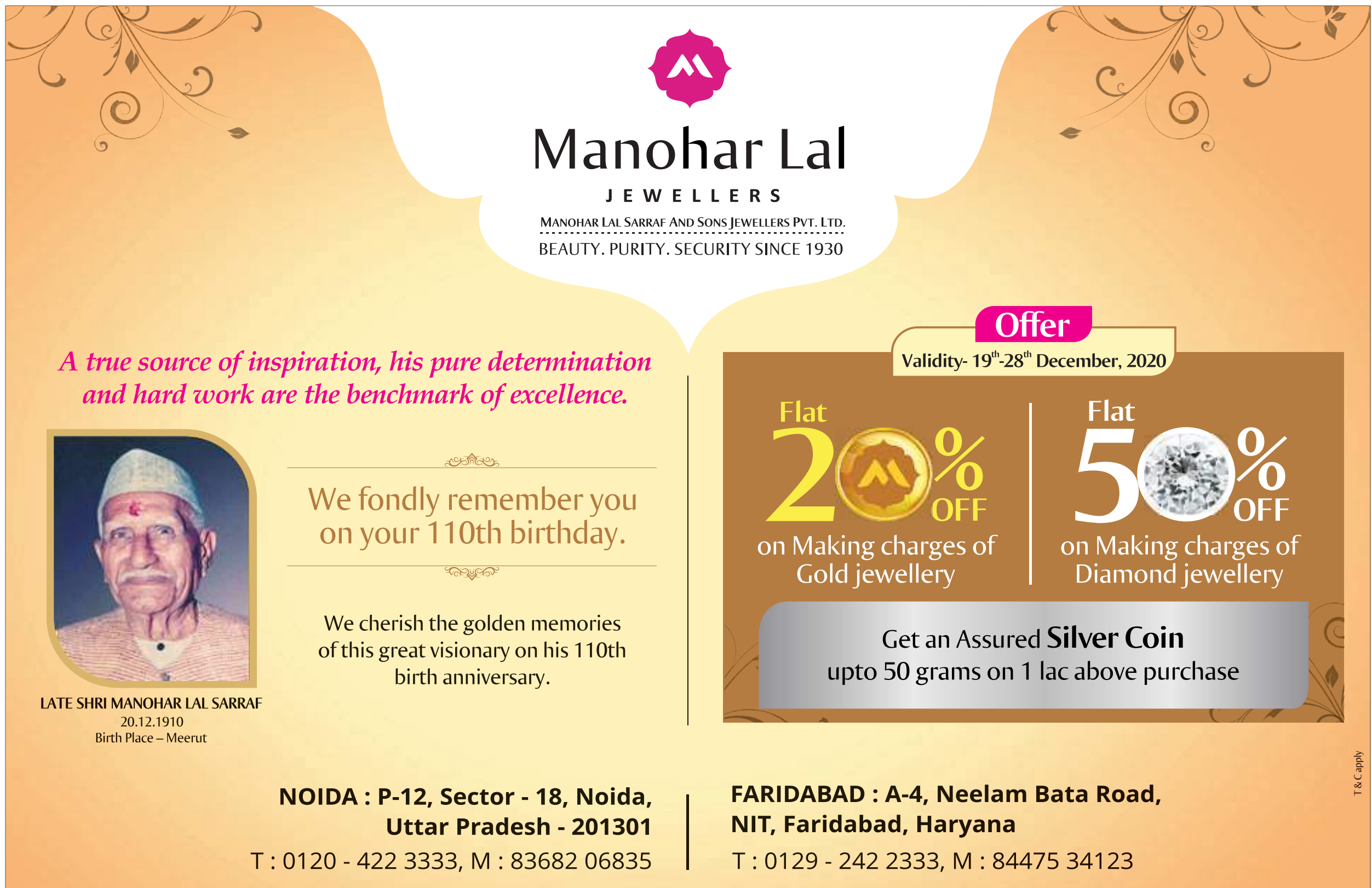
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