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**WORLD**



**PEARL KILLING: OMAR SHEIKH LIKELY TO BE FREED TODAY**  
**ONE IN 85 TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID IN ENGLAND AS CASES SPIKE**  
PAGE 15

**Apni Party scuttles PAGD chance to claim DDC in Shopian**

NAVEEDIQBAL  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 25

OVER THE LAST two days, the Altaf Bukhari-led JK Apni Party has claimed that three candidates — one Independent and one each from the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party — who won the District Development Council elections from constituencies in Shopian, have joined its ranks.

With this, the JK Apni Party's tally in the Shopian DDC will reach five, but it will still be some distance from crossing the majority mark in the 14-member strong council. Originally, Apni Party candidates had won from only two constituencies in Shopian district — Kanjiullar and Keller II.

The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) candidates won seven seats (National Conference - 3 and PDP - 4). With the support of the lone winning candidate from Congress, Nigeena Akhter from Chitragam, it could have taken the council. But since the anti-defection laws do not apply to the winning candidates of the DDCs, the PAGD does not have any recourse when its winning candidates shift allegiance.

By taking NC and PDP candidates, Apni Party has scuttled PAGD's chances of taking control of the Shopian DDC. If the remaining three more Independent candidates also join the Apni Party, Bukhari would be able to stake claim to the Shopian DDC.

While the Apni Party has taken winning candidates in Shopian from other parties, the National Conference has said its own Shopian district president

**BUSINESS AS USUAL**

By UNNAY



## With CPM since Class 5, 21-year-old is set to be Thiruvananthapuram mayor

**PAGE 1 ANCHOR**

ARUN JANARDHANAN  
CHENNAI, DECEMBER 25

ARYA RAJENDRAN, 21 and a second year B.Sc Maths student, could be the country's youngest mayor ever. The daughter of an electrician, whose entire family are supporters of the CPM, Arya is to be named by the party as head of the Thiruvananthapuram City Corporation, after the LDF won 51 of its 100 wards in the recent polls.

Arya, who studies at the all-women All Saints College, won from Mudavanmukal ward.

## RELEASES PM-KISAN TRANCHE TO OVER 9 CRORE FARMERS

# Protests an Opposition ploy, says PM, signals no yield on demand for repeal

Targets Mamata for denying PM-Kisan, asks why no stir for APMC in Kerala

HARIKISHAN SHARMA & RAVISH TIWARI  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A MONTH into the farmers' protests at the capital's borders, Prime Minister Narendra Modi effectively drew a line on Friday re-affirming his endorsement of the three laws and blaming his political opponents for what he said was their bid to "mislead" farmers.

His remarks mark his strongest public assertion against the demand that the laws be repealed. By framing it as an event attended by virtually the entire Council of Ministers, the Prime Minister indicated his resolve to use his political capital to push these laws.

**EXPLAINED**  
**E** No blink like on land laws

UNLIKE CLIMBDOWN on the land ordinance, PM has put his foot down on the farm laws. This even as talks are on with unions on the new labour codes. By targeting the Opposition, the PM has also dared them to wage a political battle against these laws.

Slamming the Opposition for what he called its "dogal" (doublespeak) policy over the new

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



PM Narendra Modi with Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad at a function to mark former PM A B Vajpayee's birth anniversary, in the Central Hall of Parliament on Friday. PTI

## Experiment with laws for a year or two, change if needed: Rajnath

DIPANKAR GHOSE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

BACKING THE Prime Minister's message to farmers on the new farm laws, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh struck a conciliatory tone Friday when he asked farmers to "experiment" with the new laws for "one-two years" before

seeking any change, while Home Minister Amit Shah said the government had an "open mind" on any clause that farmers felt was not in their interest.

Singh said he spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi two days ago, and he had emphasised the need to continue talks with farmers. He said it was "painful" to see farmers protesting.

Addressing a rally in Dwarka, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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**THE EDITORIAL PAGE**

**THE MEANING OF MERIT**  
BY PRATAP BHANU MEHTA  
PAGE 10

## Himachal's 'love jihad' law has intent clause, which HC had struck down

GAGAN & APURVA VISHWANATH  
SHIMLA, NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25



Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur

WHILE THE BJP government in Himachal Pradesh brought into force a law last week requiring a person to give prior notice to authorities for converting to another religion and outlawing conversions solely for marriage, in 2012, the state High Court had struck down similar provisions in an older version brought by the then Congress government as unconstitutional and violative of fundamental rights.

Several provisions in the Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2019, have been emulated almost word to word by Uttar Pradesh in the anti-conversion law that it passed last month, and which is being looked upon as an example by other BJP-ruled states.

Section 7 of the Himachal Act requires an individual to submit a "declaration" of intention to convert freely and without coercion from one religion to the other, to the District Magistrate. The provision also requires the priest or religious figure presiding over the conversion to give a month's notice to the DM.

On August 30, 2012, a two-judge Bench of the High Court had struck down the Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2006, passed during the then Congress regime, that had contained the exact same provision, holding it "ultra vires the Constitution of India". Neither

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## MP Govt debates its version of law today, includes alimony

IRAM SIDDIQUE  
BHOPAL, DECEMBER 25



Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan

ENSURING ALIMONY or maintenance for women forced into marriage for the purpose of religious conversion and a provision to declare such marriages null and void are some of the clauses that will be part of the Madhya Pradesh Freedom to Religion Bill, 2020, which is all set to be discussed in a special Cabinet session on Saturday, ahead of being put up in the upcoming three-day winter session that will start on December 28.

Once passed by the Assembly, the new law will replace the existing MP Dharma Swatantra Adhiniyam, 1968, law. The BJP government argues that the 1968 law is outdated and is being re-

worked in light of the experience of the past 50 years in the state regarding forced conversions, with improved definitions and higher penalties to prohibit such crimes, particularly forced religious conversions on the pretext of marriage.

Under the new Bill, forced conversions would draw a minimum jail term of five years, going up to life imprisonment, in case the person converted is a minor or from a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, and three

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Farmers respond: It's clear Govt will not back down, we are prepared for the long haul



AAP MPs protest in the Central Hall of Parliament, Friday. PTI

RAAKHI JAGGA  
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 25

RESPONDING TO the Prime Minister's speech Friday, farmer unions, protesting against the new farm laws, warned of a "long struggle", saying it was evident that the government seemed to be in no mood to back down on the laws.

Jagmohan Singh, general secretary of BKU (Dakaunda) and working committee member of the All India Kisan Sangharsh

Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), said the Prime Minister's speech showed that the government was not going to repeal the laws.

"But we will not leave (the borders of Delhi) till these are repealed. Our fight is against the undemocratic ways... first, they make laws without consultation, later they say these are for our good... then make amendments and say the laws cannot be taken back. But why did you make such laws in the first place?" he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**AS ROLLOUT OF COVID-19 VACCINE NEARS**

## Dry run planned in four states: focus on delivery, cold chain, adverse event watch

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

FOR TWO days at the beginning of next week, India will hold a dry run for the largest and most ambitious mass immunisation programme in its history.

The dummy vaccination exercise will be carried out in two districts each of four states at the four corners of the nation — Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, and Assam — on December 28 and 29.

With several countries around the world having already begun vaccination against the novel coronavirus, India could be just days away from granting regulatory approval for the shot. The inoculation exercise is expected to begin soon after. With over 10 million total infections,

India is the world's second worst affected country, even though daily case numbers have been falling consistently over the past three months.

The dry run will proceed through four key steps, which will be monitored closely by the central government:

- Each district will receive the dummy vaccine for 100 beneficiaries from the nearest depot;
- Temperature will be tracked through the vaccine's journey from the depot to the vaccination site;
- An SMS will be sent in advance to the beneficiaries with the name of the vaccinator, and the time of the vaccination;
- Each beneficiary will be made to sit for 30 minutes after being administered the shot;

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## AAI seeks 2.5 acres in Pune; airports and airlines prepare to be hubs for distribution

PRANAV MUKUL  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE AIRPORTS Authority of India (AAI) is close to finalising an arrangement with the Indian Air Force to receive 2.5 acres of land adjacent to Pune airport, to be utilised for the transport of vaccines from the facilities of vaccine manufacturer Serum Institute of India nearby.

"The transfer of the land, which is currently owned by the IAF, to Pune airport has been a longstanding demand of the AAI. They have asked for a land exchange, and AAI has finalised the plan for this," a senior government official said.

"The airport management is also constantly in discussions with Serum Institute to under-



The Serum Institute of India in Pune. Express file

stand the requirements, because a significant amount of freight is expected to go out from Pune," the official said.

Pune-based Serum, the world's largest maker of vaccines by number of doses, has been licensed by Oxford-AstraZeneca to test, manufacture, and distribute

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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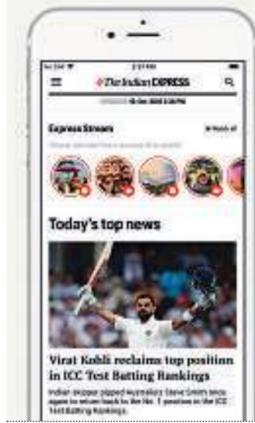
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2020 IN CLIMATE: AS THE WORLD TOOK THE PANDEMIC HEAT, GLOBAL WARMING ONLY BECAME WORSE

As curtains fall on this tumultuous year, 2020 was replete with weather-related destruction, relentless hurricanes, and became well known as the second hottest year ever recorded yet.

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THE LONG WALK OF MIGRANT WORKERS

We look at the migrant exodus triggered by the sudden lockdown

EXPRESS AUDIO

What the DDC poll results mean for the people of J&K

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Decoding what the DDC poll results, what they mean for the people in the region, and what they signal about the future of politics in J&K.

FROM PAGE ONE

SHOPIAN DDC

PDP	4
NC	3
INC	1
Independents	4
Apni Party	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

DDC polls

has been detained since the results were declared. "District President Shopian Showkat Ahmed Genai is under detention for three days now; the grounds of detention have not been made known by the administration as yet," the party said in a statement, demanding his immediate release.

On Friday, Apni Party claimed that Yasmeena Jan, a DDC member from Imam Sahib-I-seat in Shopian, has joined the JKAP. Jan had won the seat on a National Conference ticket.

Reacting sharply to the Apni Party's move, former Chief Minister and NC Vice-President Omar Abdullah said in a tweet, "This explains why our leaders in Shopian district are being put under 'preventive arrest' by the police. J&K police & the administration are facilitating horse trading & defections. The woman shown here joining the BJP's B-team contested & won elections on a NC mandate."

Omar Abdullah also took on the administration for "playing partisan politics". These parties couldn't win seats and so "now they are using money/muscle/threats & government coercion to make up the numbers. So much for 'democracy has won!'" he said. A day before, the Apni Party had said that two victorious candidates Fazal-Din Deedad and Abdul Rashid Lone who also won the Shopian DDC had joined the party. Deedad was an independent candidate who contested the Keller I seat in Shopian, and Lone had won on a PDP ticket.

Rajnath Singh

Singh said there was marked improvement in MSP-based procurement under the NDA as against the UPA tenure.

"But even then, we are being doubted. Misconceptions are being raised. I want to tell my brothers and sisters, sitting on dharna for a long time, that it causes us pain. They may be sitting on dharna, but they are farmers. They have been born from a farmer mother's womb. In our minds, we have a lot of respect for them. As the son of a farmer, I want to say, we will not do anything that harms the rights of farmers," he said.

"Ek baar iss Act ko laagu toh hone dijiye. Saal-do saal, aap experience karke toh dekhite iss Act ke

anuser. Yadi aapko lage ki yeh kisanon ke liye labhkaari Act nahin hai, toh mein daave ke saath keh sakta hoon, jaisa mein Pradhan Mantriji ki niyat ko jaanta hoon, behenon bhaiyon, ismei jo bhi sandhodhan avashyak hoga, saara sandhodhan karne ke liye hum poori tarah se taiyyar rahenge," he said.

"Let this Act be implemented once. For one-two years, experiment according to this Act and see. If you think this is not a profitable Act for farmers, I can say with certainty, knowing the Prime Minister's intentions, whatever amendments are necessary, we will be ready to do them all."

In the multiple rounds of talks so far, the government, he said, has been ready to make any amendment that the farmers want. He urged farmers to come to the table for more talks with the government, and said they can bring agriculture experts if they so wish.

"It was first said that the farmer will be destroyed, so some amendments should be made. Seven rounds of talks have happened. Whatever the farmers said, those amendments too our government is ready to make. What we too say is that the solution to the problem can be through talks... I was talking to the Prime Minister two days ago, and he said that at no point should dialogue be stopped with farmers. The sequence of talks should continue with our farmer brothers," he said.

Shah attacked the Opposition for spreading "misconceptions" on the farm laws. He said the NDA government had done more for farmers during its tenure.

"Rahul Gandhi, who talks of farmer welfare, when it was your government... when you were Agriculture Minister, Sharad Pawar, in 2013-14, how much was the budget for farmers? There was a Congress government of Sonia-Manmohan, then the farmer budget was 21,900 crore. Only 21,900 crore. In the last budget, Modi took it from 21,900 crore to 134,399 crore. And they are asking for our account? Uta chor kotwal ko daante?" Shah said.

He said "MSP was there, is there and will be forever", and that the UPA had no right to talk about it.

"For years, farmers wanted that the MSP level should be one-and-a-half times the expenditure on crop. Please tell me if that was a demand or not? For 70 years, nobody fulfilled this demand. Narendra Modi, between 2014 and 2019, made the MSP one-and-a-half times the cost of the crop, and gave the farmers big relief."

Vaccination run

if an adverse event occurs, its management will be tracked through the central server.

"A total 2,360 participants have been put through the national-level training of trainers, which includes cold chain and immunisation officers. Since people have already been trained, we want to know before the actual roll-out [of the vaccination programme] how effective this training has been. We have chosen one state each from the north, south, east and west, and the states will decide the two districts. The dry run will be monitored by the Centre," a senior government official who is part of the team that will monitor the dry run, told *The Indian Express*.

The dry run is intended to test the country's flagship vaccine delivery IT platform, Co-Win, at every stage, sources said.

"After states identify their two districts, the first step will be for them to schedule five vaccination sessions in five different locations. The locations will be primary health centres, community health centres, or a district hospital"

Protests an Opp ploy, says PM, signals no repeal

farm laws, Modi said the government is ready to hold talks in the interest of farmers, but it will be on "issues, logic and facts".

"...I humbly say to even those people who are opposing us fiercely, I say with humility, our government is ready to talk to them in the interest of farmers, but the talks will be on issues, logic and facts," Modi said after releasing the scheduled Rs 18,000-crore tranche to over 9 crore farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme.

TMC leader and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee - Assembly elections in the state are due next year - found particular mention for criticism in his speech.

He asked why those opposing farm laws do not speak about the interest of farmers in West Bengal, a state that has not implemented the PM-KISAN.

"Today, the political parties, which have been voted out by the people, are doing events and event management so that someone can take a selfie, get photos printed, and appear on TV so that their politics can continue. These have been exposed in front of the country. Why do they not speak of interests of farmers of West Bengal? They are engaged here to harass the citizens of Delhi and are ruining the country's economy. That too in the name

of farmers," Modi said.

Over 23 lakh farmers of West Bengal, he said, applied online to take advantage of this scheme, but the state government stopped the verification process.

Referring to the Opposition charge that APMC mandis would be weakened with the implementation of the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, he said, "You must have heard, they are talking about mandis and APMCs. Kerala has no APMC, no mandi... they organise programmes to seek attention, so they should start APMCs in Kerala by organising agitations there. You have time to mislead the farmers of Punjab, but if this system is good, then why is it not there in Kerala?"

"Why do you adopt a dogali (doublespeak) policy? What kind of politics are they doing in which there is no logic, no facts? Make false accusations and spread rumours to scare our farmers. Sometimes, naive farmers get misled by you," the Prime Minister said.

"These people are not willing to accept any scale and parameters of democracy. They only see their benefits, their selfishness. Those who are playing the game by taking their flags in the name of farmers, will now have to listen to the truth... they cannot escape. They have the right to do politics in democracy. Do not play with the lives of innocent farmers, do not play with their future and do not mislead them," he said.

Urging farmers "not to be misled" and "not accept the lies of anyone", he asked them to think only on the basis of "logic and facts". He listed the schemes initiated by his government for the welfare of farmers.

At the programme, organised on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Modi also interacted with six farmers from six states and asked them to share their experiences of contract farming, government schemes and other issues.

When Gagan Pering, a farmer from Lower Dibang Valley district in Arunachal Pradesh, said he had formed a farmer produce organisation for the production of ginger, and had entered into an agreement with a private company, the Prime Minister asked him, "Does the company that buy ginger from you, procure only ginger or it takes away your land?" To this, Pering said, "The agreement is only for purchase of produce, not for land. The land is owned by us, and it will remain ours."

Modi told him: "You are sitting in a remote area of Arunachal Pradesh and you

have trust that your land is safe, but some people are spreading misconceptions that if you enter into an agreement of your produce, then you will lose your land too." This was a reference to Opposition allegations against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act.

Clearly, the PM's message Friday stands in contrast to the Centre's climbdown on the land acquisition ordinance in 2015 in the face of milder protests.

The signal that the Government will not yield on the repeal demand comes against the backdrop of ongoing negotiations with trade unions on draft rules under the four labour codes recently brought by the government.

Just as he did with the CAA, the Prime Minister mocked the Opposition over its electoral debacle accusing it of instigating the protests to push their political agenda.

This playbook, that tries to delegitimise protests and attribute to them an agenda, isn't new for this Government. That the BJP let its longtime ally, the Akali Dal, walk away from the NDA over this and appears unfazed over the pressure on its state government in Haryana reinforces its political resolve on the farm laws.

Modi told him: "You are sitting in a remote area of Arunachal Pradesh and you

Farmers respond: It's clear Govt will not back down

Gurnam Singh Chaduni, president of BKU (Haryana), echoed Jagmohan Singh: "Time and again, they asked us for our proposals. But they are yet to give us any concrete proposal. Had their intentions been good, they would not have made these laws. Now what is the point of talking of

amendments. We will not budge until we win."

P Krishna Prasad, working committee member of AIKSSC and a former Kerala MLA, said: "PM stands isolated from his allies who are in support of farmers. Our struggle is for a policy, not for any fund. So we are ready for

the long haul."

Jhanda Singh Jethuke, senior vice president of BKU (Ugrahan), said the Prime Minister was "contradicting" his Agriculture Minister. "On December 5, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar congratulated us for holding the protest in a peace-

ful manner, and for not being under the influence of any political party. Now the PM is saying that farmers are being misguided by political parties who are doing event management here in their name. So who do we trust? It seems we are in for a long struggle. We are ready for it."

the senior official said.

"Next, they (the states) will create a session using the Co-Win digital platform, and include 100 people in that session. A five-member vaccination team will be constituted."

In the third step, "100 people will receive an SMS generated by the IT platform that will convey that vaccinator X will be vaccinating you on [say] December 29 at [a certain] sub-centre between Y and Z time," the official said.

The next step during the dry run will be related to the maintenance and tracking of the cold chain using the IT platform, sources said. Several Covid-19 vaccines will be temperature sensitive - and once the vaccination programme is rolled out, the country's cold chain system of 85,634 pieces of equipment at 28,947 cold chain points will be used to store the vaccine.

"A team will be dispatched to the vaccination centre. The cold chain will be operational simultaneously. The district will inform whether it will get its vaccine from the nearest state depot or the Government Medical Store Depot (GMSD). There are four GMSDs run by the Union government, and 27 state consignee points," sources said.

According to the sources, "The district will inform from which location the vaccine has to be received, where it is being taken, and details of the cold chain temperature up to the vaccination site."

The sources, however, pointed out that while every state will have a consignee point in next week's dry run, when the actual vaccine administration programme is rolled out, some states will receive their consign-

ments from others.

"Not all states have a state consignee point. For example, Nagaland, which does not have a state consignee point for receiving the vaccine, will get it from the nearest state," the sources said.

On the critical aspect of vaccine administration and adverse event reporting, the sources said: "The vaccinators will do the dummy run with 100 persons. Each person will wait for 30 minutes after getting vaccinated. They (the vaccinators) will see where the glitches are, if any. They will also record adverse events, if any, after the vaccination. Since Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) is a critical aspect, the management of the adverse event will be tracked," the sources said.

AAI seeks land

its vaccine against the novel coronavirus in India.

As the country moves closer to rolling out its Covid-19 vaccination programme, airports and logistics players are working to ensure it happens seamlessly - by expanding cold chain facilities and setting up computerised trucking slots for more efficient redistribution from airports. Officials said they believed vaccination could begin next month.

While Pune will be one of the hubs for the distribution of domestically-manufactured vaccines, the bulk of the vaccine consignment will be imported through major international airports including Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad. Delhi, the country's largest airport, has launched "Project Sanjivani" to equip cargo terminals with special cooling chambers. The airport has the capacity to handle 54

lakh vials of the vaccine a day with two complete rotations.

"The temperature-controlled cargo facilities have the capacity to handle over 1.5 lakh tonnes of cargo per annum. These facilities have state-of-the-art temperature-controlled zones with separate cool chambers ranging from 25 degrees C to minus 20 degrees C," a Delhi airport spokesperson said.

At the airport's cargo terminals, dedicated gates have been assigned for fast movement of vehicles into and out of the airport. The airport has also put in place a truck slot management system at its cargo terminals, and cargo operators can pre-book the arrival of trucks at the terminal.

On the air side, the airport has been equipped with "cool dollies", which are container systems used in air cargo for temperature-sensitive goods. They are primarily used to transport goods from the aircraft to the cargo terminal.

Preparations at Indian airports are in line with those that have been made at global air transport hubs such as the airports at Singapore, Dubai, Doha, and Shenzhen, some of which have already started receiving vaccine shipments.

Turkish ground handling company Çelebi, which operates a cargo terminal at Delhi airport, has created a separate lane for movement of vaccine shipments at the export-import warehouse, and dedicated delivery and acceptance gates for immediate handling. "Customers, both airlines and freight forwarders, are being sensitised to send us their pre-alerts and planning, to enable us to plan and expedite movements ac-

ordingly," Murali Ramachandran, CEO-India, Çelebi Aviation, told *The Indian Express*.

Airport and cargo operators are also making preparations for ad hoc freight arrivals. "Çelebi is working closely with existing airline operators to understand their specific requirements, and attracting a large number of non-scheduled operators to bring in ad hoc freighters with Covid-19 vaccine in the near future," Ramachandran said.

A spokesperson for Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport said the airport will offer flexible slot management for ad hoc charter operations. Mumbai is the country's largest airport gateway for pharmaceutical export-import movement.

"The existing infrastructure at CSMA enables the airport to offer a continuous temperature controlled movement and processing of pharma goods through the airport - an element that would be vital for the storage and transportation of the Covid-19 vaccine," the spokesperson said.

Cold chain infrastructure is being upgraded at smaller airports too. "If the vaccines are coming from abroad, they'll mainly come to international airports from where they will be redistributed to other smaller places, state capitals, etc. Whatever cold chain infrastructure is there, we are upgrading it," AAI chairman Arvind Singh said.

Hyderabad airport will be key for the distribution of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine, which is being produced in India by Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories. This airport too processes a large volume of India's pharmaceuti-

cal cargo given its proximity to several manufacturing facilities. The airport has a dedicated Pharma Zone with temperature-controlled facilities for cargo that requires temperatures from minus 20 degrees Celsius to 25 degrees Celsius.

The airport has also ensured that ramp exposure time of the cargo is minimised, with the freighter parking stands located just 50 metres away from the terminal.

Airlines - both global and Indian - are also gearing up to transport the vaccines. SpiceJet has tied up with Hyderabad airport and logistics companies Om Logistics and Snowman Logistics, for end-to-end transportation of vaccines. Globally, cargo units of airlines including Singapore Airlines and Emirates have already begun transporting Covid-19 vaccines. On December 20, Singapore Airlines delivered the first shipment of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to Singapore on board one of its Boeing 747-400 freighters.

Just as he did with the CAA, the Prime Minister mocked the Opposition over its electoral debacle accusing it of instigating the protests to push their political agenda.

This playbook, that tries to delegitimise protests and attribute to them an agenda, isn't new for this Government. That the BJP let its longtime ally, the Akali Dal, walk away from the NDA over this and appears unfazed over the pressure on its state government in Haryana reinforces its political resolve on the farm laws.

Modi told him: "You are sitting in a remote area of Arunachal Pradesh and you

have trust that your land is safe, but some people are spreading misconceptions that if you enter into an agreement of your produce, then you will lose your land too." This was a reference to Opposition allegations against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act.

Clearly, the PM's message Friday stands in contrast to the Centre's climbdown on the land acquisition ordinance in 2015 in the face of milder protests.

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The UP law also prescribes enquiry by a magistrate to give sanction for a conversion whereas the Himachal law only requires submitting a notice.

The new Himachal Pradesh anti-conversion law was promulgated in August last year, repealing the 2006 Act. Under Section 2 (j), it refers to conversion as "purification sanskar (purification ritual)", and defines a religious priest for the purposes of the law as a person performing the conversion. The Act was notified only last week.

The 2006 law had been challenged by the Evangelical Fellowship of India and ANHAD, a non-profit run by activist Shabnam Hashmi. The Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Mahant Ram Mohan Das of the Brahmin Sabha, Shimla, and BJP leader Subramanian Swamy had intervened in the proceedings, defending the law.

MP Bill

years otherwise, with a minimum penalty of Rs 50,000.

However, unlike the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, under the MP law, a person converting of his own free will does not have to report it to the district magistrate. In case a person approaches a priest for such a conversion though, the priest concerned has to inform the district administration.

Under the new MP Bill, a family court in the state will be empowered to declare marriages conducted for the purpose of religious conversion null and void. The alimony in such cases would be granted as per Section 125 of the CrPc. In his interactions with mediapersons, Home Minister Narottam Mishra had said they were also exploring the possibility of attaching the property of the accused.

The draft was scheduled to come up for discussion at a Cabinet meeting on December 22 but was deferred till a special session on December 26 after Chief Minister Shivrav Singh Chouhan said a few suggestions were awaited.

21-yr-old mayor

On top of the list of Arya's role models is Kerala Health Minister K K Shailaja, "for the amazing work she has done" during the Covid pandemic. She also counts Sugathakumari, a veteran Malayalam poet and activist who died this week, and prominent Malayalam writer K R Meera as inspirations. Arya says she doesn't hold a rigid stand against religion, her party ideology notwithstanding, occasionally accompanying her mother to temples and visiting church. "I believe in positive energy, which is what God is for me, but I stand against superstitious beliefs," she says.

Top CPM Thiruvananthapuram leader and a minister, Kadakampally Surendran, says he has been seeing Arya since she was a child. "The youth and new generation, they are the future of this country. They have clarity about the need for transparent political systems, they have bigger dreams and a vision. Arya has experience, she is very good. Her age is not a cause for worry as we have plenty of examples of young civil service officers delivering amazing work as district collectors," he says.

Legendary Malayalam writer M T Vasudevan Nair also welcomed the CPM decision. "It is not about a party but I feel happy for her," he says.

Waiting for Saturday's formal call, Arya says it is only after this that she will plan her priorities for Thiruvananthapuram. However, top of her agenda is waste-handling. "The last regime had done a lot and we have to do more."

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Divisional Railway Manager(Engg.)  
N.E. Railway, Itanagar for and behalf of  
President of India invites "Open"  
e-tender through on Line (E-Tendering)  
for the following work.

(1) Description of work : Licensing of management and control over the Railway land for realisation of Tehbazari due in the Railway land at new mode model Railway colony Itanagar for (One year 2020-21). Approx Value (₹) : 24,45,300.00. Earnest Money (₹) : 2,44,600.00. Cost of Tender Forms:Rs.3000/- . Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter 12 Month.

(2) Description of work : Provision of AMC for one year of GPS Tracking device in IZN division. . Approx Value (₹) : 8,72,197.00. Earnest Money (₹) : 17,500.00. Cost of Tender Forms:Rs.2000/- . Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter 12 Month.

● On line e-tender can be submitted upto 15:00 hrs. of dated 19.01.2021  
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CPROW-184 N.E. Railway, Itanagar  
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TOTAL CASES	Total		Vacant	
	Daily cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
6,21,439	1,063	1,120	37	89,920
	758	1,370	30	85,749
	7,267*	6,03,758	10,414	82,08,723

\*Total active cases

603 COLD CHAIN POINTS IDENTIFIED, STAFF TRAINING TO FINISH ON TUESDAY

# Pvt hospitals with over 100 health staff to be involved in Covid vaccination drive in capital

ASTHA SAXENA  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

TOP PRIVATE hospitals in Delhi with more than 100 healthcare workers will be used to carry out the vaccination programme for Covid-19. The government has finalised the list of 603 cold chain points, including mohalla clinics and government hospitals, that will play an important role in vaccinating the targeted population.

According to the World Health Organisation, the purpose of the vaccine cold chain is to maintain product quality from the time of manufacture until the point of administration by ensuring that vaccines are stored and transported within recommended temperature ranges.

"The immunisation programme in private hospitals will



Delhi recorded 758 Covid cases on Friday. Amit Mehra

## EXPLAINED Keeping it cold

The 603 cold chain points in the capital include mohalla clinics and government hospitals. According to WHO, vaccine cold chain is important to maintain product quality from the time of manufacture to the point of administration. The vaccines need to be stored and transported within recommended temperature ranges.

be carried out in coordination with government officials. Under the supervision of govern-

ment officials, the vaccination programme in hospitals with more than 100 healthcare work-

ers will be carried out. There will be three rooms at each vaccination booth — one each for wait-

ing, vaccination and observation," said Dr Suneela Garg, public health expert and advisor to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). She has been appointed in charge of the state Covid-19 task force for the Delhi vaccination programme.

On Thursday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said 51 lakh people in Delhi will be administered the Covid-19 vaccine in the first phase. He said 1.2 crore doses are needed to cover priority categories comprising healthcare workers, police, civil defence volunteers, those aged above 50 and people aged below 50 with associated comorbidities such as diabetes, heart ailments, among others.

The state had earlier prepared a list of 3,500 healthcare workers who had to be trained for the immunisation pro-

gramme; around 300 more staff have been enrolled. Among them, 600 workers are from the private sector, 200 are from hospitals under railways, cantonment, and there are 700 medical officers for monitoring these cold chain points.

The training programme will be completed by Tuesday.

"During the training programme, the healthcare workers will be informed about the safety of the vaccine, use of digital application Co-WIN, monitoring and vaccine logistics management," added Dr Garg.

On Friday, Delhi recorded 758 Covid-19 cases — the lowest in over four months — and 30 new fatalities even as the positivity rate dipped to 0.88 per cent. The infection tally in the city mounted to over 6,21,439 and death toll rose to 10,414.

## HC backs ST candidate who faced exam hassle

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

WHILE ALLOWING the petition of a Scheduled Tribes (ST) candidate who failed to submit a certificate on time during the process of recruitment, allegedly due to the ongoing farmer protests, the Delhi High Court has said that reservations or relaxations cannot be given by one hand and taken away by another by invoking technicalities while forgetting the hardships and difficulties faced by them in accomplishing the smallest of things.

"The said need has to be fulfilled, not only by providing reservations/relaxations but also by providing relaxations in implementing the said reservations and benefits conferred on the STs," the division bench of Justices Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Asha Menon said.

Observing that such reservation is an admission of the disadvantages which the STs have suffered for generations and

which have placed them in an unequal position as compared to other citizens, the court said such disadvantages extend to all parameters of day to day life.

The court made the observations in a case filed by Lekhraj Meena, who is a candidate for recruitment being held for sub-inspector post in Delhi Police, Central Armed Police Forces and assistant sub-inspector post in CISF by the Staff Selection Commission. He scored 96 per cent in the Paper I and qualified in Physical Standard Test but was rejected during the Physical Efficiency Test conducted in Noida as he had not filled up the form of certificate for height relaxation, even though he had submitted the caste certificate.

When he was given 5 days for submitting the form, the court was told that he could not reach his home district in Rajasthan in time due to the farmers' protests, and when he reached his district, there also was a delay in issuance of the certificate by authorities.

## 'Halal' meat against Hinduism, Sikhism, restaurants must specify: South body

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE STANDING committee of the BJP-led South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has cleared a proposal that asks restaurants and shops to "mandatorily" display whether the meat being sold or served is slaughtered using the 'halal' or 'jhatka' method.

The proposal now awaits nod in the SDMC House, which is controlled by the BJP, after which it would become a rule.

"According to Hinduism and Sikhism, eating 'halal' meat is forbidden and against religion. Therefore, the committee resolves that this direction be given to restaurants and meat shops that it should be written mandatorily about the meat being sold and served by them that 'halal' or 'jhatka' meat is available here," the resolution passed by the SDMC panel Thursday said.

'Jhatka' method is one in which an animal is slaughtered in one go, while in the 'halal' method, an animal is allowed to slowly bleed out after cutting a vein.

Standing committee chief Rajdutt Gehlot said, "Suppose a person wants jhatka meat but gets halal, then he will feel offended. So the idea is just to mention whether it is jhatka or halal.

Secondly, if I have taken license of jhatka and I am serving halal or vice versa, then this will keep a check on such violations as such things are recorded while taking licence."

There are thousands of restaurants in 104 wards of four zones falling under SDMC.

"Though meat is served in about 90 per cent of these restaurants, often it is not mentioned whether it is 'halal' or 'jhatka'," said the resolution passed by the SDMC panel.

Meat shops also do not make the distinction, it said.

A similar proposal was earlier passed by the East MCD meet in 2018 stating that shop owners have to put up prominent boards, specifying if they are serving halal or jhatka meat.

EDMC's then standing committee chairman Satyapal had then said that there are several Hindus who do not eat halal meat. The decision had been taken to ensure that their religious sentiments are not hurt.

In 2017, the SDMC had proposed that meat and its products were not to be displayed in the open, citing hygiene and "sentiments of people affected by the sight" of meat as main reasons behind the move.

The move was not implemented after protests from shop owners.

## Inspired by crime show, man kidnaps & kills 10-yr-old, held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A MONTH after a 10-year-old boy was kidnapped and murdered in South Delhi's Maidan Garhi, police have arrested a 22-year-old man, who was his mother's friend, for the crime.

The boy went missing from his home in Sanjay Colony on November 28 and his partially burnt body was found Thursday.

Police said the accused, Bittu Singh, wanted to marry the boy's mother. According to police, Singh, inspired by a TV show, allegedly planned to kidnap and kill the child. Police said he also allegedly tried to burn the body to destroy evidence.

DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said they received a missing persons report from the boy's mother on November 28. "We were told that the boy went to a store to buy food but didn't return. The boy's parents were separated and there was a dispute over the child's custody... All CCTVs in the area were scanned but we didn't find anything," said the DCP.

On Thursday, nearly a month later, police found a "highly decomposed" and "partially burnt"

body near a pond in Maidan Garhi. The boy's parents later identified the body. "When questioned, the mother then spoke about a friend named Singh who often gave gifts to her son," said a senior police officer.

When Singh was questioned on Thursday, he allegedly confessed that he killed the child.

The accused told the police that he has known the victim's mother since childhood but their parents were against the marriage. After the woman separated from her husband, the accused proposed marriage but she said she can't because of her child.

Police said the accused, after watching a crime show, allegedly planned to kill the child. "On November 28, he took the child in an auto on the pretext of buying him berries. They went to a forest where Singh strangled the child with a scarf. He then dumped the body in a pond," said DCP Thakur.

A day later, he went back to the spot and hid the body under rocks. "He tried to burn the body with fuel but he failed because it was wet. The accused then removed clothes from the body, put it in a plastic bag and dumped it in the river," said the police.

national health authority

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

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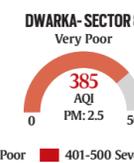
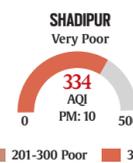
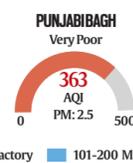
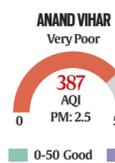
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0-50 Good 51-100 Satisfactory 101-200 Moderate 201-300 Poor 301-400 Very Poor 401-500 Severe

**SKYWATCH**  
**FORECAST: Dec 26**  
Partly cloudy sky. Shallow to moderate fog in the morning  
**MAX: 21** | **MIN: 4**  
0.4°C below normal | 3.9°C below normal

## BRIEFLY

**PWD plan to decongest stretch gets approval**

**New Delhi:** The Unified Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure (Planning and Engineering) Centre Thursday approved a proposal of the Public Works Department (PWD) to decongest a 3.5-km stretch of the Ring Road between Raja Garden flyover and Punjabi Bagh flyover. This would be done by constructing two flyovers parallel to the existing single flyovers at Club Road crossing and Moti Nagar crossing.

**Noida Police to set up help desks on New Year's Eve**

**Noida:** Noida Police is going to set up women help desks at places hosting New Year's eve celebrations across the district. According to police, the personnel will assist women with on the spot solutions in case of any issue. A female and a male personnel each will be deployed at the concerned help desks. Besides, there will also be increased patrolling. Noida Police has also launched a dedicated helpline to assist queries by women.

**Man arrested for Rs 9 crore 'fraud'**

**New Delhi:** The Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police has arrested a man for allegedly misappropriating Rs 9 crore during demonetisation. Police said the accused, Gaurav Singhal, had opened seven bank accounts using forged documents and misappropriated the money using cash deposits. Police said a tax officer had filed a complaint against the accused two years ago.

**'Feast week' at Delhi Zoo**

**New Delhi:** A feast week for animals at the Delhi Zoo began Friday, in which animals will be given a special meal that is different from their regular diet for the next five days, zoo director Ramesh Pandey said. **ENS**

## SHAHJAHANPUR PROTEST SITE GROWS

## After 1,000 km journey, Delhi in reach for Maharashtra farmers

**SOMYA LAKHANI**  
SHAHJAHANPUR, DEC 25

WITH Rs 100 in his pocket, a pair of extra pants and a bedsheet, 55-year-old *khet mazdoor* Shivaji Vinayak Rao Bhairav began his 1,080-km journey from Maharashtra's Chandwad on Monday and reached Shahjahanpur near the Rajasthan and Haryana border on Friday.

"I'm the only breadwinner in my family of five people, and before leaving from home I told them that I'll only return when the three farm laws are withdrawn. If the farm owner isn't paid the sum he deserves, I won't get the money I deserve either. This is about my livelihood too," said Bhairav, one of the 1,000-plus farmers, including farm labourers, who have travelled from Maharashtra to participate in the ongoing protest at Shahjahanpur, 130 km away from Delhi.

For two weeks, thousands of farmers from Rajasthan and Haryana have been protesting at the NH8 after they were stopped by the Haryana government from proceeding to Delhi's Singhu and Tikri borders. The cavalcade of 50 vehicles from Maharashtra reached the Shahjahanpur protest site around 12.45 pm.

From Maharashtra's Akola, Dagdu Ekhande (40) and Kalu Kathore (35) have reached Shahjahanpur in a tempo, with 15 others. "We earn Rs 100 a day for a day's work. By being here I lose my livelihood every day but this is important. We slept in schools and in gurdwaras on the way. We will go to Delhi too," he said.

Scenes similar to Singhu and Tikri borders in Delhi played out



Amit Mehra



Somya Lakhani

at Shahjahanpur too — a stage set for speeches, posters and flags, tractors and trolleys as far as the eye can see, at least five big langars, and tents in a row.

From Miran village in Haryana's Bhiwandi is farmer Dilbagh Siwach (50). He reached Shahjahanpur, 180 km away from

his village, in his tractor nine days ago. "I packed three hookahs, blankets, mattresses and raw food. I have come prepared to protest in Delhi but the police won't let us proceed. My wife and children are taking care of the fields and told me to stay put at the protest for as long as I want,"

(Top) Farmers protesting against the new farm laws at Shahjahanpur near the Rajasthan-Haryana border; langar preparation in progress on Friday

said Siwach. Every three days, he said, 500 litres of milk reaches the protest site from his village.

Around 1 pm, Haryana Police closed both carriageways of the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway. "We had to close both carriageways of the Delhi-Jaipur expressway due to the farmers' protests. There was no kind of confrontation. We are speaking to farmers to at least leave one lane of the service lane open for emergency vehicles," said Rajesh Kumar, DSP (Bawal).

Among those protesting at the site are Ram Niwas (81) from Neemrana, 14 km away, and Ratiram Vashisht (70) from a vil-

lage in Alwar district, 20 km away. "I have a bad knee and can barely walk, but I am here every day for the future of my children. If they allow us to go to Delhi, I'll go there too," said Niwas.

Vashisht said, "The farmers aren't the ones blocking the roads, it's the police. We want to leave from here."

As the last rays of the sun fell on the mustard fields on either side of the protest site on Friday, preparation for langar began again. "We had set up a langar at Tikri border for several weeks but we found out it was needed more here. So we set up a kitchen with geysers, vegetables, flour, rusk, milk. We have enough supplies to last us till 2024 or however long it takes the Modi government to take back the laws," said farmer Bilawal Singh (32) from Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar. The langar feeds 1,000 people a day, said Singh.

Apart from Singh, sewadaars from a gurdwara in Punjab's Patiala too have set up a langar here. As Sajjan Kaur (45) made roti with six other elderly women, she said, "There are plenty of troubles here. It's cold, there aren't enough bathrooms, the toilets are dirty...but we are here for the future of our children. It's all worth it. We wake up at 4 am and begin cooking and can't wait to do the same in Delhi... *Hunn Dilli zyada durr ni haiga* (Delhi isn't far now)."

In the evening, after farmer union leaders from Maharashtra, Haryana and Rajasthan finished their speeches, the task of setting up tents for the 1,000-plus protesters from Maharashtra began. "It will be a long night, a long journey," said 75-year-old Baldev Singh from Sri Ganganagar.

## Police obstacles slow down some marches

**SUKRITA BARUAH**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

FARMERS FROM villages in Western Uttar Pradesh and those at the Ghazipur protest site claim police have been dissuading them from joining the sit-in, with many being stopped briefly as they head to the border.

On Thursday, local Bharatiya Kisan Union leaders and gurdwara functionaries from Banda block in Shahjahanpur district were summoned to Banda police station.

Kuldeep Singh, district general secretary of BKU from a Jodhpur village, claimed: "Last evening, a sub-inspector called and asked for my vehicle registration number and driving li-

cence details. He called again on Thursday and said I had to come for a meeting with senior police officers. At the station, there were farmer union functionaries from various villages in our block and people from the Sikh community. We were told we should cooperate with local police, and were discouraged from going towards Delhi. When some of us were insistent, police said we should go in small cars and not tractors." The previous day, police had summoned farmer union functionaries from nearby villages to Khutar police station in the same district.

Confirming that the meetings were held, SP, Shahjahanpur, S Anand, said: "We want to educate farmers that the agitation is not required as the government is



Farmers protesting at Ghazipur border. Amit Mehra

willing to speak to everyone on this issue. The idea was to motivate them to not indulge in things that aggravate problems and to move towards a solution instead."

According to farmer unions, earlier this week, multiple trac-

tor-trolleys from the vicinity had been stopped several times before they could reach Ghazipur.

"On December 21, farmers in 15 tractor-trolleys and cars from Bareilly mandal left for Ghazipur border. This included farmers from Shahjahanpur and Pilibhit districts. There were attempts to stop us at multiple places in Shahjahanpur and Bareilly... we were stopped overnight in Rampur. Many local farmers came to our aid, and we were allowed to go ahead at 11 am on December 22. We were stopped again that evening in Moradabad for several hours. We finally reached Delhi on Wednesday morning," said Ajeet Singh, Bareilly mandal president.

Now, farmers from the region have planned to congregate at

Nawabganj gurdwara in Rampur district and head towards Delhi together. "The plan is for farmers from that area as well as from villages in Uttararakhand such as Bajpur, Kashipur, Gadarpur and Udhm Singh Nagar to leave together in the morning. This will make it difficult for police to stop them," said Gurpreet Atwal, a farmer from Rampur district, who is at the protest site.

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa also left for the Nawabganj gurdwara on Thursday. He said: "Some farmers had contacted me when they were stopped at Rampur earlier this week; I had gone there to intervene. I am now going to Nawabganj as farmers fear they will be stopped again."

## Tanker strike affected water supply but gap was plugged: DJB after office vandalism

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A STRIKE by Delhi Jal Board (DJB) contractors, who took 100 water tankers off the road this month, caused only a minor disruption in water supply in parts of the city, DJB officials said.

The strike started around December 1 and ended largely on Thursday through the intervention of the Delhi High Court. Around 20 tankers were still off the road as on Friday and were being persuaded to return to work by the DJB, officials said.

On Thursday, BJP leaders, including Delhi unit chief Adesh Gupta and nearly a hundred people, protested outside the DJB headquarters at Jhandewalan against a "tanker scam". Later, the DJB headquarters was vandalised, allegedly by the same group, following which BJP and AAP blamed each other for the violence.

On Thursday, Gupta had raised the issue on Twitter, claiming that water supply through tankers had stopped for the past 24 days, affecting people in parts of the city. DJB officials denied the charge.



Raghav Chadha taking stock of the damages at DJB office

"We have about 1,100 to 1,200 water tankers out of which around 100 private contractual tankers went on strike. We plugged this gap by re-routing tankers from areas with low requirement of water to areas of high requirement," a senior official said.

"We also deployed tankers that we keep for emergency use. However, there were disruptions and some pockets where a tanker would go once every two days were getting water once every three days. Similarly, places where a tanker goes once every three days were getting it once every four days. It is incorrect to state that for 20-24 days water has not

been supplied," the official added.

The strike, officials said, also coincided with the farmers' protest at Delhi's borders. The Delhi government is providing water tankers to the protest sites as well. However, DJB officials denied that this further impacted their water supply. "We also engaged more private tankers during the time of the strike," another DJB official said.

The contractors had called the strike as they wanted an increase in payment. According to officials, the Delhi High Court, while hearing the matter on Wednesday, asked an arbitrator to settle the dispute.

Meanwhile, DJB vice-chairman and AAP leader Raghav Chadha Friday filed a complaint at the Desh Bandhu Gupta Road police station, seeking action against Gupta and party members Yogendra Chandoliya, Ravi Tanwar, Vikas Tanwar and "other unidentified BJP workers".

"A case has been registered under IPC section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and sections of Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act," a Delhi Police spokesperson said.

## New Parliament: Location for MPs' chambers shifted after on-ground survey

**ANANYA TIWARI**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE DESIGN for the chambers for Members of Parliament, which will come up where the Shram Shakti Bhawan and Transport Bhawan are currently located on Rafi Marg and Sansad Marg respectively, is at the concept stage and will have approximately 800 or so offices for MPs, officials of the HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt Ltd have said. The new Parliament shall have six committee rooms for conducting business, they further said.

The foundation stone for the New Parliament was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 10. The new building will have 888 seats for members of the Lok Sabha, 384 for those of the Rajya Sabha. For joint meetings, the Lok Sabha Hall on the ground floor shall be able to house 1,272 members.

Earlier, the plan was for the chambers or offices for the MPs to come up in either the North or South block, said officials from the HCP. "Since on-ground surveys are more effective, this plan



An artist's impression of the new Parliament

was changed and now the chambers shall come up where the Transport Bhawan and the Shram Shakti Bhawan are located. The plan is constantly evolving," an official told *The Indian Express*.

"The two buildings will be demolished, and more than one building will come up in all probability. Even if two buildings come up, they shall be connected in some way," said officials from the HCP.

The offices shall be rudimentary, considering that MPs have their own offices across the country and do not necessarily need to spend too much time in Delhi, and design for the same is at the initial stages, said officials.

## Day after searches at Pracha office, Bar members cautiously silent

**SOFIA AHSAN**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A DAY after Delhi Police carried out searches at the offices of two lawyers, which many in the fraternity described as an attack against the attorney-client privilege and on the fundamental right to legal representation, professional bodies representing Bar members largely appeared reluctant to take a stand on the issue.

Senior advocate and Chairman, Bar Council of Delhi, Ramesh Gupta said the statutory body cannot do much at present as the court vacations have begun. "Maybe, the High Court Bar Association is doing something," Gupta told *The Indian Express*. Asked whether the Bar Council was going to take any stand on this issue, he said, "Apni level pe kya karegi, takkar maregi kahin jaake? (what will we do at our level, hit someone?)"

Gupta also said a complaint was received from advocate Javed Ali, one of the two lawyers whose offices were searched by police, and the same was forwarded to Delhi High Court Registrar General "for appropriate action".

The Delhi Police Special Cell had also searched the Nizamuddin East office of lawyer Mehmood Pracha, whose firm Legal Axis is defending several persons accused in cases related to the Delhi riots. In August, police had told a Delhi court that Pracha had forged documents and instigated a man to depose falsely in a case related to the riots. Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav had said "it would be appropriate if the matter is investigated by an independent agency like Crime Branch or Special Cell". An FIR was filed in the matter.

Delhi High Court Bar Association Honorary Secretary Abhijit Friday said the lawyers' body was in the process of ascertaining the facts. "While on the one hand it is deplorable that lawyers' offices are being raided in this manner and privileged communication is being looked into, but on the other hand we should not act in a manner the investigation in a crime is also interfered with."

He added that the lawyers' body will take a stand after conferring with the executive committee. "We do not know all the facts. The deliberations have to be informed. We cannot pass a resolution for the sake of resolution. We are collecting the information and facts that how much the police have interfered, whether Pracha is an accused in any FIR and therefore is being investigated or is it that he is being targeted because he is a lawyer for the riot accused."

In a tweet on Thursday, Pracha had said, "Bar is the last bastion. We must all rise to the occasion and save attacks on our profession and ultimately the Constitution of India." Following the searches at his office, Pracha also alleged he and his associates were assaulted during the raid and he was threatened "with the name of (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah Sahab". Delhi Police, however, in a statement accused Pracha of being "verbally aggressive" and "creating a ruckus".

The Special Cell in the statement said, "The investigation of-



Mehmood Pracha

## Pracha clients allege police pressure

**New Delhi:** Some clients of advocate Mehmood Pracha, who are fighting cases related to the Northeast Delhi riots, Friday claimed at a press conference that the Delhi Police had pressured them in the past to drop Pracha as their lawyer and withdraw their complaints. Mohammad Nasir Khan, a businessman who lives in Gonda, said he lost his left eye to a bullet wound on February 24 and his complaint was filed only after Pracha's intervention. He claimed he had been told by police to drop Pracha as his lawyer. Sahil Parvez, who also lives in Gonda, said Pracha had helped him file an FIR in connection with his father's murder. He claimed he too faced similar pressure from police. When contacted, Anil Mittal, spokesperson for the Delhi Police, said, "All such allegations are false and baseless. Investigation into cases is being done solely on merits." **ENS**

ficer and his team, showing utmost professional restraint, decided to record the happenings as were fully video-recorded in their report to be filed before the Court for further necessary instructions and returned post midnight. A complaint regarding the conduct of Sh. Mehmood Pracha and his associates has been given to the local Police Station for appropriate action."

Meanwhile, many senior senior lawyers continued to criticise the police action against the lawyers. This included Delhi government's Senior Standing Counsel (Criminal) Rahul Mehra, who tweeted: "I may have professional differences with Mr Mehmood Pracha and may agree to disagree with him most of the time but for an office of a lawyer to be raided like this is highly condemnable. Expecting good sense to prevail sooner rather than later." Congress leader Manish Tewari, who is also a lawyer, said he was "deeply disturbed" by the search conducted at Pracha's offices and asked Bar Council to "take up this arbitrary harassment".

Special Cell, in a statement, said the searches were conducted in connection with an investigation into the alleged use of documents "containing false/fabricated evidence" and "a forged notary stamp before a Hon'ble Court" during a bail proceeding.

## Pracha moves court over search warrant

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

FOLLOWING POLICE searches at his office, advocate Mehmood Pracha moved a Delhi court seeking a clarification on the search warrant order issued by the Special Cell, alleging he was directed by the personnel to provide incriminating material against himself during the search. The search warrant issued on December 22 under Section 93 of the CrPc stated, "This is to authorise and require investigating officer of this case to search for the said incriminating documents and metadata of outbox of email ID... wherever they may be found whether in

computer or in the office/premises... including outbox of email ID as well as other offices/premises where presence of such evidence are detected during the search/investigation, and, if found, to produce the same forthwith before this court."

At the court, the IO was not present nor did he submit a reply. The court also did not receive in time the application submitted by the lawyers associated with Pracha to the chief metropolitan magistrate (CMM).

He told *The Indian Express*, "Not only have we helped bail out Muslim people who have been accused in the riots, but we have... also got 22 RSS office bearers arrested and have proof of involvement of BJP leaders."

Tripura scheme to provide jobs to next of kin of victims of political violence

SAYS NO REASON TO CROSS ILLEGALLY INTO INDIA

## Border Guards Bangladesh chief: NRC is Indian issue

DEBRAJ DEB  
AGARTALA, DECEMBER 25

ABHISHEK SAHA  
GUWAHATI, DECEMBER 25



BSF DG Rakesh Asthana with BGB chief Shafeenul Islam. PTI

IN AN effort to provide relief to victims of political violence perpetrated till March, 2018 — when the incumbent BJP-IPFT assumed power in Tripura — the state government announced Friday that it will provide a government job to one member of their families, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

THE PREPARATION of National Register of Citizen (NRC) is an "Indian issue" and there has been no illegal influx from Bangladesh into India, the Director General of Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB), Shafeenul Islam, said in Guwahati on Friday.

However, BSF DG Rakesh Asthana said that as of December 15, the BSF this year has nabbed 3,204 individuals trying to illegally enter India along the entire India-Bangladesh border. Asthana added the caveat that the figure was not just of Bangladeshi nationals but the overall number of people nabbed while trying to cross over illegally, including criminals and smugglers.

The BSF and BGB chiefs were addressing a press conference after the successful culmination of the Director General-level talks between the two forces.

Islam said, "I think you need to revisit the perception that a

large number of Bangladeshis are crossing into Assam. If you see the GDP growth rate of Bangladesh, you will find that we are on a steady uprising track... There is no reason for Bangladeshis to cross the border be it for jobs or for other reason. "Yes, people do come to India with valid documents and passports for tourism purpose but for work, there is no such case... There is no infiltration from Bangladesh to India," he said.

The BGB chief ruled out that after the publication of the NRC in Assam in August 2019 and consequent political talks of a national NRC, there has been any unauthorised migration into Bangladesh from India.

Both Asthana and Islam stressed on how important the issue of cattle smuggling — and smuggling of other kinds — and killings on the border were pressing concerns for their respective countries.

AMID SPECULATION OF GOLAGHAT MLA JOINING BJP

## Assam Congress expels sitting legislator

ABHISHEK SAHA  
GUWAHATI, DECEMBER 25

and a former minister in the erstwhile Tarun Gogoi cabinet.

There was speculation that Neog might join the BJP during the visit of Home Minister Amit Shah. However, Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Friday that there have been no political talks between Neog and the party. Sarma said it would not be surprising if Neog expressed a wish to join the BJP following her expulsion from Congress.

During his visit, beginning Shah will distribute financial grants to Namghars — traditional Assamese prayer halls — and lay foundation stones for several development and infrastructure projects, including medical and law colleges. He would hold meetings with the Assam BJP unit and representatives of allies. He will visit Imphal before flying back to Delhi on December 27.

Sarma said that with Shah's visit and his meeting with the state party unit, the BJP's "formal journey" towards the Assembly polls will begin.

Meanwhile, four Congress secretaries from Delhi — Anirudh Singh, Vikas Upadhyay, Prithviraj Prabhakar Sathe and Aditya Sharma — are in Assam. They will be meeting office bearers of district Congress committees, MLAs, and former MLAs and MPs of the party, among others.

They have held meetings with state leaders, sources said. "Several issues were being taken up, including administration of the Assam unit of the Congress," a state party leader said.

The state Congress unit has initiated a survey to gauge public mood regarding its leaders and probable alliances, including that with the AIUDF.

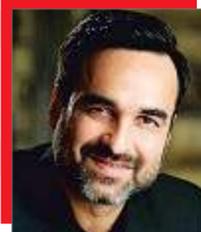
**EXPLAINED**  
**E** Bid to fix issues

THE VISIT by four Congress secretaries comes at a time when the party is battling a leadership problem in Assam, with several leaders having complained against state unit chief Ripun Bora. It is learnt that some leaders of regional parties the Congress plans to ally with are also keen for a change in the state leadership. These developments have come soon after the party lost in the two recently held local council polls.

The Indian EXPRESS  
— JOURNALISM OF COURAGE —

The Indian EXPRESS  
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in conversation with

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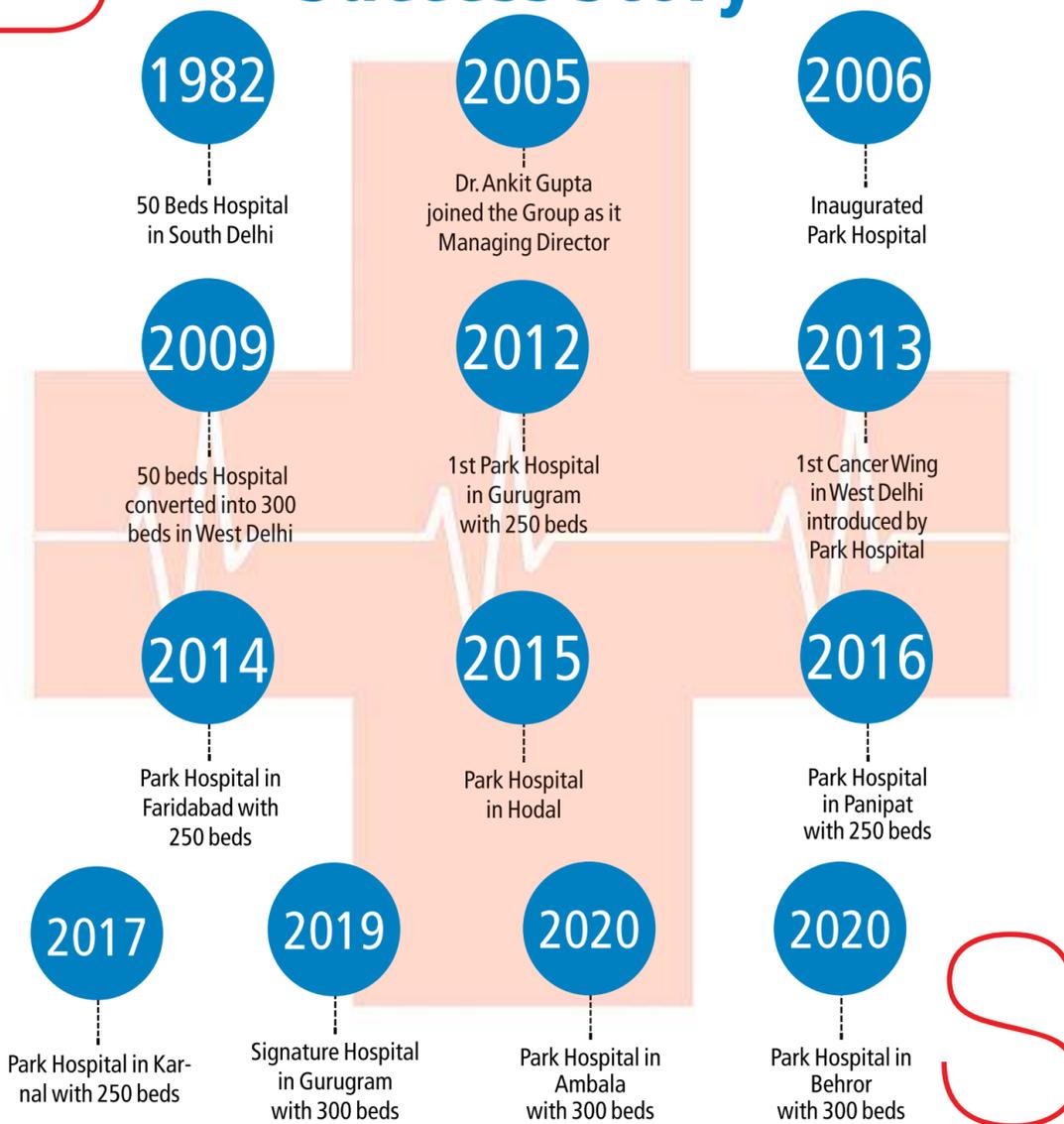
**PARK GROUP** of Hospitals (PARK) is a chain of state-of-the-art Multi-Super Specialty Hospitals founded by Dr. Ajit Gupta and is among the fastest growing chain of Multi-Super Specialty Hospitals in North India. PARK is currently having a total bed capacity of ~1,500 beds and the same will be increased to 2,500 beds in the next one year. PARK has an advanced Heart Institute, Cancer Institute, IVF Centre Harmony with Mother's Nest and delivery suites, among many other facilities. With a team of highly proficient and veteran doctors along with efficacious paramedical staff, PARK stands true to its commitment of delivering the most sophisticated and highest standard of care in conjunction with its super specialties.

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**Dr. Ajit Gupta** dreamt of serving people right since his childhood days. He owes the inculcation of this spirit to his father who served the defence forces as a civilian for the infrastructure development. A born philanthropist and leader in the Healthcare industry of India, he knew what he wanted in life and directed his efforts towards achieving his dream. Through his visionary zeal and sustained efforts, Dr. Ajit Gupta founded Park Group of Hospitals in 1982. Apart from being an eminent doctor, Dr. Ajit Gupta is also a role model and leader of the fastest growing chain of hospitals, providing personalized quality treatment with state-of-the-art equipment and technology to common people at affordable rates. Bringing this revolutionary change in the Healthcare industry, he has touched the heart of common people by ensuring quality healthcare services at par with what is available for rich people, at affordable rates. Dr. Ajit Gupta has been awarded "100 impactful leaders in Healthcare in India." He is currently serving as the founder Chairman of Park Group of Hospitals.

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## 6 GOVT &amp; POLITICS

## After PM accusation, Oppn hits back at 'lies', attempt to 'mislead' people

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

HOURS AFTER Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Opposition parties of spreading lies over the farm laws for furthering their political agenda, the Opposition hit back, saying he was indulging in misleading tactics and rhetoric to deceive the people.

The Congress said the government is trying to "tire out the farmers", hoping they will go back, but the strategy will not work. "The Prime Minister is busy giving clarifications on TV and his ministers are hiding behind the smoke-screen of letters. They are least interested in the welfare of farmers. The government shall have to withdraw

these three black laws," Congress communication department head Randeep Surjewala said.

Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said, "You do not have the guts to talk to the farmers face-to-face and find out a solution. Sitting far away, you distribute Rs 18,000 crore from the government treasury and say that this is your government's favour for the farmers. This money doesn't go into the accounts of the farmers. The middlemen still exist."

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused the Prime Minister of trying to mislead the state's farmers by accusing the state government of depriving them of cash benefits under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. "Let me set the record straight - we have always been



Mamata Banerjee and Sukhbir Badal

ready to cooperate in the interest of the farmers. I personally have written two letters and have even spoken to the concerned Minister two days ago but they are refusing to cooperate and are instead indulging in malicious propaganda for political gains," Banerjee said in a statement.

The Left too slammed the Prime Minister. CPM general secretary

Sitaram Yechury tweeted, "There is no confidence in Modi government's assurances for discussions with farmers since these bills were passed without any prior discussion and by preventing a vote in the House."

"The Prime Minister claimed today that some monies had been released. But this is part of a pre-poll ongoing scheme! PM asking why no protests in Kerala! But there are big protests in Kerala. The state government's decision to call a special session of the assembly to reject these bills is not being permitted by the governor. This is blatantly unconstitutional," he added.

CPI general secretary D Raja said the Prime Minister thinks that he can hoodwink the people. "Whatever he said today was nothing but lies. For instance, he

was referring to Kerala. Kerala is one state which is giving MSP more than what is fixed by the Union government. He is accusing the Opposition of indulging in petty politics. It is the Prime Minister who is doing politics by referring to the outcome of recent elections..."

## Stop defaming farmers: Sukhbir

Sukhbir Singh Badal, chief of the BJP's estranged ally Shiromani Akali Dal, said the Centre should stop defaming farmers and hold talks with them on ways to repeal the laws.

In a statement, the SAD president said the Centre has adopted a "callous and insensitive attitude" towards the suffering of farmers who are camping in severe cold at Delhi borders.



AAP MPs Sushil Gupta, Sanjay Singh and Bhagwant Mann at Parliament House on Friday. PTI

## AAP MPs confront PM with slogans, placards in Parliament

SOURAV ROY BARMAN  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE ONGOING farmer protests echoed in the Central Hall of the Parliament Friday with AAP MPs Sanjay Singh and Bhagwant Mann raising slogans against the three agricultural laws in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an event to commemorate the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"Kisan virodhi kaala kanoon wapas lo, MSP ki guarantee do, Pradhan Mantri ji annadata mar raha hai sir (repeal the anti-farmer black laws, provide MSP guarantee... farmers are dying)," the two leaders shouted as Modi was about to leave the venue after releasing a book on the former PM.

"Despite not having numbers in the Rajya Sabha, they got the farm bills cleared through voice vote. We had protested even then. Our point is why show such urgency to get laws cleared during a lockdown? They are just trying to favour their friendly corporates. You have not spoken to the farmers in over 25 days, instead (you are) using force on them, attempting to stop them. You turn everything into an event. So we took this step. And we protested only after paying tributes to the former PM as well as Madan Mohan Malviya," Singh told *The Indian Express*.

While Singh is a Rajya Sabha member, Mann represents Punjab's Sangrur constituency in the Lok Sabha. They also held up posters against the laws while raising the slogans.

Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad were interacting with Modi around that time.

At a press conference later, Mann said, "The PM does not address press conferences, Parliament sessions are not held, there is only one-way communication, via radio or over the internet. There is no way to meet him. He even meets farmers of his own choice in Gujarat while people protest barely 20 kilometers away from his residence."

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted: "BJP claims these laws will not harm the farmers but where are the benefits? They say farmers will now be able to sell their produce outside mandis. But sales outside mandis do not yield even half the price as compared to mandis. How is this a benefit?"

## DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



## THE BIG QUESTION

IT HAS been a month since Ahmed Patel, one of the towering leaders of the Congress, passed away but the party is yet to officially hold a condolence meeting in his memory. Many party leaders, and some from other opposition parties, are wondering what is stopping the Congress from organising a remembrance meeting for Patel, about whom the CWC itself had said that the interest of the Congress was his only interest and the advancement of the Congress's agenda was his agenda. Apart from Patel, the Congress lost veteran leaders like Tarun Gogoi and Motilal Vora in the last one month. And in August Pranab Mukherjee passed away. Mukherjee was a frontline leader of the Congress before he became the President. But the party has not organised any condolence meeting much to the surprise of many leaders. Although the CWC held a meeting to condole the death of Patel and Gogoi, the party has so far not organised a remembrance meet where leaders from the party and opposition can attend.

## KEEPING IT SHORT

EVEN AS senior Cabinet ministers fanned out to publicise the farm Bills in different kisan sammelans on Friday, just ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at noon, there was clearly a premium being on time. While both Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's speeches were exactly 15 minutes, both explicitly said they would keep their speeches short so people could listen to the Prime Minister.

## GRAND WELCOME

EARLY THIS week, an officer of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) ended up embarrassing his IG when he draped the side of a building with a banner welcoming the senior officer. The banner carrying a huge picture of IPS officer Dayal Gangwar walking in fatigues was put up by the CO of CISF's DMRC unit in Ghaziabad. The buzz is the officer may be asked to explain why taxpayers' money was spent on giving an IG a welcome generally reserved for politicians.

## 7 US Congress members ask Pompeo to raise farm protests with Jaishankar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A GROUP of seven US lawmakers, including Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, has written to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, urging him to raise the issue of the farmers' protest with his India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

In addition to Jayapal, the letter has been signed by US Congress members Donald Norcross, Brendan F Boyle, Brian Fitzpatrick, Mary Gay Scanlon, Debbie Dingell and David Trone.

The farmers' protest is an issue of particular concern to Sikh Americans linked to Punjab, although it also heavily impacts the Indian Americans belonging to other Indian states, the lawmakers said in their letter to Pompeo dated December 23.

"Many Indian Americans are directly affected as they have fam-



Mike Pompeo and S Jaishankar

ily members and ancestral land in Punjab and are concerned for the well-being of their families in India. In view of this serious situation, we urge you to contact your Indian counterpart to reinforce the United States' commitment to the freedom of political speech abroad," the letter says.

The lawmakers have said that the US, as a nation that is familiar with political protests, can offer counsel to India during their current period of social disturbance.

Over the past few weeks, more than a dozen US Congressmen have expressed their concerns on the protests.



## FARMERS BREAK UP BJP PROGRAMME

During PM Narendra Modi's address on Friday afternoon, farmers in Punjab disrupted the programme being watched live by BJP units in Bathinda, Kotkapura and Fazilka districts. In Bathinda (above), protesters entered the venue and broke the chairs where BJP workers were to sit. The event wound up within 15 minutes of its start. Gurmeet Singh

## PUNJAB: POWER TO JIO TOWERS SNAPPED

## Telecom disruption will hurt economy, CM says in appeal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 25

AMID REPORTS that farmers were disconnecting power supply to Jio mobile towers in Punjab, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Friday appealed to them to not inconvenience the general public with such actions.

Pointing out that telecom connectivity had become even more critical for people amid the Covid-19 pandemic, Amarinder said the farmers should show the same discipline and sense of responsibility which they had been exercising during their protest at the Delhi border, which completed one month, and also earlier during their agitation in the state.

Amarinder's appeal came in the wake of a request from the Tower and Infrastructure Providers Association (TAIPA), a



Chief Minister Amarinder Singh

registered body of telecom infrastructure providers.

The TIPA request came after farmers at various places including Mansa, Barnala, Ferozepur and Moga, disconnected the power supply to Reliance Jio mobile towers as part of their protests over past several days.

"... (this) is not only adversely affecting the studies and future prospects of students, who are dependent entirely on online education, but also hampering the daily life of people working from home," Amarinder said. "Further, the disruption of telecom services would also seriously affect the state's already disturbed economy."

At least two farmer bodies, Friday said disconnecting power to mobile towers was never on their agenda and that they had only given calls to boycott Reliance stores and products.

"Our decision is to boycott Jio and not to disconnect the power supply to any tower. However, if anyone is doing it in villages, it is not a decision of BKU (Ugrahan)," said Jhanda Singh Jethuka, senior vice-president of the largest farmers' body in Punjab, while addressing farmers at Delhi's Tikri border.

BKU (Dakaunda) president Buta Singh Burjigill said their call was "only to boycott Jio SIMs or get those numbers ported" to other networks.

The clarification comes two days after Reliance Jio Infocomm Limited wrote to Punjab Director General of Police complaining of "incidents of sabotage and vandalism at Jio sites..."

## HARYANA: PROTESTS AGAINST GOVT INTENSIFY

## Farmers halt toll collection at most highways in state

SUKHBIR SIWACH  
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 25

HARYANA FARMERS on Friday halted toll collection on most highways across the state while also intensifying their protests against ruling BJP-JJP MLAs' and ministers.

The agitators have announced that vehicles will pass through the toll plazas without paying any charges on Saturday and Sunday too in response to the call given by farm outfits.

On Friday, according to sources, angry protesters showed black flags to state Women and Child Development Minister Kamlesh Dhandra at her constituency Kalayat where she had gone to address a few public meetings.

At Guhla Cheeka (Kaithal), the protesters gheored local JJP MLA Ishwar Singh when he had gone to address a function held at a college on the occasion of Good Governance Day. As soon as farmers came to know about his function, they immediately gathered near the venue carrying black flags. Ishwar Singh was not available for comment.

At Siwani town in Bhiwani district, farmers staged a protest ahead of the visit of state

Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister JP Dalal, who had gone there to address a public meeting. The protesters claimed that the minister was forced to change his route leading to the meeting venue. Dalal told *The Indian Express* the meeting has been postponed keeping in view the upcoming civic body elections on December 27.

Meanwhile, the farmers on Friday ensured free movement of vehicles at toll plazas situated on the highways including on Rohtak-Panipat highway, Rohtak-Delhi highway, Rohtak-Jhajjar highway, Rohtak-Hisar highway, Jind-Patiala highway, Hisar-Chandigarh highway, Rohtak-Hisar highway, Hisar-Sirsa highway and Charkhi Dadri-Bhiwani highway. Toll, however, was being collected as usual on Friday morning at Kherki Daula toll plaza in Gurgaon.

According to officials, toll collection was halted either post midnight or from early Friday morning at several toll points in the state. While at many places, farmers took over toll plazas not allowing authorities to collect fees from commuters, at other places toll employees themselves halted the process in view of the protest.



INLD leader Abhay Singh Chautala (second from left) during a sit-in protest with farmers against the new farm laws at Charaunda Toll Plaza in Karnal district on Friday. PTI

## The farmers PM spoke to: Their gains from govt schemes, and their plans

MANOJ PATIDAR, 42  
Dhar, Madhya Pradesh

A RESIDENT of Chikdiya village in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, Patidar feels the farm laws have opened up alternatives, but ensuring mandis are up and running with assured MSP are of utmost importance. Patidar who cultivates wheat, gram, garlic, peas and onion during the Rabi season and soyabean and maize during kharif on his four hectares, says the government needs to ensure that they don't just declare MSP but purchase on it too. He says he has benefited from the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme and has received Rs 10,000 in five instalments.

"I forgot to ask the PM if the government will just declare MSP or also procure on it. There are people in my village who cultivated maize after the government declared MSP at around Rs 1,700-Rs 1,800 but are forced to sell at

1,200 as the government has not initiated procurement." Patidar says when he finds the prices at mandi to be lower, he sells his produce to the soya choupal set up by ITC outside the mandi.

The second generation farmer has a family of six. He denies any political affiliation.

HARI SINGH BISHNOI, 51  
Fatehabad, Haryana

BISHNOI, A resident of Nadhori village in Fatehabad district, owns 10 acres of land. He and his three brothers and their families live together and jointly own 40 acres in the village.

He said, "Three days ago, I got a call from SDO (Agriculture). He told me that I have been short-listed for having a conversation with the PM. I was also told that two of my brothers have received money under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme."

"I have been doing farming



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the farmers virtually on Friday. @narendramodi

for the last 15 years. Earlier, I grew paddy, but now I have started growing fruits and vegetables. We sell our crop in local mandis and markets."

On the farmers' agitation, he said he was neither in favour nor against the laws. "If the legislation have been framed and certain shortcomings are pointed out, those shortcomings shall be removed. But, to say the entire

concept is wrong is not correct."

GANESH BHOSALE, 38  
Latur, Maharashtra

DURING HIS interaction with the PM, Bhosale, from Matola village in Latur district, spoke of his experience with the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.

Bhosale grows soyabean, tur, wheat, chana over his 7.5 acres of land. "I opted for the insurance

scheme as it acts as a cushion in case my crop fails due to adverse climate conditions," he says. For the last kharif season, Bhosale paid a premium of Rs 2,580 per acre for his soyabean crop, and received compensation worth Rs 54,315 per acre as his crop was all but destroyed in heavy rain.

"I am a simple farmer and stay as far as possible from politics," he says.

Bhosale supports the new laws and believes they would help growers like him increase their earnings. "Traders will come to our village to buy directly from us. Through contract farming, small holders can pool in their holdings and grow for corporate buyers," he says. The discontent, he says, is due to some "misconceptions".

RAM GULAB, 53  
Maharajganj, Uttar Pradesh

HAILING FROM Maharajganj district, he owns 1.5 acres of land. Along with four other farmers, he recently brought together 300 small farmers under the farmer producer group, Maharajganj Producer Company Ltd, and entered into a contract with a company to grow a specific variety of sweet potato.

Having studied till Class VIII, Gulab has said he has benefited from several government

schemes, from Swachh Bharat Mission to Kisan credit card to PM Kisan Samman Nidhi.

He said they are growing a specialised variety of sweet potato that has higher protein and vitamins content.

"We would have to give 10 tonnes by February-end or March and over 200 tonnes by next season. In a year, we can get two crops and as per the agreement, the company will pick our produce from the field at Rs 25 per kg, which otherwise sold at Rs 10-15 per kg in the market," he said. He said they estimate expenditure of Rs 35,000- Rs 40,000 to grow the crop per acre and expect profit of Rs 1 lakh per acre.

GAGAN PERIYING  
Lower Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh

AN ORGANIC ginger cultivator from Lower Dibang Valley district, Periyng is managing direc-

tor of the farmer producer's company Lower Dibang Valley Organic Ginger Producer Company Ltd.

Peryng said the PM asked him about the PM Kisan scheme. "I told him about getting Rs 2,000 after every four months. He asked me about what I was doing with the money I received as a part of the scheme. I told him that I was buying organic fertilisers and other organic chemicals," he said. Peryng said the company has also signed an agreement with a Siliguri-based company to sell finished organic ginger products.

The Prime Minister also spoke to M Subramani from Tamil Nadu and Naveen Thakur from Odisha

REPORTING: IRAM SIDDIQUE INBHOPAL, VARINDER BHATTAIN CHANDIGARH, PARTHASARATHI BISWAS IN PUNE, MAULSHREE SETHI IN LUCKNOW AND ABHISHEK SAHA IN GUWAHATI

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The Covid-19 pandemic has created a situation where indoor space is now considered unhygienic and a breeder of the virus. Coughs and throat infections have spiked. Beyond just close contact with an infected person, airborne particles carry the virus for long periods as confirmed by WHO. Entertaining guests and living amongst large families have rippling consequences in the absence of purified indoor air.

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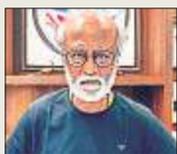


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Rajinikanth

**Rajini admitted to hospital with BP fluctuations**

Hyderabad: Actor Rajinikanth was Friday admitted to Apollo Hospital in Hyderabad with severe blood pressure fluctuations. The actor had been shooting for the film *Annamthe* in the city over the last 10 days but isolated himself after two people on set tested positive for Covid-19. Rajinikanth, who turned 70 on December 12, has tested negative. A statement from Apollo Hospitals stated that although the actor had no Covid symptom, his blood pressure showed severe fluctuations. "He will be investigated and monitored closely in the hospital till his blood pressure settles down before being discharged..." the statement said. **ENS**



**CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES**

People gather at Park Street in Kolkata to celebrate Christmas on Friday. Celebrations remained muted during the day across most parts of the state because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but ramped up during the evening. *Express*

**First in Gujarat: Jailer held under anti-terror law for aiding gangster**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
RAJKOT, DECEMBER 25

OVER A week after he was arrested in a case related to an alleged dinner party by accomplices of gangster Nikhil Donga inside the Gondal sub-jail in Rajkot district, suspended jailer Dhirubhai Parmar was arrested by Rajkot rural police under the Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Act, 2015 on Thursday for allegedly aiding Donga's crime syndicate.

Parmar is the first serving officer of the state government to be arrested under the GCTOC Act. He was arrested on December 16 in connection with a case registered against him and five other guards of Gondal sub-jail for allegedly allowing a "dinner party" inside the jail premises by six 'guests' of Donga who was lodged in that jail on October 1. Parmar was lodged in Rajkot Central Jail afterward under judicial custody.

A team led by Sagar Bagmar, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of Rajkot arrested Parmar on Thursday from the jail and presented him in a designated GCTOC Act court in Rajkot city on Friday. The court sent the sus-

pending jailer to police remand till January 1. Balram Meena, Superintendent of Rajkot Rural police said Parmar was actively helping Donga and his syndicate. "He was actively helping the criminal syndicate run by Donga. Had the jailer done his duty well, Donga would not have been able to run his gang. Therefore, Parmar has been arrested," Meena said.

Donga and 11 members of his alleged gang were booked under GCTOC Act last month and 10 of them, including Donga are presently in judicial custody. Parmar becomes the eleventh person accused to be arrested in connection with the case. Sources said that in his statement, Donga had referred to Parmar's name in operations of his gang from inside the jail. Parmar had absconded after being booked by the Gondal town police following a raid by the vigilance squad of the prisons department on October 1. Days later, he and five guards of the Gondal sub-jail were suspended from service after their names cropped in the investigation. The jailer had surrendered before Gondal town police on December 16 after Gujarat High Court refused to admit his plea seeking protection against arrest.

**TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE**

**298** DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN  
**CASES: 1,01,46,845** | **ACTIVE CASES: 2,81,919**  
**DEATHS: 1,47,092**  
TESTS: 16,63,05,762 | RECOVERIES: 97,17,834

DEC 24	CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERIES	TESTS
	23,067	336	24,661	9,97,396



**STATES WITH RISING ACTIVE CASES**

	ACTIVE CASES	RISE IN LAST WEEK
Kerala	63,220	5,017
Bihar	5,199	95
Odisha	2,667	-9

**STATES WHERE ACTIVE CASES ARE DECLINING**

	ACTIVE CASES	DECLINE IN LAST WEEK
Maharashtra	54,891	6,014
West Bengal	15,193	4,404
Delhi	7,909	4,289

**STATES REPORTING MAXIMUM CASES**

	ON DEC 24	TOTAL
Kerala	5,176	7,26,687
Maharashtra	3,580	19,09,951
West Bengal	1,590	5,43,214

**STATES REPORTING MAXIMUM DEATHS**

	ON DEC 24	TOTAL
Maharashtra	91	50,189
Delhi	37	10,384
West Bengal	32	9,505

Data as on December 24, released by Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Indian Council of Medical Research and state governments. Often, the numbers released every day contain data from previous days as well. As such, trends based on daily numbers are only indicative and not definitive

**RELOCATION OF MUMBAI METRO CAR SHED**

**Maharashtra looks at 500-acre 'natural area'**

**SANDEEP ASHAR**  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

IN THE wake of the Bombay High Court's (HC) stay on the Mumbai Metro car shed at Kanjurmarg, the Maharashtra government is examining the option of relocating the project on a land parcel in Goregaon, which has been classified as a 'natural area' and a 'no-development zone' in Mumbai's development plan (DP).

While other alternate locations are also being looked at, a senior state official confirmed to *The Indian Express* that the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has approached the state's Urban Development (UD) department for sanctioning the reservation for a car shed on a part of a 500-acre privately-owned land sprawl in Pahadi.

But to accede to MMRDA's request, the department will have to reclassify the land use plan. When Mumbai's new DP was first placed before citizens, a bulk of this land was classified as ecologically sensitive, and was tagged as "natural area (NA)". The DP classifies mangroves, mudflats, ecologically vital salt pans and hills, etc as NA, where construction activity is barred. Barring a 25-metre-wide coastal road, no construction was envisaged on the patch. The remain-



The stretch at Pahadi was also tagged as a 'no-development zone' in Mumbai's draft development plan. *Express file*

der of the land was also tagged as a no-development zone (NDZ) and shown affected by the coastal regulation zone. Additionally, in 2017, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation even withdrew the coastal road reservation.

Documents also show that the Devendra Fadnavis-led regime had first initiated the proposal for modifying the land user. On September 1, 2018, the previous government, while sanctioning the new DP, had separately notified its intention to introduce over 2,000 substantial changes to land use and FSI in the DP, for which public suggestions and objections were reinvited. One of them involved declassification of the Goregaon land as NA, and re-reservation of bulk of this land for Metro rail car shed, National Law University

and Other Courts (Human Rights Courts, Family Courts, Motor Vehicle Tribunal, etc), and an 18-metre-wide road.

Ironically when the Fadnavis regime proposed the modification, there was stiff opposition to it. Alleging that the land in question was "mangrove land", the then Leader of Opposition (Assembly) Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil, who has since joined the BJP, had even accused the Fadnavis government of "passing undue benefits to the land owner to the tune of Rs 80,000 crore" by way of the modification, a contention that Fadnavis had contested.

A senior official, meanwhile, said the landholder had also submitted a report by the government's mangrove cell stating that the land is "clear of mangroves."

**BARC report says former executives spiked TRPs: Police**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

THE MUMBAI Crime Branch, investigating the alleged Television Rating Point (TRP) scam, on Friday said it received an audit report it received an audit report of BARC last week that confirms that TRPs of channels were manipulated under the previous BARC management. BARC or Broadcast Audience Research Council is responsible for measuring TRPs of channels. Its former CEO Partho Dasgupta was arrested on Thursday based on this report. Earlier this month, the Mumbai police arrested Republic COO Ramil Ramgarhia, who had resigned from BARC in July after the audit report submitted to BARC by a third party allegedly showed his involvement in fixing TRPs.

Joint commissioner of police (crime) Milind Bharambe said they received the audit report from BARC a week ago. The forensic audit was commissioned after a new management took over at BARC in January this year, police said.

"BARC had received the report in July this year. The report said from a period of May 2017-November 2019 TRPs of English and Telugu news channels had been fudged. It showed that TRPs of channels like *Times Now*

had been reduced so that *Republic* would appear to be no. 1 by analysing selectively," Bharambe said.

The Mumbai police said they were unaware of this audit report until last week. A chargesheet in the case names six channels including *Republic TV* for fixing TRPs.

The officer added that according to the report, in some cases "rating appeared to be pre-decided" and that there was "cartelisation" of some former senior BARC officials to assist particular channels. While BARC received the report in July, it was only after the Mumbai police wrote to them that it sent the report to the police last week, nearly two months after the FIR was registered. Bharambe added that in addition to the BARC report, they have also secured email trails of former employees from BARC servers that substantiates what was found in the third-party audit report.

Responding to the arrest of its former CEO and COO, a BARC India spokesperson said, "The development related to the two ex-employees of BARC India is a part of an ongoing investigation for which BARC management continues to extend its support and cooperation to the law enforcement agencies..."

**Vajpayee foresaw danger of China's unchecked rise: USIBC chief**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

FORMER PRIME Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was able to foresee what many others couldn't and anticipated the "potential dangers posed by a rising and unchecked China", US India Business Council chief Nisha Desai Biswal said Friday.



Nisha Desai Biswal

Speaking at the first memorial lecture on Vajpayee's birth anniversary organised by the Ministry of External Affairs, Biswal—who has served as the US Assistant Secretary of State (equivalent to Joint Secretary in the Indian government)—said Vajpayee "saw the importance of a US-India partnership, built on the foundation of our democratic values, to advance a rules-based order that would enable a more peaceful, prosperous and pluralistic Asia."

She said the Trump presidency has brought a "realistic and sharp focus" on the exigent priorities and rapidly changing geopolitics of Asia.

"The last several years have seen a more aggressive and assertive China that sought to leverage its growing economic clout to advance its strategic ambitions, often at the expense of its neighbours," Biswal said.

She said Prime Minister Vajpayee foresaw the challenges that are now playing out across the Indo-Pacific.

"And in the face of these "destabilising actions", she said that the US and India have forged a closer partnership and cooperation.

"With the incoming Biden-Harris Administration, there will be a renewed focus on restoring our global alliances and strengthening our global institutions," she said.

External Affairs S Jaishankar, who presided over the address, said Vajpayee had an intuitive understanding that the post-Cold War world required India to drastically rework its relationships and this vision led to a new beginning in ties with the US.

Paying tribute on his 96th birth anniversary, Jaishankar said India's principled approach of engaging China on the basis of mutual respect and mutual sensitivity also reflects Vajpayee's thinking.

**Will bury you 10 feet under... no one will come to know: Chouhan warns land mafia**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
BHOPAL, DECEMBER 25

IN AN aggressive warning to the 'land mafia' operating in the state, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday asked them to leave the state or they would be "buried 10-feet in the ground and no one would get to know."

Chouhan, speaking at a function in Babai town of



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Hoshangabad district on the occasion of 'Sushasan Divas' (good governance day) added that those using clout to encroach land would not be pardoned.

His comments come amid a drive by the government to demolish illegal structures in the state. Warning those indulging

in land irregularities to leave the state, Chouhan said while addressing the crowd: "Aaj-kal apan khatamaak mood mein hai. Gaddab karne walo ko chhodenge nahi mama. Ek taraf mafia ke khilaaf abhiyaan chal raha hai. Muscle power, rasook kaa istemaal karke, kahi aavaid kabza, kahi drug mafia, Sunlo re. Madhya Pradesh chhod dena nahi toh zamene mein gaad dunga 10 feet neeche, pata nahi chalega kahi bhi. (These days I am in a dangerous

mood. Those who create trouble will not be let off easily. There is a drive being carried out against this mafia. Those who use muscle power, clout to encroach land and drug mafia should leave Madhya Pradesh or I'll bury them 10 feet in the ground and no one will know.")

Meanwhile, at least twelve Congress leaders were kept in preventive detention before his arrival. They were released after the even concluded.

**'USHERED IN THE TREND OF MODERNISM IN URDU'**

**Writer-poet Faruqi dies of Covid complications**

**SURBHI GUPTA**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

INFLUENTIAL CONTEMPORARY Urdu writer-poet Shamsur Rahman Faruqi died at his residence in Allahabad on Friday due to complications from Covid-19. He was 85.

"The tallest figure in the world of Urdu, his death leaves a void that cannot be filled," said Anis Azmi, theatreperson and former general secretary of the Urdu Academy of Delhi.

Faruqi was not only a celebrated writer and poet, but also a critic who formulated a modernist framework for evaluating Urdu literature. A recipient of numerous awards, he was honoured with the prestigious Saraswati Samman for *She'r-e-Shor-Angez*, a four-volume study of the 18th-

century poet Mir Taqi Mir. His 1982 book *Tanqidi Afqar* that reflected on modern literary and critical theories of poetry won him the Sahitya Akademi award in 1986. His 2006 novel *Kai Chand the Sar-e-Aasman*, set in 19th century Delhi, set new standards for the Urdu novel.

In 1966, he founded 'Shabhkhon', a magazine that he edited for four decades. It gave space to writers who did not agree with the mainstream Progressive Writers' Movement, and led to Faruqi being dubbed "an agent of the CIA and American-minded, and a person with borrowed ideas". But the magazine also gave space to progressive writers, including Ali Sardar Jafri, Ismat Chughtai, and Rajinder Singh Bedi.

"Faruqi sahab put Urdu language, literature and criticism on the world map. He ushered in the



SHAMSUR RAHMAN FARUQI  
1935-2020

trend of modernism in Urdu and gave wings to generations of writers and poets under it," says Ahmad Mahfooz, Faruqi's protegee and professor of Urdu at Jamia Millia Islamia. Mahfooz wrote the first book on the life and works of the Urdu giant in 1994.

"He was a man full of imagination and gentle wry humour.

He had a keen sense of history and was very appreciative of other people's work and that is what made him a great writer... Faruqi sahab has left an indelible mark of refinement through his in-depth knowledge..." said filmmaker Muzaffar Ali.

Born in Azamgarh and raised in Gorakhpur, Faruqi was a chief postmaster-general and member of the Postal Services Board in New Delhi until 1994. Part of the first batch of the BA programme at Maharana Pratap College in Gorakhpur, he pursued a Master's degree in English from Allahabad University in 1955. Although he topped the university, he did not receive a first-class, which he thought was probably because "he asked too many questions, or did not dress in three-piece suits".

In his interviews, Faruqi recalled how he first decided to be-

come a poet at seven and used to produce a house magazine named 'Gulistan' with his sister. At the age of 15, wrote his first novel, *Daldal se Bahar*. His library of over a thousand books at his Allahabad home includes the 46 volumes of the Urdu oral romance, the *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*, printed by Munshi Nawal Kishore, who had sat down the dastangos, writers and calligraphers, and printed volumes between 1883 and 1905. Faruqi wrote four volumes analysing the dastan called *Saheri, Shahi, Sahibqirani*, a feat of scholarship which became the base for the revival of Dastangoi form of storytelling. "His path-breaking scholarship provided the seed for Dastangoi and his supervision and mentoring saw it into fruition as a revitalised performance form. He was not just a mentor but the greatest resource per-

son for all things we do with language, literature, history, poetry and Indo-Persian history..." said Anusha Rizvi, producer and designer at Dastangoi Collective.

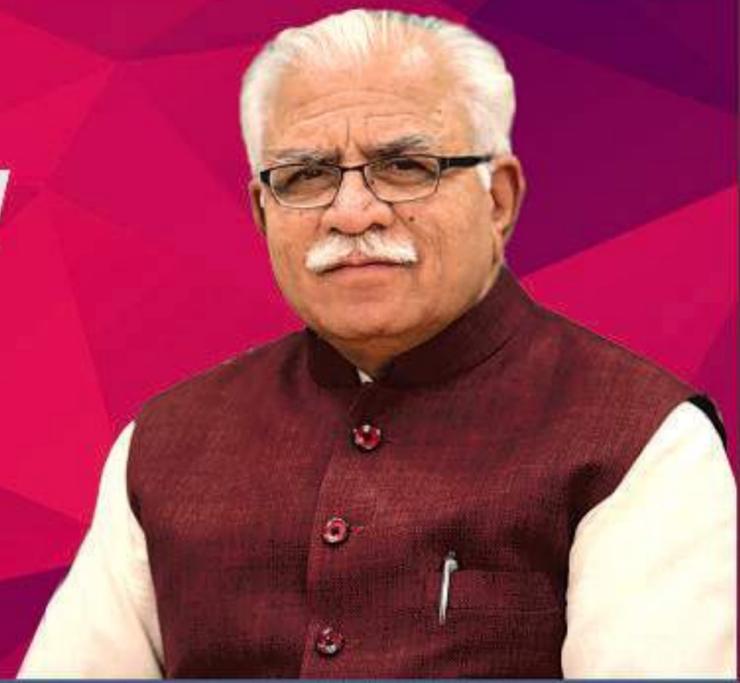
A decade ago, responding to a reporter, he had said: "I came to the conclusion that Faruqi until age 35 was created by many Western poets and novelists and dramatists... and Western theorists of literature, and Ghalib. Faruqi after 35 and until age 40 was created and nurtured by a sustained interlocation with Ghalib, closely followed by Iqbal and western writers. Faruqi after 40 was generated almost entirely by Mir, followed by Iqbal, Sabk-e-Hindi Farsi poets, 18th century Urdu poets, and Ghalib. Now, Faruqi is nearly 75 and doesn't want to go anywhere else."

**FULL REPORT ON**  
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# On the Occasion of Good Governance Day (25 December, 2020)

**Sh. Manohar Lal**  
Chief Minister, Haryana  
unveiled



## New Announcements

### 'Sooksham Sinchai Se Har Khet Me Pani'

Scheme to provide canal-based water and sewerage treated water to farmers in their fields through Micro Irrigation Project, it will be implemented from January 1, 2021.

### 'Mukhyamantri Bagwani Bima Yojana'

20 horticultural crops included in this scheme to compensate for the losses due to natural calamities.

### 'One Time Registration for Application'

- Applicants of Haryana Staff Selection Commission and Haryana Public Service Commission will have to fill personal details only once.
- Application form will be linked to the Parivar Pehchan-Patra and applicant will not have to deposit the fee again and again.

### 'Haryana Credit Guarantee Scheme'

- Under the Credit Guarantee Scheme for the students studying in the higher educational institutions of the State.
- Higher education loan will be available at lower interest rate.

### Registration facility in any Tehsil of the District

Facility will be started from April 1, 2021. Online process for property registration already started in September 2020.

### CLUs Will Be Online Completely

- Online facility of land use change system (CLU) in the State.
- All the CLUs will be available online and permission will be available within 30 days.

### Facilities to Employees

Deemed ACP will be provided to Government employees in case of delay of 3 months on ACP due to any reason.

### Enhancement in Honorarium for the Sports Awardees of the State from January 1, 2021

- Monthly honorarium of Arjuna, Dronacharya & Dhyan Chand awardees increased from Rs.5,000 to Rs.20,000.
- Monthly honorarium of Rs.20,000 to the winners of Tenzing Norge National Adventure Award and Rs.5,000 monthly to Bhim awardees started.

## Launch / Expansion of New Schemes

### Winners of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Good Governance Award - 2020

Digital Project	Name and Department
e-Kharid Portal	Sh. PK DAS, IAS, Sh. V Umashankar, IAS, Sh. Chander Shekhar Khare, IAS, Sh. Rajiv Rattan, IAS, Sh. Munish Chandan & Team (Food Supplies and Consumer Affairs & Information Technology Electronics and Communication Department)
Online Release Orders & Billing System (ERP) Software	Mrs. Dheera Khandelwal, IAS, Mr. PC. Meena, IAS, Mrs. Varsha Khangwal, HCS, Mr. Pardeep Kaushal & Team (Information, Public Relations and Languages Department)
Encouragement to Diversification and agriculture growth	Mr. Devender Singh, IAS, Dr. Arjun Singh Saini & Team (Horticulture Department)
Agriculture growth through enhanced water supply by ground water recharging through abandoned river beds	Mr. Devender Singh, IAS, Mr. Salbir Singh Kadian & Team (Irrigation and Water Resources Department)
Asha app to cover door to door covid-19 survey	Mr. Rajeev Arora, IAS, Dr. Prabhjot Singh, IAS, Dr. V.K. Bansal & Team (Health Department)
Implementation of eSanjeevani OPD teleconsultation services	Mr. Rajeev Arora, IAS, Dr. Prabhjot Singh, IAS, Mr. Suraj Bhan Kamboj & Team (Health Department)
Ayushman Bharat	Mr. Rajeev Arora, IAS, Mr. Ashok Kumar Meena, IAS, Ms. Amneet P Kumar, IAS & Team (Health Department)
Achieving immunization for all under universal immunization programme	Mr. Rajeev Arora, IAS, Dr. Prabhjot Singh, IAS & Team (Health Department)
Antyodaya-saral	Mr. V. Umashankar, IAS, Dr. Rakesh Gupta, IAS, Mr. Deepak Bansal & Team (Department of Information Technology Electronics and Communication)
Jansahayak mobile app.	Mr. Vijayendra Kumar, IAS, Mr. Yashpal, IAS & Team (General Administration Department)

### Integration of Parivar Pehchan Patra with the Services being provided on Saral Platform

Various services and benefits of schemes will be available to the citizens at their doorstep.

### e-Office Launched in all District Offices

Initiative to ensure accountability and transparency and to perform paperless work.

### Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)

Payment of water and sewerage bills started through this system.

### Portal for Horticultural Products

Portal started in Hindi for online sale of horticultural products/vegetable plants.

### Digital Public Library

More than 6 crore e-Books and other study material will be available on e-Granthkosh.

### Haryana Forest Management Information System

- Various applicants of forest department integrated under this scheme.
- Size wise information of nurseries and species wise information of plants will be available for the people.

### Distribution of Title Deeds under Svamitva Scheme

On Good Governance Day title deeds provided to 18,323 beneficiaries of 81 villages of 12 districts.

### More Villages included under Mhara Gaon Jagmag Gaon

From 25 December 2020, 24-hours power supply to 202 more villages of the state, along with more than 5,000 villages.

### Passport facility for students

Passport distribution for college students started under the scheme.





## The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### SOWING TRUST

That's the challenge for the Government as it draws the line on reform; mocking those who have anxieties doesn't help

ALMOST A MONTH since their laying siege to the national capital, the farmer protests against the Centre's three agricultural reform laws show no signs of ebbing. On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that his government was ready to engage with the protesters — including those “with political agenda” and “ideologically against us” — but this could only be based on “facts and logic”. In short, there was no question of repealing or even, as suggested by the Supreme Court, withholding the implementation of the three laws. The farm unions, on the other hand, have expressed a willingness to return to the negotiation table, provided the discussions relate to providing “legal guarantee” for minimum support prices (MSP) of crops beyond simply the government's “written assurance”. As for the three laws, they would settle for nothing short of outright repeal.

This is a standoff nobody had bargained for. Certainly not the Modi government, while steamrolling the legislation first via the ordinance route and then through Parliament. The amendments it is proposing now — particularly to the most contested Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act — could well have been inserted during the course of informed debate in both Houses and after soliciting genuine stakeholder feedback. Not only did it fail to reach out to the naysayers then, the same dismissive approach was adopted when the protests began initially in Punjab and then at Delhi's doorsteps. The demonstrators were variously called anti-national, ultra-Left and Khalistan sympathisers-led. Even in his outreach address, the Prime Minister blamed the parties that had “ruled Kerala and West Bengal” for “misguiding the farmers of Punjab”. Such talking down is least helpful in a situation that calls for dialogue and more dialogue.

The core problem today is a breakdown of trust — between the government and farmers from the granary of India. These are men and women who cannot be easily misled. They know that the regime of open-ended MSP procurement and paddy-wheat monoculture is both fiscally and environmentally unsustainable. And they aren't wholly unjustified in assuming that the new farm laws may well be a disruptive game-changer; hence the demand for “legalising MSP”. Having staked so much political capital on the reforms, whose intrinsic merit cannot be doubted, the onus is entirely on the Modi government to engage with the farm unions. The usual tactics of divide, defame and divert clearly haven't worked; if anything, they have been counterproductive and added to the already elevated distrust. This isn't about farmers being misled by election-losers who want selfies, this is about much-needed reform that needs political management with tools smarter than a sledgehammer. The earlier the government realises this, the easier it will be for it to break the deadlock.

### ABHAYA

Through the 28 years since her murder, a few good individuals kept their faith in due process and moved the wheels of justice

THE WHEELS OF justice turn slowly, more so when the accused are on the side of power and the powerful. In the case of Abhaya, it took 28 years for the investigative agencies to establish that the 21-year-old nun, found dead in a convent in Kerala in 1992, was murdered. On Wednesday, a CBI special court judge held a nun, Sephy, and a priest, Thomas Kottoor, guilty of Abhaya's murder and sentenced them to life. A closure in the case after these many years — Abhaya's parents died as the case laboured in the courts — hardly calls for celebration but it does evoke a sense of trust in due processes.

The verdict is a victory for a few good individuals who selflessly, and at great personal risk, fought off attempts by powerful interests to deny justice to Sister Abhaya. A crime branch probe had concluded that she suffered from depression and committed suicide by jumping into a well in the convent. A CBI probe reached a similar conclusion and sought to close the case. It was a little-known social activist, Jomon Puthenpurackal, from the same congregation as the victim and the accused, who pursued the case in the courts. Judges in the lower courts refused to accept the investigating agencies' closure reports and prodded them to dig deeper. Finally, the testimony of an eye witness, Raju, who had intruded into the compound at night, sealed the case. A poor labourer, Raju refused to change his statement through the trial, despite reportedly receiving physical threats and financial inducements. His explanation was simple: As the father of three girls, he had to fight for Abhaya.

The moral courage and perseverance shown by Jomon, Raju and others in their pursuit to ensure justice for a woman with no social or political capital, and who they did not even know, is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the (Knanaya) Church and a section of law enforcers, who, in fact, were duty-bound to protect her. In her case, the Church, which is morally and theologically committed to stand with the weak and the truth, chose to gloss over the crime. More recently, nuns in Kerala, across denominations, have come out against institutional corruption, particularly sexual crimes. Some in the clergy have rubbished these allegations, attempted to tarnish their reputation. This is in sharp contrast to the stand of eminences such as Pope Francis who have acknowledged the history of male domination and abuse of women and children. The Abhaya verdict should be a moment for renewal and reflection — at both levels, individual and institutional.

### CONVERSATIONS WITH TIME

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi spent a lifetime in conversation with Urdu poets and poetry, and reclaiming its modernist spirit

SHAMSUR RAHMAN FARUQI rejected, like the character from his majestic novel, *Kai Chand the Sar-e-Aasman* (2006), “the notion that the past is a foreign country and strangers who visit there cannot comprehend its language”. His lifetime's work, as a poet, critic, translator and theorist of Urdu literature, was spent in conversation with this rich terrain, especially the culture of poetry that flourished in 18th and 19th century Delhi, and to recall and reincarnate a lost age of eloquence for a contemporary Indian audience. In his death on Friday, the world loses one of the last great writers of Urdu, a language birthed in the mash-up and synthesis of subcontinental cultures.

Faruqi took the Urdu literary establishment by storm in the late 1960s with a literary journal, *Shabkhone*, that was as uncompromisingly high-brow as it was irreverent. He sought to wear away literary criticism from ideas of social purpose and themes to a tough-minded modernist consideration of form and structure, much like T S Eliot did in his expositions on Elizabethan poetry. Nearly a quarter of a century's work went into a four-volume exegesis on the life and works of Mir, freeing his works from limiting, moral analysis. But if he was a connoisseur of literary excellence, he was also a translator of pulp detective novels of Ibn-e-Safi, and a late convert to the adventures of the medieval oral romance *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*, on which he ended up writing a multi-volume analysis.

Faruqi came to fiction late — first through a collection of stories on Urdu poets, and then, through his magnum opus, *Kai Chand*, which he translated into English in 2013 as *The Mirror of Beauty*. The novel plucks the story of Wazir Khanum, an unconventional 19th century woman, from the footnotes of history to create a heroine of erotic power. It is, also, a celebration of a poetry that is inseparable from the business of daily life, and a Delhi that is a *baith-mamur*, a teeming house of beauty and bawdy, love and betrayal. It is a platitude that is also the legacy of Faruqi.

# The meaning of merit

Supreme Court verdict exposes fallacy of using general category as reservation for upper castes



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

THE SUPREME COURT has, in a significant recent judgment, *Saurav Yadav versus State of Uttar Pradesh*, once again artfully negotiated the thicket of issues arising out of reservation. There is no question that India needs a credible and effective affirmative action, though it can be debated over whether the current system is the best way of going about it. The matter before the Court arose in the context of complications that arise from trying to specify the relationship between vertical and horizontal reservations. Articles 15(4) and 16(4) enable vertical reservation based on slotting the population in terms of SC, ST, OBC and General Category. But there is also a class of reservations which cuts across all these categories and are referred to as horizontal reservation. These can include reservation for women (in this case, a 20 per cent reservation for women in posts for police constables), differently-abled persons, freedom fighters, army veterans and other categories to whom we may choose to provide reservation.

The problem arises in specifying the relationship between the two categories of reservation. In cases like *Anil Kumar Gupta v/s State of Uttar Pradesh*, the Court had made it clear that horizontal reservation ought to be generally understood in compartmentalised terms, as a nod to recognition of inequalities within each vertical category. In this particular case the problem was different, but it is illustrative of some of the interpretive absurdities of our system. There were 3,295 constable posts in the General Category of which 188 went to women. In filling up these vacancies, OBC women were not considered. But here is the absurdity. The last female candidate selected in General Category secured 274.8298 marks. But 21 applicants in the OBC female category scored more than these marks, including the plaintiff who scored 276.5949 marks! But these candidates were not considered against the available General Category seats because they were OBC. In short they were excluded from competing from the General Category positions even though they had scored more, simply because they were OBC. The Court rightly thought this was absurd.

This case is an interesting miniature sociology. One cannot help remark on the fact that

marks have to be computed to four decimal places or higher to determine one's fate. It also shows how, in effect, some state governments are trying to use the open category seats as a quota for general category candidates.

Other jurisdictions have involved similar cases. The High Courts had been giving contrary directions: Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh excluded reserved category women for consideration in the general category. Rajasthan and Gujarat, amongst others, included them. The Supreme Court, in a three judge bench, ruled against the UP government and clarified the relationship between horizontal and vertical reservations. This was the correct decision.

The judgments authored by Justice Uday U Lalit and a concurring judgment by Ravindra Bhat are clear and concise. They reiterate the principle that groups eligible for horizontal reservation cannot be excluded from the open category seats because they are from other vertically reserved category communities, like SC or OBC. Women from all categories are eligible to be considered for the open category. As Justice Bhat put it, the open category seats are not meant to be a quota for the non-reserved categories. The consequence of the UP government's policy was in effect to declare the open category a quota for upper castes. The Court has ended this nonsense. Second, in terms of framing, it has also got one issue right. The Court has often, very unhelpfully, contrasted merit with reservation. And in popular parlance merit is construed to be a deviation from reservation. But this has always been a mistaken view of the relationship between merit and reservation. In principle, reservation is an instrument for identifying merit in individuals from historically marginalised communities. The Court is saying that by excluding the adjustment of OBC women who had scored higher against general category seats, the UP government was ironically using the General Category to exclude meritorious candidates.

Some scholars, like the brilliant Gautam Bhatia in “Horizontal Reservations and the Persistence of the Myth of Merit”, (<https://indconlawphil.wordpress.com/>) worry that the Court's judgment does not go far enough. It is still concerned with merit. In *BK Pavitra versus*

*Union of India* for example, the Court had tried to be more radical and deconstruct the entire logic of merit. It had argued rightly that inclusion must not be seen as the antithesis of efficiency and merit; in fact inclusion and substantive equality are the aims of government. There is a good deal to be said in favour of this argument. There is also a larger critique to be made of the ideology of meritocracy, a critique to which I fully subscribe. But, as *Saurav Yadav* reminds us: Inclusion also takes place in the context of a criteria of selection. In the current framework, a recourse to a limited language of merit is inescapable for one simple reason. When the Court is using the term merit, it is not doing so in any exalted philosophical sense. It is simply pointing out that certain selection criteria are being used. Such selection criteria are also within particular reserved categories: Why some OBC candidates are picked over others is also a function of selection criteria, in this case marks. From this point of view, even those who advocate reservation do not fully give up on the meritocratic criteria of selection — they just apply it differentially. What the Court was concerned with is fairness in the application of the selection criteria within the overall framework of reservation.

*Saurav Yadav* is conceptually interesting for this reason. Defenders of radical inclusion think that social justice can be achieved by displacing merit with inclusion. But this has the unintended consequence of leaving intact the idea that those included come through by casting aside merit. In some ways, it actually shares common ground with critics of reservation who share exactly this premise. What the Court is trying to do, in an interesting way, is to argue that for its purposes, the opposition between merit and reservation needs to be deconstructed — not because there is no such thing as merit (as defenders of reservation claim), or because there should not be reservation (as critics of reservation claim). It is trying to say something more interesting: Members of the reserved category must be fully considered as falling under the rubric of being potentially meritorious.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

## LIBERALISM IN CRISIS

In Pakistan, the misfortunes of fundamentalism were foreshadowed



KHALED AHMED

THE WORLD is saying goodbye to liberalism. Right-wing politicians win elections by denouncing “liberals” and preside over self-centred states wearing the badge of aggression against “liberal fascists”. The US under Donald Trump, India under Narendra Modi, the UK under Boris Johnson, Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdogan — and most East European states who maltreat “refugees” and shun foreigners — foreshadow the misfortunes of tomorrow. Pakistan is no exception.

In March 2009, addressing a lawyers' gathering at the Rawalpindi Bar, Imran Khan belaboured a certain section of society as “liberals” who fly “in the face of national emotion” and hurt the state of Pakistan. He particularly condemned their interpretation of the phenomenon of the Taliban and their obedient following of dictation from the US in this regard. (Five years later in 2014 Taliban gunmen stormed the Army Public School in the northern city of Peshawar. More than 150 people were killed, 132 of them children.) He had also blamed the “liberals” for causing the massacre of Lal Masjid in 2007 by pressuring the Musharraf regime into taking brutal action against its “innocent” seminarians.

He called those who set great store by human rights “liberal fascists”, a label that resonated with most Urdu columnists in a predominantly “religious” or “ideological” Pakistan. Since Pakistan was never dominated by “liberal fascists” it is quite possible that he was attacking them in order to allow himself to ignore the violation of human

rights by those who operated against the writ of the state in the Tribal Areas. But oddly, Khan never stopped being the favourite of the very liberals he berated. He was an icon whose achievement as a social worker they recognised to strengthen their own argument.

Where does extremism spring from? If you take liberal “uncertainty” and “doubt” as your norm, then one can say extremism springs from certitude. In doubt, there is freedom to make concessions to those who think differently. Doubt here includes self-doubt to allow for a measure of altruism. It is also from doubt that moderation emanates: The instinct of standing in the middle when everyone is taking sides and is getting ready to clash.

The conservative is surer of his thinking because it is connected to the known past; the liberal is less sure-footed because he wants to question the entrenched attitudes of the past. It is certitude that inclines us to punish those who don't agree with us. The liberal will appeal to us to consider his argument but will not threaten us if we reject him. The misapplied term “liberal fascist” implies power that the liberal does not wish to possess because he knows that his thinking is too individualistic for the formulation of a group capable of wielding the power to punish.

The liberal voice as the gnawing conscience of the nation has bothered others too. Pakistan's top Urdu columnist published a plaint against the liberals on

February 3, 2001: “The ‘liberals’ are busy demonising the Taliban and predicting Talibanisation of Pakistan. On the other hand, Islamic movements have a way of becoming moderate after reaching a certain level of intensity, as it happened in Iran and is bound to happen in Afghanistan”.

According to the above columnist, Pakistani society was altogether of a “different sort” and would not succumb to Talibanisation “after the Taliban have completed their conquest of Afghanistan”. In fact, Pakistan was a “cosmopolitan” society and would remain “cosmopolitan” and would never allow the religious fanatics to take over even if the latter became stronger than at present.

In his next column (February 9, 2001), the same columnist rebutted the “liberal exaggeration” that, after the jihad outfits are done with Kashmir, they will turn upon Pakistan. He even quoted a Quranic verse in *Sura Al Kafirun* and its message of tolerance as proof of Islam being a “liberal” religion.

Eight years down the road, the marginal “liberal” was proved right. But judging from the way the critique of Talibanisation has spread around the country, one has to concede that liberalism is not a political creed but a bent of personality that may be found in elements in both right-wing and left-wing parties, and even among religious leaders.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

## DECEMBER 26, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

**MARCHERS ARRESTED**  
NAGPUR CITY HAS virtually turned into a police camp with policemen in uniform and plain clothes all over the place locating “Dindi” marchers. More than 2,000 persons have been arrested since last night. According to Sharad Pawar, former Maharashtra Chief Minister, at least 10,000 persons have been arrested in eight districts of Vidarbha and all hotels, rest houses, offices of left democratic parties checked for any marchers camping there. Madhu Dandavate was arrested at Butibori, about 23 km from Nagpur, while attempting to march to the city. Pramila Dandavate and Mrinal Gore were arrested in the afternoon when they

had gone to a hostel. Chandrajit Yadav, Karpuri Thakur and Devi Lal are also expected to reach Nagpur.

**ATROCITIES ON SCs, STs**  
THE COMMISSIONER FOR Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is of the opinion that Central intervention to deal with atrocities on Scheduled Caste communities and tribals in states and even use of force by Central forces does not constitute infringement of constitutional norms. Nor does such action go beyond the scope or ambit of the executive powers of the Central government. The view has been communicated to the president N Sanjeeva Reddy by the Commissioner,

Shishir Kumar, in his report for 1978-1979.

**X-MAS DAY**  
CHRISTMAS DAY BROKE the tedium of the US hostages in Iran, brought a rampage of violence in Beirut and pointed up the year's changes in Poland, the only country where Communism co-exists with mass devotion to Christianity. The Polish Pope, John Paul, wished the word, Happy Christmas in 41 languages. In Iran, a Vatican envoy saw half of the hostages — their first outside visitor in eight months — and reported that they were in good spirits. In Bethlehem, the city's Arab Mayor, Elias Freij, blamed the fall in the number of tourists this year to the rise of terrorism.



# THE IDEAS PAGE

## Ideology trumps analysis

Contrary to some recent observations, the newly released NFHS data reveals large improvements in welfare for Indian children, women, and households. Then why the deep angst?



SURJIT S BHALLA

ATYPO HERE, a typo there, and soon it can begin to add up to a "story", a point of view. All of us have made data errors in print — the editors allow a "correction" post-publication, and do so easily on the web pages. I have had occasion to correct my own data, and everyone should. We have been in the era of data-based policy for some time now, not just in India but around the world. There are several "fact-check" websites around the world. This article should be seen primarily in that light.

But there is more, much more, to the recent data release of the preliminary results of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) for 2019-20. These preliminary results have been released for 2019-20 along with comparable data for the 2015-16 survey. Data are presented for 21 states (12 "big" and nine small), with a population coverage of approximately 700 million. Tabular data for 131 variables have been released for 2019-20, along with comparable data for 2015-16. The data show that there has been considerable improvement in many of these 131 indicators of social welfare; and that in very few (you can count such instances on the fingers of one hand) there has been stagnation rather than a decline.

But that is not the first impression one obtains from the writings of distinguished scholars like Jean Dreze ('Give children weight', IE, December 19) and Abhishek Anand, Vikas Dimble and Arvind Subramanian ('New welfare of India's Right', IE, December 22), as well as editorials like 'Hunger Alarm' (IE, December 15), and pronouncements on worsening teenage pregnancy.

Dreze starts his essay with the conclusion that "leaving aside two or three countries like Niger and Yemen, India has the highest proportion of underweight children in the world...". And adds for effect that this proportion is much higher than in neighbouring countries like "Bangladesh (22 per cent) and Nepal (27 per cent)". Subramanian and co-authors, write that "after showing a slow but steady decline, especially between 2005 and 2015, there has been a disappointing reversal thereafter". The 'Hunger Alarm' editorial notes that "there have been several indicators of the slowing down of economic growth and employment distress, which are bound to have an effect on hunger and nutrition" (emphasis added). The *Hindu's* (December 15) verdict on worsening in India was reflected in the title "Rise in teenage pregnancy, higher anaemia rate in women: NFHS-5 phase data".

The collective interpretation one obtains from reading these and many other articles on the subject is that after years of progress on health, nutrition, and child welfare, things have really worsened in the last four years — 2015/16 to 2019/20. Some authors are explicit, others indulge in nudge-nudge, wink-wink — these four years were also the first four years of the changing political order in India — the beginning of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister.

I have often stated in my articles (starting from 'India, the Incomparable', *The Economic Times*, March 3, 1989) that Indians suffer from a special disease — we think we are unique. To help negate this falsehood, it is important to compare India with the rest of the developing world, about 180 countries and a population of 6.5 billion. Thus, data presented in the table



### WELFARE INDICATORS AND INDIA PERFORMANCE IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: 2000-2019

Welfare Indicator	World Bank Development Indicators				NFHS Data	
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2015/16	2019/20
<b>Stunting - Height for weight (&lt;5 years)</b>						
India	53.3	48.7	43.3	37.9	35.9	35.5
Developing World	30.2	28.4	26.3	26		
<b>Underweight (weight for age, &lt;5 years)</b>						
India	45.9	43.9	36.4	36.3	34.2	34
Developing World	15.7	14.3	13.6	13.8		
<b>Wasting (weight for height, &lt;5 years)</b>						
India	17.5	19.6	17.6	20.8	21.5	21.5
Developing World	7.4	7.1	6.6	5.8		
<b>Teenage pregnancies</b>						
India	19.9	16.7	12.8	8.7	10.5	9.3
Developing World	18	17.9	18.2	17.9		

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators; NFHS surveys 2015/16 and 2019/20. Note: World bank indicators are % of relevant population, NFHS is % of population

■ Number  
■ Average Gain % pts

**28 (4%)**  
CHILD WELFARE INDICATORS

**7 (3.9%)**  
YOUNG WOMEN INDICATORS

**15 (4.1%)**  
HOUSEHOLD AND ADULT INDICATORS

C R Sasikumar

tries to put interpretation, and data, into both an absolute (for example, what happened in India) and a worldwide perspective (what happened elsewhere in comparable economies). The World Bank provides these comparable data on an annual basis and the data are easily available to all who are interested. Trends in hunger, nutrition, inequality, and growth among others can be judiciously assessed in a comparative perspective.

Let us look at some of the typos, falsehoods, misinterpretation of the data. Dreze states that the Bangladesh underweight percentage in 2015 was 22 per cent; World Bank (WB) data states it to be 30.1 per cent — some 4.7 percentage point (ppt) lower than India, but not 12.8 ppt lower as implied by Dreze. WB figures for all developing countries with data on stunting (63 countries, population 2.5 billion): In 2000, the stunting average excluding India was 29.3 per cent; in 2010 23.8 per cent; and in 2015, 28.7 per cent. In other words, a lot of zig-zag, reversals, and no net improvement over 20 years. In contrast, the stunting average in India was 46 per cent in 2000, 10 ppt lower in 2015, and still lower in 2019.

Teenage pregnancies on the rise? Really? In 2005, teenage pregnancies in India were 19.9 per cent; in 2015, 8.7 per cent, and 1 ppt lower in 2019. Net improvement — about 12 ppt in 15 years. Contrast this with a constant 10 ppt higher level in the developing world over the same period. The decline in teenage pregnancies in India is a genuine success story. India had the 10th lowest level in 2015, with Nepal nine positions lower (16.7 per cent) and Bangladesh (30.8 per cent in 2014) with the ninth highest magnitude of teen pregnancies (women 15-19 years of age).

Wasting: Not one of the authors looked at the data on wasting (weight for height). A curious but revealing omission. The wasting percentage in India was 17.5 per cent in 2000, and 3.3 ppt higher in 2015, and did not deteriorate further in 2019. In contrast, in the same time-period, wastage in the developing world improved by 1.6 ppt.

None of the data presented above shows India's performance to have worsened post-2015. In other words, the pessimistic conclusion of "many" (or some) of a deterioration is false. Further, according to a very large number of NFHS indicators, welfare improved "big-time" between 2015 and 2019. A summary version of these data is as follows (comparable data for other countries is not as yet available).

All data are for change (difference in percentages) as revealed by NFHS on an aggregate

Not one of the authors looked at the data on wasting (weight for height). A curious but revealing omission. The wasting percentage in India was 17.5 per cent in 2000, and 3.3 ppt higher in 2015, and did not deteriorate further in 2019. In contrast, in the same time-period, wastage in the developing world improved by 1.6 ppt. None of the data presented above shows India's performance to have worsened post-2015. In other words, the pessimistic conclusion of 'many' (or some) of a deterioration is false. Further, according to a very large number of NFHS indicators, welfare improved 'big-time' between 2015 and 2019.

population-weighted basis, rather than on an elevator economics basis as presented in many data analyses on the subject, for example, for X, Y states showed an improvement and Z states showed a decline.

**Child Mortality:** Data on three indicators (neo-natal, infant and under-five) show an improvement between 3 and 4 ppt. **Immunizations:** This is one big story of improvement; for example, the hepatitis B vaccine percentage (for children 12-23 months) increased from 64.8 per cent in 2015 to 83.6 per cent in 2019. **Breast-feeding and diet of children 6-23 months:** Average gain of 4 ppt for four indicators.

Negative trend in 26 children indicators: Only two show a worsening. Children with fever taken to a health facility (71.3 per cent in 2019, as compared with 72.6 per cent in 2015); and children under five years who are severely wasted — increase to 8.6 per cent from 7.6 per cent in 2015.

Negative trend in seven young women indicators: Zero. Modern birth control methods, age at marriage, teenage pregnancies, and sexual violence all show improvement. The average improvement in these seven indicators — 3.9 percentage points.

Negative trend in 15 adult indicators: Zero. Average gain 4.1 percentage points. Some of the indicators show an increase of 9 percentage points and above: Households with electricity (9.2 ppt), improved sanitation facilities (17.3 ppt), clean fuel for cooking (18 ppt) and women having a bank account that they use (29.8 ppt increase to a level of 77.2 per cent in 2019).

Why such a large divergence between perception and reality? If there is improvement in close to a 100 indicators and stagnation (not worsening) in very, very, few (less than five) then why are there editorials, special shows on TV, and scholarly (but motivated) conjectures about the larger "reality" that maybe causing a non-existent worsening? The intelligentsia, both domestic and international, got the Modi election, and his re-election, horribly wrong. As I have argued earlier (*The New Wealth of Nations and Citizen Raj*) one consistent explanation for this mis-reading is that the old elite has not come to grips with the reality that there is a change in leadership on issues relating to politics, economics, culture, and society.

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## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The prime minister does not want this deal to be examined. What can already be said with some certainty is that it prescribes an immediate downgrade for the UK economy."  
— THE GUARDIAN

## All the world's without a stage

The arts sustained many through Covid, but it leaves behind formidable challenges for the artists



PADMAPRIYA JANAKIRAMAN AND MAANSI VERMA

DURING THE PANDEMIC, art became an expression of resilience for society. From people singing together in their balconies to PPE-clad doctors dancing to uplift their patients to graffiti expressing gratitude for health workers, people rediscovered the power of art to heal in these sordid times. But how resilient is the artist? "There are seven tribes of street performers in India — street magician, snake charmer, animal trainer, juggler, acrobat, street singer and *behrupiya*," says Ishaan Khan, a former resident of the now-demolished Kathputli Colony slum in Delhi, himself a *madari* magician who has toured the world with his Indian rope trick. "But there are no official figures on the number of street performers in India. They are not acknowledged as artists."

What is art and who is an artist? Within the expansive spectrum of the creative sector, many are jostling for recognition of their craft in a largely unorganised and ill-defined industry. Already having survived on uncertain incomes, the pandemic aggravated the vulnerable conditions of artists across the board. A British Council, FICCI and ART X Company study on the

impact of COVID-19 on India's creative economy reveals that self-employed professionals and MSMEs make up 88 per cent of the industry, 70 per cent of the respondents faced temporary business disruptions and 33 per cent lost up to half of their annual income. The anticipated lower levels of tourism, drop in purchasing power and reduction of funding for arts could amplify this further. Yet, in the government's many financial assistance packages, artists found no mention.

In the absence of institutional support, the creative community came together to help their own. Among many other organisations, the Cine & TV Artists Association (CINTAA) stepped in to provide resources, funds, emotional and medical support to struggling artists and their families.

But financial distress wasn't the only fallout of the pandemic — it closed avenues for artists' self-expression. Kathak dancer Aditi Mangaldas responded by uploading videos of impromptu, unrehearsed performances. However, acknowledging her own privilege, Mangaldas pointed out how her company's dancers struggled to find equipment and even space in their homes to perform and record their work. Dancer Dr Swarnamalya Ganesh created 'I Am a Dancer under #Lockdown', in which she herself handled the camera, editing and post-production. But she fears that the pandemic has increased the schism between those who will be more vis-

ible and the rest. The transition of art to online spaces has been a mixed bag. Amit Mutreja, lead vocalist of Azaadi The Band, argues that the internet has proved to be a more democratic space, yet his band turned down requests to perform online, as engaging a virtual audience was challenging. The liberty to express online is also affected by negative reactions and trolling of a scale not seen in the offline space.

Going online also requires special skills. Shyam Aravindakshan of Creative Dignity, a movement aiming to provide relief and rejuvenation to artisans, recalls the technical constraints in getting artisans online to sell their crafts. From cataloguing to professional photographs to quality checks before shipments to online payments, the artisans, having largely produced for local markets, struggled.

The arts community has never had it easy but the worry is about life post-COVID-19. From museums to dance, the digital is here to stay. Apart from learning new skills, artists will have to address how to reduce piracy, while revisiting settled notions of copyright, which otherwise get lost in a closed Zoom room performance. But audiences for staged performances will not disappear. Digital fatigue and the charm of the live performance, which highlights the symbiotic relationship between artist and audience, should reflect in deeper engagement by the audience. For sustained income avenues, the sector has to innovate by finding stronger connections across related areas like education and health.

The pandemic has brought to the disorganised artist community some improvements — collaboration to create new works, higher online visibility, and the ability to reach audiences and consumers differently. The Indian creative sector is seeing togetherness. But whether the community stands for sustained advocacy with

the government and private sector for recognition and support remains to be seen.

Governments are increasingly interested in regulating the expression of art online. But what they need to focus on is reducing the already deep divide in the art world between the privileged and underprivileged. While some art forms will go digital, street/festival performances are difficult to showcase online. So, should they be lost? Governments should make a transparent directory of artists so that grants and other schemes reach the right beneficiaries. Apart from firming up anti-bullying laws, the need of the hour is to recognise gig workers in this sector and strengthen policies that support cultural assets.

Not every form of art is economically self-sustainable. The downsizing of the creative sector will have a negative impact on jobs and revenues, levels of innovation, citizen well-being and the vibrancy and diversity of communities. Philanthropy for the arts has to grow. The appreciation for art's contribution in providing society with a semblance of normalcy during these isolated times must be cultivated into respect and value for an artist's labour. Else, as a country, we will be collectively responsible for the loss of our cultural lineage.

*Janakiraman is a National Award-winning film actress, dancer and public policy researcher. Verma is a consulting researcher with Sahapedia*

### AN EXPRESS IDEA SERIES

# 2021

## COVID SHADOW, NEW YEAR LIGHT



RAHUL TRIPATHI

## A new idea for Goa

The 60th anniversary year is a chance to start reflecting

ON DECEMBER 20, President Ram Nath Kovind flagged off the celebrations for Goa's 60th year of liberation on the banks of Mandovi at the historic Bandothkar Grounds in Panjim. It's an occasion for the state to reflect on its accomplishments as well as failings as part of its integration into the Indian Union.

As one of the smallest states in the Indian Union, with excellent social and economic indicators and a quality of life not enjoyed by many in other states, Goa is indeed a class apart. Perhaps no other land of such a scale has so much history and made as much of a contribution to religion, art, music, cosmopolitanism and nationalism as Goa has. At the same time, in no other place, perhaps, has the battle for identity, language, and ecology been as strong as has been witnessed in Goa during the last several decades. The other side of the story is of people's struggle for things that are critical for their very existence — water, air and land.

The state and the political class in Goa have been at an interesting intersection of these two often divergent trends, often as mediators, but many a time as complicit forces in these battles. On questions of identity and language, as witnessed in the 1967 opinion poll and the movement for statehood culminating in 1987, the political class and the state went along with the people's wishes. In recent struggles

over land, environment and water, in contrast, they have often been seen as succumbing to big capital and a different vision of development that has flowed from Delhi and Mumbai in the last two decades.

What kept the state's hopes alive was the ability of the political class and the people to have a voice much bigger than their actual scale and intensity, given its national and international profile. That, perhaps, also united Goa's civil society and political society. For example, in its early years, Jawaharlal Nehru, despite his initial disappointment with Goa on not naturally giving the Congress the chance and opting for regional parties, was clear in his 1963 message to Goans that the state will always remain special in the Indian mosaic and its identity shall be protected. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has always had a special place for Goa in his illustrious political career, in one of his speeches marvelled at the then demand by people for special status, not based on material benefits, but for preserving their identity.

Seemingly tall leaders like former Chief Minister Pratap Singh Rane and former Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, along with various luminaries in academia, literature, defence, art and culture, remained prominent ambassadors of Goa, who would always exude optimism and hope that Goa would be able to put its views

across much strongly than its size. The result was that with all its inner turmoil, Goa had the optimism that its promised uniqueness would remain an article of faith. This faith is gradually getting eroded if Goa's trajectory in the recent years is any indication. To quote a prominent Goan academic, while Goa is becoming part of the Indian mainstream (and that was natural), the nature of mainstreaming that has been going on over the years — political, economic and ideological — has raised apprehensions. There is a sense of loss and this loss, it is feared, will be difficult to recover. The onus lies on the rest of India to make sure that the mainstreaming emerges out of the diverse ideas that Goa has stood for rather than subsuming them into a paradigm of monolithic nationalism.

Politically, Goa appears to be heading towards single party domination, following more or less the pattern of the ruling party poaching on the Opposition and fragmenting it. But to say that Goa will become a single party dominant state would be premature given its history of defections. What is more worrying is that there is often a disconnect between grass roots level democracy as proffered by Goa's vibrant gram sabhas and the ruling establishment. Besides, thanks to the majoritarian political impulse creeping in the rest of the country, there is a feeling in Goa that the fringe

could become the mainstream, unsettling the harmony that has been evident for centuries.

Goa's ideal economic model is linked to its fragile ecology, which often militates against big ticket capital that is gradually engulfing it. While mining, the backbone of the economy, saw a hiatus owing to a Supreme Court judgment, the impact of the pandemic has left tourism reeling. Meanwhile, the Centre wishes to make Goa part of its big infrastructure push which superimposes mega plans over a state where micro planning should actually have been a norm. The state also fights an uphill battle with big neighbour Karnataka over the sharing of river Mhadei (as Mandovi is known in Karnataka), its lifeline. The despair on the ground stems from the perception that the bigger state has a greater say in the corridors of power in Delhi.

But the biggest battle perhaps is ideological. Can there be a new idea for Goa, away from the popular ideas which have always harped on Goa's uniqueness, but have not done much to protect it? The onus lies as much on the rest of India to protect it, even as contemporary Goa debates that idea. The 60th anniversary perhaps gives us a chance to begin reflecting.

*The writer teaches political science at Goa University. Views are personal*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BJP'S HYPOCRISY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bury the legacy' (IE, December 25). The government's move to file an appeal at the Singapore seat of the permanent court of arbitration challenging its judgment in the Vodafone retrospective taxation case is preposterous and legally untenable. The fact that the appeal was filed in the aftermath of Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague passing a judgment against India holding the retrospective demand of taxation was in breach of fair treatment envisaged under the UK-India bilateral investment treaty will dent the image of the country to dissuade investors.

Ravi Mathur, Noida

### EDUCATION IGNORED

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'My school vs. your school' (IE, December 25). If education does not find resonance among the political class, it is the people, the voters, who are to be blamed. Instead of letting politicians focus on religion and caste, we should make them accountable for issues which can make a difference in our lives. While development is now being courted by the leaders and jobs find mention in the political lexicon, it is education which is the foundation.

Kamna Chhabra, Gurgaon

## IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

● CHRIST, THE PHILOSOPHER: JYOTHI S

● FEEDING THE HOSPITALS: SUDHANSH PANT

www.indianexpress.com

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'My school vs. your school'; (IE, December 25). UP government's claim about the superiority of its schools is reckless imagination. No other state in India has misused education policy as a weapon in politics as UP. During Mulayam Singh Yadav's chief ministership, teaching in English was made optional followed by allowing copying in examinations as a sort of right. But the state government's focus seems divided between correcting the system and rewriting the history books for students.

YG Chouksey, Pune

# Classifieds

**Notice** is hereby given that, We, Sanjay Ganjoo and Sunita Ganjoo, residing at Flat No. 1801, Mantova Mahagun Moderne, Sector-78, Near Mahagun Mart, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201301 have changed the name of our son from Poorvas Ganjoo to Purvas Ganjoo vide affidavit dated 21-12-2020 sworn before notary Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, Gautam Budh Nagar, for all purpose 0040558709-1

**Notice** is hereby given that, I, Suneeta Ganjoo w/o Mr. Sanjay Ganjoo residing at Flat No. 1801, Mantova Mahagun Moderne, Sector-78, near Mahagun Mart, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201301 have changed my name to Sunita Ganjoo vide affidavit dated 21-12-2020 sworn before notary Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, Gautam Budh Nagar, for all purposes. 0040558710-1

**Sheetal d/o Shri om R/o Plot No-83 Nanda Enclave, Najafgarh ND-110043 declare that Sheetal and Sheetal Yadav are same person.** 0040558703-1

**Shri om S/o Charan Singh R/o Plot No-83, Nanda Enclave, Najafgarh ND-110043 declare that Shri om and Shri om Yadav are same person.** 0040558703-2

**I, ANITA DEVI W/O, No.14649688P NK/ AUTO A VEH DEVENDRA SINGH, R/O-VILL-NAGLA KARE POST-MANKENDA, TEHSIL +DIST-AGRA, UP-283102, I CHANGED MY NAME, FROM ANITA KUMARI TO ANITA DEVI VIDE AFFIDAVIT DATED 23-12-2020, BEFORE MANDAN LAL GUPTA, (DELHI). 0040558724-6**

**I, Amritha S D/o Unni Sudhakaran R/o H.No.35-C, Pocket-A-1, LG-Flat, Mayur Vihar Ph-3, Delhi-110096, have changed my name to Amritha Sudhakaran. 0040558729-1**

**I, Rajan Tyagi, S/o Subodh Kumar Tyagi, R/O-445, Niti Kand-3, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201014, inform that in my all Educational record, my father name has wrongly mentioned as Subodh Tyagi instead of Subodh Kumar Tyagi. 0040558719-7**

**I, MOHAN SINGH S/O VASTI RAM, H.NO.-2E/111, WARD. NO.-11, N.H.-2, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121001, have changed my name to MOHAN SINGH BHATIA. 0040558719-6**

**I, Ashok Kumar, S/o Late. Ansuaya Prasad Nautiyal, R/o. OMQ, No. 484/1 officers-Mess North-Camp Air-Force-Station Bamarauli Prayag raj, UP-211012, have changed my name, from Ashok Kumar to Ashok Kumar Nautiyal, vide Affidavit, dated 22-12-2020 at New-Delhi. 0040558724-7**

**I, AANCHAL D/O ASHOK SHARMA R/O HNO.E-31, GURDWARA ROAD, PRASHANT VIHAR, RAJAPUR KALAN, DELHI-110085. CHANGED MY NAME TO AANCHAL SHARMA. 0040558719-2**

**I, hitherto known as Raj Kumar alias Raj Kumar Jain, S/o Sh. Chandar Bhan, R/o-286, First Floor, AGRIC Enclave, Delhi-110092, have changed my name, and shall hereafter be known, as Raj Kumar Jain. 0040558711-1**

**I, Viney Kumar alias Viney S/O Shankar Lal Aggarwal R/O-C-164, Prashant Vihar, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Viney Kumar. 0040558719-9**

**I, Udit Kumar Choudhary S/O Jile Singh R/O-105, PKT-2, Sec-23, Rohini, Delhi-110085 have changed my name to Udit Kumar Chaudhary. 0040558719-8**

**I, Suneel Choudhary S/o Brahm Singh R/O H.No.55-C, IIIrd Flr, Street No.6, Majlis Park, Adarsh Nagar, Azadpur, Delhi-110033 have changed my name to Sunil Choudhary for all future purposes. 0040558690-1**

**I, SHIKHA VOHRA w/o Rishabh Chadha r/o 125, Kohat Enclave, Pitam Pura, Delhi-110034 have changed my name to SHIKHA CHADHA. 0040558695-1**

**I, SANJAY S/O BRIJ MOHAN SHARMA, H.NO-KC-5, 3rd-FLOOR, GANESH-NAGAR, SHAKARPUR EXTENSION, DELHI-110092, have changed my name to SANJAY KUMAR SHARMA. 0040558724-1**

**I, Rajiv Kumar S/o O.P. Bhatnagar, R/O RZ-10/316, Gali No.7, Gitanjali Park, West Sagarpur, New Delhi-110046 have changed my name from Rajeev Kumar to Rajiv Kumar for all future purposes. Both name belongs to same person. 0040558712-1**

**I, Ritika Ahuja R/O-Pocket-A, 6B Siddhartha-Extension, New Delhi-110014, have changed my minor son's name from Rachit Talwar to Rachit Ahuja permanently. 0040558711-2**

**I, Sarjeet Kumar s/o Radhey Shyam H.No 3159 Gali No.72 Molarband Extension New Delhi 110044 inform that in the School record and Birth Certificate of my minor son ayush yadav and my wife name priyanka name are wrongly written as Sarjeet Yadav and priyanka yadav which may be corrected** 0040558712-1

## PERSONAL

**I, NARENDRA KUMAR S/O NET RAM SHARMA R/O 9-D, 2nd-FLOOR, KAMLA NAGAR, DELHI-110007. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NARENDER KUMAR. 0040558719-3**

**I, Madan Lal, S/O Late Shri. Jamma Das Gupta, R/O-9559, Gali Mill Wali, Sadar-Bazar, Azad-Market, Delhi-110006 have changed my name to Madan Lal Gupta. 0040558719-5**

**I, MAHABIR PARSAD S/O DEEP CHAND JAIN RESIDENT 4/177, GALI NO-9, SONIPAT, HARYANA HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MAHABIR JAIN. 0040558724-4**

**I, KRITI W/O SANJAY KUMAR SHARMA, H.NO-KC-5, 3rd-FLOOR, GANESH-NAGAR, SHAKARPUR-EXTENSION, DELHI-110092, have changed my name to KRITIKA SHARMA. 0040558724-2**

**I, JASMEET KAUR KOHLI W/O MR. GURPREET SINGH KOHLI R/O G-605 RANJIT VIHAR II, PLOT NO-16, DWARKA SECTOR-23, SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110075 INDIA. I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM JASMEET KAUR TO JASMEET KAUR KOHLI FOR ALL PURPOSES 0040558684-1**

**I, Gagandeep Gujral alias Gagandeep W/o-Davinder Jeet Singh, R/O-39, 3rd-floor, Pocket-11A, Sector-22, Rohini, Delhi, have changed my name to Gagandeep Kaur 0040558719-10**

**I, Brajesh Kumar S/o, Rati Ram R/O, 22 Vikas Kuni, Vikas Nagar Delhi-110059, have changed my name to Brijesh Kumar Pal. 0040558719-4**

**I, Brahm Singh Choudhary S/O Harphool Singh R/O H.No.55-C, IIIrd Flr, Street No.6, Majlis Park, Adarsh Nagar, Azadpur, Delhi-110033 have changed my name to Brahm Singh for all future purposes. 0040558691-1**

**I, Archana S/O Unni Sudhakaran R/O H.No.35-C, Pocket-A-1, LG-Flat, Mayur Vihar Ph-3, Delhi-110096, have changed my name to Archana Sudhakaran. 0040558729-2**

**I, Avneesh Mathur, S/o-Bhuvanesh Narain Mathur, R/O-K-807, Prateek Laurel Apartment-Sector-120, Gautam Buddha-Nagar, Uttar-Pradesh-201301, declare that name of mine has been wrongly-written as Avneesh Narain Mathur in my Passport, No.J6043866, and Mathur Avneesh in my, PAN-CARD-No.AA5PM0984D, and name of my father has been, wrongly-written as BN Mathur in my, Aadhar card. The actual name of mine and my father are Avneesh Mathur, and Bhuvanesh Narain Mathur. 0040558724-8**

**I, SARTHAK S/O SANJAY KUMAR SHARMA H.NO-KC-5, 3rd-FLOOR, GANESH-NAGAR, SHAKARPUR EXTENSION, DELHI-110092, have changed my name to SARTHAK SHARMA. 0040558724-3**

**I, SRISHTI D/O-RAKESH DAHIYA R/O H.NO.62-P, SECTOR-15, PART-4, SONIPAT-131001. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SRISHTI DAHIYA. FOR FUTURE PURPOSES. 0040558719-1**

**I, Arun Rawat, S/o Sh. Sohan Singh Rawat, R/O 338-C, Gazipur DDA-Flats, Delhi-110096, declare that name of my father has been wrongly-written as Sohah Singh Rawat in my 10th-pass Certificate. The actual-name of my father is Sohan Singh Rawat which may be amended accordingly. 0040558724-5**

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that my client Shri. Harihar Sharma S/o Late Shri. Kewal Kishan Sharma and Smt. Chandrakanta Sharma is one of the co-owners of undivided property bearing No. C43, Double Storey, Nimal Park, Lapat Nagar-IV, New Delhi. No body has any right title or interest to sell, transfer, create third party interest in the said property. Any body dealing as regards to the said property in any manner shall do the same at his/her own risk, cost, consequence and part. Anybody can contact the undersigned for any clarification.

Sd/- DALIP SINGH (Advocate)  
184-A, Patiala House Courts,  
New Delhi

### NOTICE

Ic It know to general public that my client Shri Pramod Kumar S/o Shri Raj Kumar, R/o 36-C, Second Floor, DDHA Flats, Masjid Moth, Phase - I, New Delhi - 110048, is the owner of 25% share in the house property No. 53, Darayaganj, New Delhi - 110002, comprising of one Shop at Ground Floor, First Floor and Second Floor alongwith terrace by virtue of Will dated 13th December, 2007 duly registered with the office of Sub-Registrar-V, New Delhi. My aforesaid client is the absolute owner in possession of the said property and no one has any right, title or interest of any nature whatsoever in the said property except my aforesaid client.

(Mohd. Qasem) Advocate  
B-855, MIF Flats East of  
Loni Road, Delhi - 110093.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

"My clients Shri. Girish Lohia S/o Shri. Dhamraj Singh and Smt. Krishna W/o. Shri. Girish Lohia R/o Farm No.1, Road No.1, Silver Oak Farms, Ghazni, Sutteraj, New Delhi-110030 have severed all their relations from their son Robin Lohia and his wife Shikha D/o Sh. Mahraj Singh Mavi and disowned & debarred them from all moveable and immovable properties and shall not be responsible for the acts, deeds and things done by Robin Lohia or his wife in past, present or future."

Deepa Rawat (Advocate)  
Ch. No. 440, Saket Courts, New Delhi-17

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public is hereby informed that my client Smt. Pooja Saini W/o Late Shri Pradeep Saini R/o Kharsa No. 68/1, Main Road Village Bhoghar, Narela, Delhi-110040 have disowned their son namely Rahul Saini and his wife Namely Manisha Saini from all her moveable and immovable properties and have severed all her relations with them on account of their immoral conduct and intolerable physical and mental cruelties with him. Anyone dealing/transacting with them shall be fully responsible for their acts and my client shall not be responsible for any of their acts in future.

Dharamvir Singh Chauhan (Advocate)  
Ch. No. 322, Saket Courts, New Delhi-17

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public at large is hereby informed that my client Smt. Saroj Bala Tyagi W/o Late Vishnu Dutt Tyagi R/o A-283, Majlis Park, Delhi-110033 have severed all kind of relations from her step sons namely Harshwardhan Tyagi and Rishwardhan Tyagi both sons of Late Vishnu Dutt Tyagi due to their indifferent and abusive attitude towards my client and also disowned/debarred them from all kind of moveable and immovable properties and assets owned by my client. If any person deals with above said persons then he/she will be doing so at his/her own risk.

PANKAJ (ADVOCATE)  
E.MD.0161/2009  
389, Lawyers Block II, Court  
N.Delhi-17, PH-981102227, 9711824555

## NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

### ई-निविदा आमन्त्रण सूचना

मंडल रेल प्रबंधक, इजीनियरिंग, उत्तर पश्चिम रेलवे, जोधपुर द्वारा भारत के राष्ट्रपति के लिये एवं उनकी ओर से ई-निविदा के माध्यम से प्रचलित नियमों के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित प्रयोजनों के निविदा निम्न कार्यों के लिए क्रमानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है - ई-निविदा सूचना सं. 2020-21 : 80 कार्य का नाम व स्थान : Renewal of 463 Nos. Glued Joints & 90 No. SEJ on main line on cum condition basis on Luni-Samdari-Bhildi section in the jurisdiction of ADEN/Samdari of Jodhpur Division. अनुमानित लागत रुपये : 77.85.001. 72 बयाने की राशि रुपये : 155,700.00 निविदा सूचना संख्या 2020-21 / 80 निविदा प्रस्तुत करने की तिथि 08.01.2021 को 15.00 बजे तक है। वेबसाइट का विवरण जहाँ पर ई-निविदा देखी व मरी जा सकती है - [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in)

901-DH/20  
Please join us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NWRRailways) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/NWRRailways) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/NWRRailways) [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/NWRRailways) [Twitter](https://www.twitter.com/GMSRailway) [WhatsApp](https://www.whatsapp.com/NWRRailways) [Telegram](https://www.telegram.com/NWRRailways) [Viber](https://www.viber.com/NWRRailways) [Zoosk](https://www.zoosk.com/NWRRailways) [Meetup](https://www.meetup.com/NWRRailways) [Badoo](https://www.badoo.com/NWRRailways) [OkCupid](https://www.okcupid.com/NWRRailways) [Tinder](https://www.tinder.com/NWRRailways) [Match](https://www.match.com/NWRRailways) [eHarmony](https://www.eharmony.com/NWRRailways) [Bumble](https://www.bumble.com/NWRRailways) [OkCupid](https://www.okcupid.com/NWRRailways) [Tinder](https://www.tinder.com/NWRRailways) [Match](https://www.match.com/NWRRailways) [eHarmony](https://www.eharmony.com/NWRRailways) [Bumble](https://www.bumble.com/NWRRailways)

## NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

### (E-Tender Notice)

Dy. CME/Works for Chief Workshop Manager, North Eastern Railway, Mechanical Workshop, Gorakhpur and on behalf of President of India invites open tender through on line (E-Tendering) for the following work:- S.No.-1, E-Tender Notice No & Name of the work: Tender No.: 03-MWS-GKP-2020-21-11. "Supply and Fitment of Venturi type Toilet ventilation Arrangement in 100 LHB Coaches at Mechanical Workshop, Gorakhpur (As per Drg. No. MP19 VENTLHB, Version-0)" Estimated Cost: 16,49,600/-, Earnest Money: ₹ 33,000/-. Cost of Tender forms: ZERO. Last date of tender submission: Upto: 11.00, 29-01-2021, Period of Contract: 08 Months

The details of above tenders are also available on Indian Railway website [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in)

Dy. CME/Works, Gorakhpur  
About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mobile No. 0979484599

Do not smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train.

## SOUTHERN RAILWAY

### TRIVANDRUM (WORKS BRANCH) E-Tender Notice

No.WW/TVC/11/2020 DATED 24/12/2020 Divisional Railway Manager/Works Branch/Trivandrum Division, Trivandrum-14 for and on behalf of the President of India invites online tenders for the following works as per tender notice given in our e-tender portal [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in). The tenderer(s)/contractor(s) to apply for e-tender for WORKS in Trivandrum Division, need to get enrolled in the e-tender portal [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in) and only online tenders will be accepted.

1. Description: Divisional Engineer South - Supply of welding portion 52 Kg & 60 Kg, equipments and supervision of welding.

Approximate value (in lakh) Rs.354.26  
Earnest Money Deposit: Rs.327100  
Period of completion in months: TWELVE

2. Description: Aluva Additional FOB connecting PF No.1 and 2 & 3 (balance work)

Approximate value (in lakh): Rs.79.37  
Earnest Money Deposit: Rs.158800  
Period of completion in months: SIX

3. Description: Kayankulam - Trivandrum section - Elimination of major sag at Km: 185/950-186/200 UP in Varkala P.Way section

Approximate value (in lakh): Rs.124.87  
Earnest Money Deposit: Rs.212400  
Period of completion in months: TWELVE

4. Description: Trivandrum Division - Provision of Multi Section Digital Axle Counters (MSDAC) in Shoranur - Ernakulam section - Construction of Goomties (Engg. Part Est. for PB Item No. 1027 of 2018-2019)

Approximate value (in lakh): Rs.17.13  
Earnest Money Deposit: Rs.34300  
Period of completion in months: NINE

5. Description: Trivandrum Sub Division: Periodical cleaning of open well, cleaning of OHT, GLRs & septic tank etc

Approximate value (in lakh): Rs.49.90  
Earnest Money Deposit: Rs.99800  
Period of completion in months: TWELVE

6. Description: ZONE B - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Trichur (excl) to Koratti Angadi (excl) in Chalakkudi permanent way section

Approximate value (in lakh): Rs.21.20  
Earnest Money Deposit: Rs.42000  
Period of completion in months: TWELVE

7. Description: Trivandrum Division - Deep screening of Points and Crossings by BCM in DEN/South Jurisdiction

Approximate value (in lakh): Rs.51.09  
Earnest Money Deposit: Rs.102200  
Period of completion in months: TWELVE

8. Description: Repair and Maintenance of L&CS in Harpad - Ambalappuzha Section (PB No.25/2020-21, Ambalappuzha-Harpad Doubling)

Approximate value (in lakh): Rs.25.76  
Earnest Money Deposit: Rs.51500  
Period of completion in months: THREE

Tender Closing date of time: SI.No.1 to 8: 15.01.2021 at 11.00 hrs

Details of approximate value of tender, EMD & location are given on the e-portal [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in). For Details of bid submission, please refer website portal [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in)

Senior Divisional Engineer/Cordin Trivandrum-14  
Follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/GMSRailway) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/GMSRailway) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/GMSRailway) [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/GMSRailway) [Twitter](https://www.twitter.com/GMSRailway) [WhatsApp](https://www.whatsapp.com/GMSRailway) [Telegram](https://www.telegram.com/GMSRailway) [Viber](https://www.viber.com/GMSRailway) [Zoosk](https://www.zoosk.com/GMSRailway) [Meetup](https://www.meetup.com/GMSRailway) [Badoo](https://www.badoo.com/GMSRailway) [OkCupid](https://www.okcupid.com/GMSRailway) [Tinder](https://www.tinder.com/GMSRailway) [Match](https://www.match.com/GMSRailway) [eHarmony](https://www.eharmony.com/GMSRailway) [Bumble](https://www.bumble.com/GMSRailway)

## SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely Shivani D/o Munna Sahani R/o H.No. B-9, Flat No. 650, Lal Flat Sec-3, DSIIIC Bawana, Delhi Aged- 17 Years has been reported missing since 11.12.2020 from the area of P.S. Bawana, Delhi vide FIR No. 715/2020 u/s 363 IPC Dated 12.12.2020 has been registered at Police Station Bawana, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

**Complexion:** Fair, **Height:** 5'3", **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **ID:** Burn marks on forehead, **Wearing:** Sky blue coloured kurti, black coloured leggings and slipper in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Bawana, Delhi at E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

Sd/-  
Tel. No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641 SHO, Bawana, Delhi  
Fax No. : 011-24368639 Tel. : 011-27752534  
DP/677/ON/2020 Mob. : 7065036321

## NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

### E-Tendering Tender Notice

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction Distribution) N.C. Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on line (E-Tendering) for the following work:

Description of work	E-Tender No.	Approx Cost	Earnest Money
Modification in OHE regarding dismantling of LP departure LINE-1 of JHS Yard in Jhansi Division.	JHS/TD/Tender/2020/19	₹ 13,25,218.01/-	₹ 26,504/-

Date of closing Tender : 10.01.2021 15.00 pm, Date of completion/period from issue acceptance letter: 06 Months. Tender on line can be submitted up to 15.00 hrs on 10.01.2021. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in)

142629 (AN)  
[?] North central railways [?] CPONCR

## NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

### JHS\_M\_21\_01 E-Tender Notice Dated: 23.12.2020

On behalf of President of India DRM (M/JHS/NCR invites "Open E-Tender" through online (E-tendering) for the following work in prescribed format:

Description of work and place	E-Tender No.	Estimated cost of work	Earnest Money
"Supply of good condition (make 2017 or latest) fat body truck capable to carry maximum 04 wheel sets (08 tons approx.) at a time i.e. per occasion on bare basis for transportation of wheels by road from C & W depot JHS to JHS work shop & vice versa, JHS repair depot to roadside station of JHS division & back to JHS repair depot; JHS repair depot to any nominated work shop as per instruction of railway administration, from GWL depot to road side station and from station to station over JHS division. The truck shall run approximately 2000 KM in a month (including cost of driver, cleaner, fuel lubricants and all other consumable items & maintenance) for a period of 03 years"	JHS_M_21_01	23,84,341.36	47,690/-

Time of completion: 36 months, Tender submission & opening date and time : 15.01.2021 Closing time 15.00 hrs. Opening time: after 15.00 hrs. Online Tender can be submitted upto 15.00 hrs on 15.01.2021. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in). 143420 (AN)

[?] North central railways [?] CPONCR

## GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB

### OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL RESIDENT COMMISSIONER PUNJAB BHAWAN, COPERNICUS MARG NEW DELHI-110001

#### TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tender are invited for disposal of following Vehicle\* as and where basis\*:

S.No	Make	Registration No	Model	Reserved Price
1.	SX4 ( AC CAR) CNG	DL2CQ-6523	8/2011	169833/-

2. The Vehicles can be inspected on any working day during office hours at the above address. The tenders will be received on or before 2.00 PM on 10.01.2021 and opened same day at 3.00 PM in the presence of Tenders or their authorized representatives.

3. The tenders should be accompanied with a Demand Draft of 10% of the bid amount as earnest money in favour of "Superintendent, Punjab Bhawan, New Delhi." The highest bidder shall have to take delivery of the vehicle within 72 hours after the bid has been accepted, failing which the earnest money will be forfeited.

4. The Resident Commissioner, Punjab Bhawan, New Delhi, reserves the right to reject any or all the tender without assigning any reason.

5. If no Tender has been received offering an amount equivalent to or above the reserve price, the vehicle will be sold at the reserved price in the next 15 days to serving/retired Govt. Servants/MPs and MLAs/EX-MPs and War widows of the State of Punjab on first come first serve basis.

Sd/-  
Superintendent

## PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

Regd. Off.: PSEB H.O., The Mall, Patiala - 147001  
CIN: U40109PB2010SGC033813, Website: [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in)

### SHORT TERM

Open (Press) Tender Enquiry, No. 304/P-II/EMP-W 11766 dated: 11.12.2020

Scope of Work: Annual Maintenance Contract for maintenance of Computer Systems, Printers, Scanners & UPS installed at GGSSTP offices.

Time Period: As per NIT

EMD: @2% of tendered value rounded off to a multiple of Rs. 10/- on the higher side, subject to minimum of Rs. 5000/- and maximum of Rs. 10.00 lac.

## In Arunachal, 6 JD(U) MLAs switch to BJP

ABHISHEK SAHA & SANTOSH SINGH  
GUWAHATI, PATNA,  
DECEMBER 25

THE JD(U) suffered a jolt in Arunachal Pradesh on Friday as six of its seven legislators switched over to the ruling BJP. A seventh MLA -- the lone People's Party of Arunachal (PPA) representative in the Assembly -- has also officially joined the saffron party.

The JD(U) -- BJP's alliance partner in Bihar -- has reacted sharply, calling the move "unfriendly". The party is likely to discuss the matter at its upcoming national executive on December 27 in Patna.

The development comes a day after Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad -- a senior BJP leader -- had hinted at a cabinet expansion.

The Arunachal MLAs who changed allegiance are Talem Taboh from Rungong Assembly seat, Haiyeng Mangfi (Chayang Tajo), Jikke Tako (Tali), Dorjee Wangdi Kharma (Kalaktang), Dongru Siogju (Bomdila) and Kanggong Taku (Mariyang-Geku).

Senior Assam minister

Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is a key BJP leader in the Northeast, told reporters in Guwahati on Friday evening that the MLAs who defected had been part of the saffron party from before. "Due to some arrangements they had contested from the JD(U)... This is a kind of homecoming for them," Sarma said.

The BJP already enjoyed a large majority in the House, having swept the 2019 Assembly polls by winning 41 seats in the 60-member House.

Soon after the MLAs switched allegiance, JD(U) national spokesperson KC Tyagi told *The Indian Express*, "We were a friendly Opposition in Arunachal Pradesh. This act on part of BJP is unfortunate, unfriendly and unwarranted. This has caused us embarrassment and also given a chance to our Bihar Opposition RJD to attack us."

Meanwhile, the RJD has claimed that the BJP may attempt the same in Bihar. Party spokesperson Mrityunjay Tewari said, "It is a clear warning for the JD(U) that has 43 MLAs (in Bihar). BJP might try to do an Arunachal Pradesh with Nitish Kumar in Bihar. This is how BJP has started unfolding its plan against JD(U)."

# BJP doesn't give ticket to Muslims, uses them to topple govts: Gehlot

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
JAIPUR, DECEMBER 25

RAJASTHAN CHIEF Minister Ashok Gehlot said on Friday that the BJP doesn't give tickets to Muslims during elections but uses them to topple governments.

Gehlot made this point while mentioning BJP Rajya Sabha MP Syed Zafar Islam of being involved in alleged horse-trading during the revolt in July by a group of Congress MLAs led by former deputy CM Sachin Pilot.

"When we held a meeting here with our MLAs during the time of the crisis, our friends were raided by the ED and income tax. See the level of planning that they did to topple the government. They must have made a map, done a recce, briefed officials, made bookings, you can imagine. They used all weapons... Dharmendra Pradhan and Zafar Islam," he said during a press conference held in Jaipur to mark the two years of the Congress government in the state.

While Gehlot addressed the press conference, Pilot was visit-



Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot (right) and Rajasthan Congress in-charge Ajay Maken in Jaipur on Friday. Rohit Jain Paras

ing Bharatpur to pay tributes to former ruler Maharaja Suraj Mal on his death anniversary. Some of his loyalist MLAs who had sided with him during the political crisis were also present with him.

"A new Zafar Islam has been born in this country. The BJP doesn't give tickets to Muslims. In UP there are around 400 tickets distributed, in Bihar, it's around 250. The BJP doesn't give a single ticket to Muslims. And (they are) using

Muslims for toppling governments," Gehlot added.

Gehlot referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech to a gathering at the Aligarh Muslim University earlier this week and praised it before adding, "One ticket, at least give just for show. But not that too... Where have they brought democracy?"

Gehlot also accused Union ministers Amit Shah and Dharmendra Pradhan, along

with 'four other leaders from Rajasthan' of efforts to destabilise his government.

He added that his government will remain strong during its remaining three years.

During the political crisis, the Congress had accused Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and had claimed that his voice was heard in an audio in which some persons were allegedly heard plotting to topple the Rajasthan government. Shekhawat had strongly refuted the allegations back then.

Gehlot said that four CMs of the Congress party wanted to meet the President but the meeting couldn't happen.

Speaking on the farm laws passed by the Congress government in Rajasthan to counter the three farm bills passed by the Centre, Gehlot said that the Governor is not forwarding them further.

"Our honorary Governor is not sending these bills further. Why is he not forwarding them? I had made laws against Honour Killing and Mob Lynching six months ago, the President is not

approving them, maybe because the Government of India doesn't want. This is a challenge made by them to democracy. Rahul Gandhi ji has correctly said that now there is no democracy in the country, only a show of democracy," said Gehlot.

The CM said his government has waived off farm loans of farmers. He added it waived farm loans from cooperative banks and land development banks but since nationalised, commercial and regional rural banks come under the administrative control of the Union Finance Ministry, the state government has sent a proposal of a one-time settlement to the Centre.

Gehlot added that for this he has also written letters to the Prime Minister and Union Finance Minister and has also proposed that the cost be shared between the Rajasthan government and the Centre in a ratio of 50:50.

Responding to a question about the rebellion of Pilot, Gehlot said that all he has to say on the entire episode is 'forget and forgive'.

## HC nod for Uddhav govt to make plans for Bhima Koregaon programme

CHANDAN HAYGUNDE  
PUNE, DECEMBER 25

THE BOMBAY High Court has granted permission to the Maharashtra government to enter upon the "disputed land" around the Jaystambh to make arrangements for the January 1 programme to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Bhima Koregaon.

Justice V G Bisht passed the order in this regard on December 23, as per which the government has been permitted to enter upon the "suit land" to make necessary arrangements for the public to visit the victory pillar (Jaystambh) from December 25 to January 5, 2021. "Once this period expires on January 5, 2021, the state shall restore the status of the suit land (as it was on December 25) by January 15," the HC order stated.

Like last year, the government through Pune district collector moved the HC and sought permission to enter on the disputed land to make arrangements for the January 1 programme at Jaystambh.

## INDIA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FESTIVAL

# Citing scientists' role in Covid-19 fight, Venkaiah asserts need for scientific temper

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

ADDRESSING THE concluding session of the India International Science Festival on Friday, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said it is the hard work of scientists in the country that has brought India on the verge of releasing our own indigenous Covid-19 vaccine.

The Vice President said that at the beginning of the pandemic, India started off with barely a few testing kits, but within months, scientists developed cheaper indigenous rapid testing kits, ventilators and PPEs.

"Today, we are even able to export PPEs. It is in this context that people have to be made aware of scientific developments of the day and the work of the dedicated scientists," he said, adding, "Science is not just about natural laws and state of the art technology. Science is also about the spirit of rational inquiry that can guide us in our lives. This is even recognised by our Constitution, which identifies the development of scientific temper as one of our Fundamental Duties."

"If we imbibe this temper, we can apply scientific methodology to every endeavour of life and make informed decisions. The methodology is simple: enquire, investigate, reason, and when satisfied, accept," he said.

"The pandemic has also reinforced the importance of scientific temper in our lives. One of the major challenges in this pandemic has been the prevalence of the 'infodemic'. False information on the nature of the virus, medication and the vaccine caused panic and anxiety among the people. It is not vaccines or drugs that can defeat the infodemic, but a rational outlook among people. A citizenry that can think critically will be immune to such misinformation or fake news," Naidu said.



Science is also about the spirit of rational inquiry that can guide us: V-P Naidu

Pointing out India's long tradition of sharing its scientific advancements with the rest of the world, he said that our decimal system was borrowed by Arab traders, which later spread to medieval Europe. "It is in the same spirit that we have not only become the pharmaceutical hub of the world, but we have been extensively sharing these life-saving drugs with the rest of the developing world," he said.

FULL REPORT ON [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## Women achievers in science recount journey to success

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

AN ASTROPHYSICIST, a Padma Shri awardee in science and technology, a top scientist at Tata Consultancy Services, the first woman commercial pilot of India and a BAFTA award winning actor were among the women achievers roped in by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to share their experiences on a virtual platform to encourage women in their career paths, especially in science.

Officials of NEERI, hosts of the Women Scientists' and Entrepreneurs' Conclave, said the aim of the conclave was to promote "awareness on the importance of the role of women in a sustainable growth of the country, via science and technology".

Gender parity and increasing women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine subjects and having them choose careers in science is being pushed by the Ministry of Science and Technology. The conclave is being held in light of this gender-parity impetus. "The programme will address issues that can accelerate

gender equality by including more women in science, technology and innovation, addressing grass root application of science to society and empowering women both in the rural and urban sectors," said an official.

Addressing the conclave, Dr Urmila Mitra Kraev, a plasma physicist at University of Cambridge, said that as a young mother she was aware of the issues related to pursuing a science career. "But the rewards of science discovery are far greater than the difficulties and with planning and determination, things do work out if one is confident of one's goal," she said.

Indian physicist and Padma Shri recipient Prof Rohini Godbole talked about her journey from studying physics in Pune to her current position as a particle physicist best known for her work at CERN. Her work on high energy photons could form the basis for the next generation of particle colliders, used to study the fabric and composition of the universe. She said she came from a middle-class family that was supportive of her decision to pursue a career in science.

Harpreet Singh is the first woman to be selected by Air India as the first woman commercial pilot of India in 1988. However, due to health reasons, she had to quit her flying job. Since then, she has been active in other areas of aviation, including flight safety. She has been appointed CEO of the state-run airline's subsidiary Alliance Air, becoming the first-ever woman to head an Indian carrier.

Dr. Sharmila Mande, Chief Scientist and Head of Bio Sciences R&D in TCS, said she is a strong supporter of women in science, especially in leadership positions. Dr Mande is one of the first who worked on computational biology. She suggested to follow one's heart to take up any challenges in life.

Renowned actor Rohini Hattangadi recounted her journey. "One of the most difficult roles was playing middle aged Kasturba Gandhi in Gandhi opposite Ben Kingsley at the age of 27," said the actor, who has received several awards, including the prestigious BAFTA for the role.

## Amartya Sen being targeted as he isn't affiliated to BJP ideology, says Mamata

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 25

A DAY after Visva-Bharati University (VBU) wrote to the West Bengal government, accusing economist Amartya Sen of illegally occupying its plots, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday said the accusation had been levelled against the Nobel laureate as he was "not affiliated to BJP's ideology".

The VBU administration has alleged dozens of the university's plots had been incorrectly recorded and the list of unauthorised occupants included Sen.

Banerjee said, "We all salute Amartya Sen. Just because he isn't inclined towards BJP's ideology, they're levelling such allegations against him." Writing to the Nobel laureate on Friday, the CM said, "We all know about your family's deep and organic bonds with Santiniketan..."

"Some new invaders in Visva-Bharati have now started raising surprising and completely baseless allegations against your family properties. This pains me and I want to express my solidarity with you in your battles against the bigotry of the majoritarians in this country, battles that have made you an enemy of these forces of untruth."

## BOOKED UNDER UP'S ANTI-CONVERSION LAW

# Before arrest, youth was thrashed; 2 held for assault: Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A YOUTH booked under Uttar Pradesh's new anti-conversion law was allegedly assaulted by local residents before his arrest, police said.

According to police, an FIR has been filed after a video, in which some people can be purportedly seen assaulting the youth in Bijnor area, emerged on social media.

"It was brought to our notice that the man accused of conversion was assaulted by local residents. An enquiry has been set up under SP (rural) and two persons have been arrested. More people will be identified and action will be taken against them," said Bijnor SP Dharm Veer Singh.

According to police, an FIR has been filed under charges of assault and criminal intimidation against unknown persons. Local residents Shakir and Shehzad have been arrested in connection with the assault case.

Around 10.30 pm on December 14, the girl, a Dalit,

and her former classmate, a Muslim, were walking back home after a friend's birthday party, when they were allegedly chased by a group of men, beaten with sticks and questioned.

When it became apparent that they belonged to different religions, they were allegedly whisked away to a local police station.

The FIR, registered allegedly on a complaint by the girl's father, stated that the accused "induced the girl to elope with him" with the "intention to marry and convert her".

The youth, who was subsequently booked under the anti-conversion law and charges of abduction and under sections of SC/ST Act, and POCSO Act, is now in a jail in Bijnor.

"Those men beat him up with sticks. He was limping the last time I saw him. They branded us thieves first and then beat us both. They made videos of us and circulated it among the public and made it a case of love jihad. We were just returning from a birthday party," the girl told *The Indian Express*.

## CANCELLATION/SHORT TERMINATION/REGULATION OF TRAINS DUE TO DOUBLING WORK

In order to further strengthen the existing infrastructure, Northern Railway will undertake the Non-Interlocking work for doubling at Haridwar-Laksar section of Moradabad Division. To execute this work, Northern Railway will take a traffic block up to 05.01.2021. As a result, 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)	
02017/02018 New Delhi - Dehradun - New Delhi Shatabdi Special	29.12.2020 to 05.01.2021	
02092/02091 Kathgodam - Dehradun - Kathgodam Jan Shatabdi Special	29.12.2020 to 05.01.2021	
02191 Jabalpur - Haridwar Jn. Special Express	30.12.2020	
02192 Haridwar Jn. - Jabalpur Special Express	31.12.2020	
04609 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Rishikesh Special Express	30.12.2020 to 04.01.2021	
04610 Rishikesh - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Special Express	31.12.2020 to 05.01.2021	
02055/02056 Dehradun - New Delhi - Dehradun Jan Shatabdi Special	29.12.2020	
04888 Barmer - Rishikesh Special Express	28.12.2020 to 04.01.2021	
04887 Rishikesh - Barmer Special Express	29.12.2020 to 05.01.2021	
04113 Prayagraj - Dehradun Special Express	28.12.2020 to 04.01.2021	
04114 Dehradun - Prayagraj Special Express	29.12.2020 to 05.01.2021	
05001/05002 Muzaffarpur Jn. - Dehradun - Muzaffarpur Jn. Special Exp.	28.12.2020 to 04.01.2021	
05005/05006 Gorakhpur Jn. - Dehradun - Gorakhpur Jn. Special Express	30.12.2020 to 05.01.2021	

Short Termination/ Partially Cancellation of Trains			
Train No. & Name	Short Terminated at/Originated from	Partial Cancellation Between Stations	Date (from the Originating Station)
09609 Udaipur City - Haridwar Spl. Exp.	at Delhi	Delhi - Haridwar	28.12.2020 to 04.01.2021
09610 Haridwar - Udaipur City Spl. Exp.	from Delhi	Haridwar - Delhi	29.12.2020 to 05.01.2021
09111 Valsad - Haridwar Spl. Express	at Meerut City	Meerut City - Haridwar	29.12.2020
09112 Haridwar - Valsad Spl. Express	from Meerut City	Haridwar - Meerut City	30.12.2020
09017 Bandra Terminus - Haridwar Special Express	at Meerut City	Meerut City - Haridwar	30.12.2020
09018 Haridwar - Bandra Terminus Special Express	from Meerut City	Haridwar - Meerut City	31.12.2020

Regulation of Train		
Train No. & Name	Regulation	Date (from the Originating Station)
04042 Dehradun - Delhi Special Express	will be regulated for 60 Minutes	29.12.2020

Please 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](http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in)

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(पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय का एक स्वायत्त निकाय, भारत सरकार)  
(An Autonomous body of the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Govt. of India)  
P.B. No. 2273, (Behind to Peenya Metro Station), HMT Link Road, Off Tumkur Road, P.O. Yeshwanthpur, Bengaluru-560 022. Ph.: 080-30534000, 30534001, 30534049, 28394231-32-33 Fax: 080-28396361/30534021, 28395970 E-mail: [director@ipirti.gov.in](mailto:director@ipirti.gov.in), [contactus@ipirti.gov.in](mailto:contactus@ipirti.gov.in)

## EMPLOYMENT NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited from eligible Indian National candidates by IPIRTI, Bengaluru for the following Posts:

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Posts lying Vacant	Essential qualification as per Approved Recruitment Rules	Pay Matrix Level	Reservation as per Roster
1.	Driver	01 (ONE)	<b>Essential:</b> i) Possession of a valid driving license for motor cars. ii) Pass in 10 <sup>th</sup> standard from Central/ State Board. <b>Desirable:</b> i) Knowledge of Motor mechanism (The candidate should be able to rectify minor-defects in vehicle). ii) Trade Test.	Level 2 [19900-34000]	UR
2.	Multi Tasking Staff (MTS)	01 (ONE)	<b>Essential:</b> 10 <sup>th</sup> Standard pass from a recognized board.	Level 1 [18000-30600]	UR
3.	Carpenter	01 (ONE)	SSC/HSC/12 <sup>th</sup> in Science with 60% marks in aggregate/ITI certificate of 2 years duration in relevant field.	Level 2 [19900-34000]	UR
4.	Laboratory Assistant	01 (ONE)	SSC/10 <sup>th</sup> standard in Science with 50% marks in the aggregate or ITI certificate of 2 years duration in relevant field.	Level 1 [18000-30600]	UR

## GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Age limit:** (a) Between 18 & 27 years for post No. 1 and 2. (b) Between 18 & 28 years for Post No. 3 and 4. The Crucial date for determining the age limit shall be the closing date for receipt of application. Age relaxation for Government servants as per approved Recruitment Rules of IPIRTI.
- Interested candidates may submit their applications (separate applications for each post) in the prescribed form which can be downloaded from our website [www.ipirti.gov.in](http://www.ipirti.gov.in). Non-refundable Application fee of Rs.600/- (Rs.300/- for SC/ST candidates along with renewed/latest caste certificate proof) should be paid along with application, by way of Demand Draft ONLY drawn from any nationalized bank, in favour of IPIRTI Corpus Fund, payable at Bangalore.
- Last Date for receipt of completed application form along with relevant documents is 30 days (including NE Region) from the date of publication of this advertisement in the Employment News.** The duly completed applications along with requisite application fee should be sent to: Director, Indian Plywood Industries Research & Training Institute (IPIRTI), Post Bag No. 2273, off. Tumkur Road, HMT Link Road, Bengaluru-560 022, Karnataka.
- Please refer to our website [www.ipirti.gov.in](http://www.ipirti.gov.in) for further details about general instructions and terms & conditions about the advertised posts. Updates/Corrigendum/Addendum or Cancellation to this advertisement, if any, shall be published on IPIRTI website only. No interim correspondence will be entertained. Therefore, the candidates are advised to check IPIRTI website regularly.

Sd/- Director

**STATE ELECTION COMMISSION HARYANA**  
Nirvachan Sadan, Plot No. 2, Sector-17, Panchkula  
Telephone: 0172-2584810, Fax-0172-2585904  
Website: [www.secharyana.gov.in](http://www.secharyana.gov.in)

## PUBLIC NOTICE

All the electors, to whom Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC) have been issued by the Election Commission of India, shall have to produce it to prove their identity to cast the vote for general elections of Municipal Corporation, Ambala, Panchkula, Sonapat, Municipal Council Rewari and Municipal Committee, Sampla, Dharuherha and Uklana to be held on 27.12.2020.

However, the electors who have not obtained Elector's Photo Identity Card as yet shall have to produce any one of the following alternative documents for establishing their identity at the polling station, in case their identity is challenged:

- Passport,
- Driving License,
- Income Tax Identity (PAN) Card,
- Service Identity Card issued to employees by Central/ State Government Offices, Public Sector Undertakings, Local Bodies or other public Limited Company,
- Pass Book of accounts, having photograph, opened in a scheduled bank or post office,
- Freedom Fighter Identity Card having photograph,
- SC/ST/OBC certificate having photograph, issued by competent authority,
- Certificate of Physical Handicap having photograph issued by the Competent Authority,
- Arms License having photograph,
- Job Cards with photograph issued under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme,
- Property documents with photographs such as Pattas, Registered Deeds etc,
- Pension Documents such as Ex-Servicemen Pension Book/Pension Payment Order, Ex-Servicemen's Widow/Dependent Certificate, Old Age Pension Order, Widow Pension Order, with photograph,
- Health Insurance Scheme Smart Cards with Photograph,
- Ration Cards or any other similar documents establishing the identity of the electors to the satisfaction of the Presiding Officer, having photograph.
- The Aadhar Card issued by UIDAI.

All the electors of above mentioned municipalities are advised to carry with them the Elector's photo Identity Card or any of the above mentioned documents while going to cast their vote.

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# 'Biden will be more effective on China, has said he will bring allies for common approach'

What can India expect in its relationship with the US under the Biden Administration? Former Indian Ambassador to Washington DC Arun Singh, who interacted with many Obama-Biden team members who are now in the Biden-Harris team, discussed key issues with a nationwide audience



## On the Biden Administration and China

A lot of people in India, the US and elsewhere have been trying to figure out how the Biden Administration would respond to the China challenge. They have been partly concerned because of some vacillations that were seen during the Obama Administration...

President Trump himself, in the beginning, gave mixed signals... Subsequently the Trump Administration clearly defined China as a major global rival, a strategic competitor...

Now, when you look at what Biden has said and what people around him have said... they have said the situation today is very different from the situation in 2016, China follows unfair trade practices, China is a major technological rival to the US... So I would believe there will be some nuancing because they will want to show that they are different from the Trump Administration — and some have said that Trump was very aggressive on China by the end — but Biden would be more effective on China, because Biden has said that he will bring allies and partners to have a common approach towards China. Although the US under Trump had taken a very aggressive approach towards China, the Europeans didn't follow it because he had decried alliances. But if the US wants an effective policy on China, it needs to bring its allies in Europe and Asia on a common platform to respond to the China challenge.

## On the future of Quad

Clearly the Quad made much more progress under the Trump Administration... Quad of course had started earlier, after that it slipped a little because Australia lost interest in the process because of its own relationship with China... But now as all countries, be it Australia, Japan, India, US, are facing similar challenges in many ways from China, (There is a recognition of some harmonisation of work in the Indo-Pacific region... If you see the conversations that Biden has had with the Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister of Australia, President of South Korea, and the statement that has been put out by the US side, there is a reference to the Indo-Pacific and therefore, it is a recognition that in some areas, they will recognise and build on the positive work that has been done by the Trump Administration.

## On the approach towards Pakistan

The US will define its approach towards Pakistan based on how it perceives its own interests being served, and from India's perspective, we have to see where is the convergence and divergence... Today, the US wants to get out of Afghanistan, and they believe that they need cooperation from Pakistan for a dialogue with the Taliban if some kind of reconciliation can progress between the Taliban and the government in



Arun Singh (left) in a Zoom conversation with Shubhjit Roy, Associate Editor & Chief Diplomatic Correspondent

## AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

### On Biden Administration's ties with Beijing and Islamabad

In the early phase, they will find Pakistan a necessary partner in the context of what they want to do in Afghanistan... And if Pakistan plays its cards well, the US would not put pressure on Pakistan. But if they assess that Pakistan is not being a helpful partner, the US approach would change and we have to watch that. (On China) while there may be some nuancing, the substance of the policy will remain and they will also try and reach out to Europeans, other countries in Asia to see if they come with a common approach, and that is going to be the overall defining priority in the Biden Administration in the coming years. Moving from there, they see the India relationship as a very important relationship, partly because of the strength in the bilateral dimension of the relationship.

### On the possibility of China offering a trade deal with the US

If the Chinese are smart — and everybody says they are — they would probably want to offer to the incoming administration something positive, something on trade... Biden has himself said the phase 1 trade deal that President Trump has done, he will not remove that from the table immediately. More than that, the statements coming out from the transition team, they want to put emphasis on getting the US economy back on track. For that they will need certain Bills to pass on a bipartisan basis. The one factor that will enable bipartisanship to emerge would be the projection of a challenge from China. So, when they project that there is a major challenge from China, that is what will bring the Democrats and Republicans together on the economic and technological issue.

Afghanistan. And because of that, the sharpness of their rhetoric and action related to Pakistan has come down. The only thing they have done is, they have maintained Pakistan in the grey list of their Financial Action Task Force, as a pressure point.

Now the US has traditionally struggled with a policy on Pakistan, whether to incentivise Pakistan or pressure Pakistan... I would believe that a Biden Administration would be clear-eyed about the nature of the Pakistani state, its involvement with terrorist groups. So they will recognise that but they will have a certain need for cooperation from Pakistan in the context of Afghanistan and that will limit the extent of pressure...

### On Biden's likely policy on immigration

The Biden campaign had made it clear that they would not be as harsh on immigration is-

suues as the Trump Administration has been. The Biden Administration has signalled that they recognise that the high-skilled immigrant worker, including the high-skilled Indian immigrant worker, contributes to the US remaining in the lead in technology globally...

But this is a challenge that I have also in the time of the Obama Administration. Even then, there was a phase when the visa fees for H1B workers of certain categories of companies, which impacted Indian companies very much, were raised to three times. So this is the pressure the US system faces — they want to get more skilled workers because it helps the US, but at the same time, many US workers who are unemployed, who lose jobs, start generating a campaign that they are losing jobs because of the H1B immigrant worker. And that generates pressure on

Congressmen, Senators to try and restrict that. So I think the Biden Administration would also have to work its way through these.

### On the US and India-Russia

This is clearly going to be an important issue. For India, our relationship earlier with the Soviet Union and now Russia is very important. The Soviet Union gave us military support, military supplies, political support, at a time when it was not available from the West, be it the US or others. And even today, almost 60% of our defence inventory is of Russian origin and there are certain areas where we get technologies from Russia at competitive prices that are not available elsewhere...

[Under] CAATSA (Countering American Adversaries through Sanctions Act), purchase of major defence systems from Russia could become sanctioned, and the S-400 is a case in point... India's case is different and from the various comments and writings that have come out in the public domain, it has been made clear that the US would be making a mistake if it sanctions India for the S-400... If the US then goes ahead and sanctions India for something, it will affect its own image as a reliable partner and will impact negatively on the evolution of the US-India relationship. The US needs to keep that in mind. I think it was because of this that when the US Congress passed the CAATSA Bill originally, there was no provision for waiver — the US administration had no capacity to give waiver from the sanctions — but the then administration lobbied in Congress to give the President waiver provisions. So I would hope and expect that if the situation reaches a certain point, whoever is the US President would exercise that waiver and not impose sanctions on India.

### On the Biden Administration's likely approach on Kashmir, CAA/NRC

We have to recognise that US leaders will base their politics based on their compulsions, their constituent interests and, therefore, they will take

a certain position on issues that they articulate as human rights, based on how it plays out for them and their voters. You would have seen the kind of comments that came from Bernie Sanders at one stage, comments that came from Kamala Harris, from Pramila Jayapal. But at the same time, people in the Biden camp have said that any differences with India on issues related to human rights would be based on a discussion among friends. My own sense is that India takes its decisions based on its own interests; we don't have to be unnecessarily insecure or on the defensive related to decisions that we take. The US has its own challenges, systemic racism... all societies face challenges. Therefore, any India-US discussion or dialogue related to human rights should be as a dialogue among friends who are trying to understand each other, who want to advance their relationship and a recognition that every society has challenges that it is dealing with.

### On Biden's cabinet appointments

When I look at the appointments made so far, it is a clear signal that President-elect Biden is comfortable with people who worked with him closely — Tony Blinken was his national security advisor; Jake Sullivan was his national security adviser until 2014. I had the occasion to interact with many of them — Sullivan who used to be the Director of Policy Planning in the State Department when I was there, Blinken in his various capacities, Avril Haines was deputy NSA.

So the clear sense that I got was that all of them are very aware and very committed to the India-US relationship. During the time of the Obama Administration, there were many firsts. In 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was invited as the first state visitor of the Obama Administration. In the US, state visits are a very clear signal... and President Obama wanted to signal that there was going to be continuity from the time of President Bush, from the time of the civil nuclear cooperation agreement... And then they also declared India a major defence partner — no other country in the world has this status, and it was done deliberately because India is not an ally and yet they wanted to give India the same level of technology access as their closest allies and partners.

Vice-President Biden had come to India in 2013 and, speaking at the Mumbai Stock Exchange, he said that he'd like to reiterate what President Obama had said, that the India-US relationship would be the defining relationship of the 21st century. And he spoke about what he had said in 2006, that by 2020, he wants the US-India relationship to be the closest. And we are in 2020 now. So I would say that given the fact that many in the Obama-Biden team are going to continue in the Biden-Harris team, I am very confident based on my interactions when I was there that the India-US relationship will continue to strengthen over the next four years.

TRANSCRIBED BY MEHR GILL

(Edited excerpts)

VIDEO: [youtu.be/sYVRgmAcHTU](https://youtu.be/sYVRgmAcHTU)

## SIMPLY PUT

# Reading the new US policy on Tibet: snubs to China on Dalai Lama, rivers

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

THE TIBET Policy and Support Act, passed by the US Senate earlier this week, bookends a turbulent year in US-China relations. The House of Representatives had passed the legislation in January. It will become law after the US President signs off on it.

### The earlier version

The TSPA is an amended version of the Tibet Policy Act of 2002, which came into existence during the Bush Administration. But in an indication of just how important he considered relations with China, President George W Bush distanced himself from this Congressional action, and wrote strong words against it in his signing statement, in which he asserted the administration's right not to implement parts of the act. He wrote: "Regrettably, the Act [H.R. 1646] contains a number of provisions that impermissibly interfere with the constitutional functions of the presidency in foreign affairs, including provisions that purport to establish foreign policy that are of significant concern."

He also said his approval to the Act did not constitute his adoption of the various statements of policy in the Act as US foreign policy, and said these would be taken as "advisory" statements only, "giving them the due weight that comity between the legislative and executive branches should require, to the extent consistent with US foreign policy".

### US and China, today

US-China relations have become much more difficult over the last two decades, particularly worsening in the Trump Administration, and more so in 2020 over matters ranging from the pandemic to trade tariffs, and its cross-world coalition-building against Chinese superpower ambitions.



Paramilitary officers in front of Potala Palace in Lhasa. Reuters

Earlier this month, the Holding Foreign Companies Accounting Act, targeting Chinese investments in the US, was signed into law. Earlier in the year, President Donald Trump signed into law the Hong Kong Autonomy Act.

President Trump is not expected to take a Bush-like view on the TSPA, which introduces stronger provisions on Tibet, plus teeth in the form of a threat of sanctions, including travel bans on Chinese officials. How the Biden Administration, expected to frame its own China policy, views TSPA remains to be seen.

Still, most US administrations, the Trump Administration included, have broadly maintained a diplomatic balance between relations with China, and support for Tibet and the Dalai Lama. The State Department has a separate section on Tibet in its annual reports on human rights and religious freedom. But there has been no real push for talks with the Dalai Lama or on the release of political prisoners.

### The Dalai Lama

Among the most significant amendments is that the TSPA makes it US policy to

oppose attempts by Beijing to install its own Dalai Lama "in a manner inconsistent with Tibetan Buddhism in which the succession or identification of Tibetan Buddhist lamas, including the Dalai Lama, should occur without interference..."

The legislation makes reference to the Chinese government's "Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas" in 2007, and a March 2019 statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson that the "reincarnation of living Buddhas including the Dalai Lama must comply with Chinese laws and regulations and follow religious rituals and historical conventions". It also refers to China's installation of a 6-year-old boy in 1995 as the 11th Panchen Lama, and to statements by the present Dalai Lama explaining the traditions to be followed in the selection of a Dalai Lama, and that the authority to recognise the reincarnation of a Dalai Lama lies with him and his officials.

The Act also makes it US policy to hold senior Chinese officials "responsible for, complicit in, or have directly or indirectly engaged in the identification or installation of a candidate chosen by the future 15th Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism" to have committed "a gross violation of internationally recognized human rights", attracting sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. The Act, named after a Russian tax lawyer who died after being imprisoned while investigating Russian tax officials for fraud, authorises US officials to impose travel bans globally.

### Other provisions

The TSPA has introduced provisions aimed at protecting the environment of the Tibetan plateau, calling for greater international cooperation and greater involvement by Tibetans. Alleging that China is diverting water resources from Tibet, the TSPA also calls for "a regional framework on water security, or use existing

frameworks... to facilitate cooperative agreements among all riparian nations that would promote... arrangements on impounding and diversion of waters that originate on the Tibetan Plateau". While the 2002 Act said the US should establish a "branch office" in Lhasa, the TSPA ups the ante by changing that to a "consulate". It recognises the Central Tibetan Administration, whose Prime Minister Lobsang Sangay takes credit for ensuring that the Senate took up the legislation for vote.

In a statement, Sangay said, "By passing the TSPA, Congress has sent its message loud and clear that Tibet remains a priority for the United States and that it will continue its steadfast support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the CTA. It is a momentous landmark for the Tibetan people."

### What China says

China had earlier said the TSPA "severely breached international law and basic norms governing international relations, interfered in China's internal affairs, and sent a wrong message to Tibet independence forces". After the passage of the Bill through the Senate, China said it "resolutely opposes" the "adoption of Bills containing such ill contents on China. Issues related to Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong... are China's internal affairs that allow no foreign interference". A Foreign Ministry spokesman urged the US "to stop meddling in our domestic affairs under those pretexts, refrain from signing the bills or implementing the negative contents and items in them that target China and undercut China's interests".

If India is pleased at this latest US barb to China, it has not said so openly. India has mostly refrained from playing the Tibet card against China, and like the US, has a one China policy. It was only this year, in the ongoing Ladakh standoff, that it used special forces made up almost entirely of Tibetan exiles to occupy strategic heights in Pangong Tso's south bank.

## CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

INDIA ACTIVE CASES **281,919**



Note: The Dec 24 figure in this graph is based on the government update on Dec 25

INDIA TOTAL CASES  
**10,146,845**

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on Dec 25

WORLD TOTAL CASES  
**79,627,975**

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on Dec 25

## Granted emergency approval in US, antibody fails in trials

IN NOVEMBER, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted emergency use approval to an antibody, LY-CoV555, for certain patients of Covid-19 — non-hospitalized adolescents and adults with mild to moderate symptoms who are at elevated risk of progressing to severe Covid-19 disease. This week, the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) published preliminary findings of a phase 3 trial — in hospitalised Covid-19 patients. LY-CoV555 did not provide clinical benefit compared to placebo. The results were published in the *New*

*England Journal of Medicine*. The trial is part of the Accelerating Covid-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) programme.



**PAPER CLIP**

NEW RESEARCH

LY-CoV555, a monoclonal antibody, was discovered by AbCellera Biologics, based in Vancouver, in collaboration with NIAID's Vaccine Research Center. Subsequently, it was developed and manufactured by Indianapolis-based Lilly Research Laboratories, Eli Lilly and Company, in partnership with AbCellera. Source: *National Institutes of Health, US*

Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch in California has found a new owner in billionaire businessman Ron Burkle. The Wall Street Journal reports the property was sold for \$22 million to Burkle, an associate of the late pop star and co-founder of the investment firm Yucaipa Companies. The asking price of the property was as high as \$100 million in 2016.

## TOP OF THE WORLD



Lyubov Sobol

RUSSIA  
Criminal case opened against ally of Navalny

RUSSIAN LAW enforcement agencies opened a criminal case against Lyubov Sobol, an ally of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, and took her in for questioning early on Friday after raiding her home, Navalny and his supporters said. There was no immediate comment from the police. Supporters of Navalny said the police action appeared to be a response to Sobol visiting the home of an alleged FSB security service agent in Moscow. Navalny had earlier said the man took part in a botched plot to poison him in August. Sobol was briefly detained on Monday after visiting the alleged agent's flat and ringing the doorbell. She was not let into the man's apartment. **REUTERS**

## WEST ASIA

## Israeli jets fly over Beirut; blasts in Syria

ISRAELI JETS flew very low over parts of Lebanon early Friday, terrifying residents on Christmas Eve, some of whom reported seeing missiles in the skies over Beirut. Minutes later, Syria's official news agency reported explosions in the central Syrian town of Masyaf. Other Syrian media said air defences responded to an Israeli attack near the town in the Hama province. There was no immediate word on the target or whether there were any casualties. Israeli jets regularly violate Lebanese airspace and have often struck inside Syria. **AP**

## USA

## Covid patient bludgeoned to death in hospital

AN 82-YEAR-OLD man who was being treated for Covid-19 at a hospital north of Los Angeles was bludgeoned to death with an oxygen tank last week by his roommate, the authorities said. The men were sharing a two-person room at Antelope Valley Hospital in Lancaster, California, when the assault happened on Dec 17, authorities said. They said the attack had occurred when the victim began to pray, angering the roommate, who was identified as Jesse Martinez, 37. The victim, who was not identified, was pronounced dead next morning. **NYT**



A man dressed up as Santa Claus waves to children from inside a plastic ball as a protective measure against the spread of Covid-19, in Ferrol, in the northwestern Spanish region of Galicia. **Reuters**

## Celebrating Christmas in a pandemic: Churches shut, borders complicated

FRANCES D'EMILIO  
ROME, DECEMBER 25

CURFEWS, QUARANTINES and even border closings complicated Christmas celebrations Friday for countless people around the globe, but ingenuity, determination and imagination helped keep the day special for many.

Pope Francis delivered his Christmas blessing from inside the Vatican, breaking with his traditional speech from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to tens of thousands in St. Peter's Square. But tourism in Italy has virtually vanished in the pandemic and the government's coronavirus restric-

**I beg everyone... to promote cooperation and not competition, to find a solution for everyone — vaccines for all — especially for the most vulnerable and needy in all areas of the plane."**

POPE FRANCIS  
IN HIS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

tions for the holidays foiled any plans by locals to flock to the square.

Citing a cause for optimism amid the pandemic's bleakness, Francis said the invention of

Covid-19 vaccines shines "lights of hope" on the world. In a passionate appeal to leaders, businesses and international organisations, he said they must ensure that the most vulnerable and needy in the pandemic be first in line to receive the vaccines.

Bells rang out around Bethlehem on Friday as the traditional birthplace of Jesus celebrated Christmas Day. But the closure of Israel's international airport to foreign tourists, along with Palestinian restrictions banning intercity travel in the areas they administer in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, kept visitors away.

In Beijing, official churches abruptly cancelled Mass on

Christmas Day in a last-minute move, after China's capital was put on high alert following the confirmation of two confirmed Covid-19 cases last week.

Border crossing closures kept thousands of migrants from economically devastated Venezuela who live in other parts of South America from going home for the holidays. Others successfully crossed borders elsewhere only to find themselves in quarantine.

Celebrations were muted in Africa, too, as overnight church vigils could not be held in many parts because of a curfew. Fewer people also reportedly headed home to see families, which could help limit the spread of the virus. **AP**



At the scene of an explosion in Nashville, Tennessee, on Friday. **AP**

## Large explosion shakes Nashville; police say it was an intentional act

KIMBERLEE KRUESI  
& THALIA BEATY  
NASHVILLE, DECEMBER 25

AN EXPLOSION shook the streets of downtown Nashville early Christmas morning, shattering windows, damaging buildings and wounding three people. Authorities said they believed the blast was intentional. The FBI is leading the investigation.

No deaths have been reported.

Metro Nashville Police Department spokesman Don

Aaron said police responded to a call of shots fired just before 6 am, but were not able to immediately locate signs of a shooting, although officers noticed a suspicious vehicle and called for a hazardous unit. While they waited, the vehicle exploded.

Aaron said three people were taken to area hospitals for treatment. He said some people were taken to the department's central precinct for questioning but declined to give more details.

The FBI will be taking the lead in the investigation, said spokesman Joel Siskovic. Federal

investigators from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were also on the scene. The FBI is the primary law enforcement agency responsible for investigating federal crimes, such as explosives violations and acts of terrorism.

At noon, police dogs continued to search cars and buildings in the nearby area.

A Philadelphia man staying in a nearby hotel said that when he heard the blast, he was sure it wasn't a harmless noise. "It was a very loud explosion," said Joseph Fafara.

two severed arms inside.

The limbs were identified as Yeshchenko's, and investigators found other body parts in the river and in Sokolov's apartment in the historic part of St. Petersburg, less than a mile from the Hermitage Museum.

During the trial, Sokolov testified that he and Yeshchenko had a romantic relationship and that he shot her during a quarrel.

Sokolov was known for his books about the Napoleonic era and his enthusiastic participation in reenactments of historic battles, and his case attracted

broad attention in Russia.

A fluent French speaker, Sokolov was a leading member of military reenactment movements since the early 1990s and represented Napoleon in numerous representations of historic battles and other events.

Sokolov's flamboyant style and fiery delivery made him popular among students, and he spoke about his passion for the Napoleonic era in TV interviews. Napoleon was his idol and fellow history buffs would address him "Sire", the emperor's title.



## Britain sees record rise in cases; US tells UK travellers to get tested

UK sends more troops to Dover to help clear truck queues

PTI &amp; REUTERS

LONDON, WASHINGTON, DEC 25

A RECORD number of people have tested positive for Covid-19 in England as millions spend Christmas Day away from friends and family due to a continuing spike in coronavirus infections on Friday.

Figures from the National Health Service's (NHS) Test and Trace network showed that between December 10 and 16, 173,875 people received a positive result — the highest weekly total of positive cases and a 58 per cent increase on the previous week.

Separately, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), positive cases of coronavirus are increasing sharply in parts of the UK, with around one in 60 people now testing positive in Wales and one in 85 in England.

Experts believe the new mutations of the deadly virus are driving cases up across the country as they are more contagious. It has resulted in most parts of the UK to be placed in some form of stringent lockdown measures.

It has also resulted in many countries putting restrictions on travellers from Britain. The US said on Thursday that it would require all airline passengers arriving from the UK to test negative for Covid-19 within 72 hours of departure starting Monday.

The decision was a turn-



A woman looks through the window at her mother opening a present on Christmas Day in London. Millions in Britain were spending Christmas away from their families as authorities tightened restrictions amid rising Covid-19 cases. **Reuters**

around after the Trump administration told US airlines on Tuesday it was not planning to require any testing for arriving UK passengers.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has warned that tougher restrictions could be needed to keep the mutant coronavirus strain "running out of control" in the new year.

"We believe that we're going to have to get through this tough period now with, as I have said many times, very tough restrictions, with tough tiering," he said at a press conference Thursday.

Britain deployed additional military personnel to the port of Dover on Friday to help clear the

queues of lorries following the resumption of cross-channel travel for drivers who test negative for Covid-19.

Ferry services between Dover and the French port of Calais restarted on Thursday, ending several days of a blockade imposed by France following the discovery of the new virus variant in England.

Soldiers were checking vehicles and drivers' documents at the entrance to the port and French officials, in Dover to help clear the backlog, were seen administering nasal swab tests to drivers. An additional 800 British troops have now been deployed to the port, on top of the 300 sent initially.

## US Covid relief Bill hangs in balance as Trump goes golfing

TIM REID &  
RICHARD COWAN  
DECEMBER 25

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump will spend Christmas Day at his Palm Beach resort as millions of Americans face the risk of losing jobless benefits on Saturday and a partial government shutdown looms next week, following his threat to veto a \$2.3 trillion coronavirus aid and spending package.

The fight over the spending and aid package comes as Americans face an unprecedented holiday season, amid a pandemic that is killing people in record numbers. Nearly 320,000 Americans have died of Covid-19 this year and the daily death toll is repeatedly well over 3,000, the highest since the pandemic began.

On Christmas Eve, Trump played golf at his course in West Palm Beach, Florida, and tweeted a series of grievances repeating his baseless claims about the election result, including one aimed at Senate Republicans, whom he accuses of abandoning him because many now publicly recognise Biden as the winner.

Trump stunned members of both parties when he unexpectedly announced this week his dislike of the \$2.3 trillion spending Bill, a package that had taken the House and Senate months to ne-

EXPLAINED  
**E** Threat of a pocket veto

IT IS NOT yet clear whether Trump actually intends to veto the Covid relief Bill. The Bill was passed after months of negotiations between both parties in Congress, and it is possible that lawmakers could vote to override the veto if Trump does use that option. However, Trump could use what is known as a pocket veto in order to kill the Bill. The President can hold on to legislation for 10 days before he has to make a call on it, and if Trump does that, the Bill will effectively die because the current Congress' term expires next week.

negotiate. The Bill provides \$892 billion in coronavirus relief, and \$1.4 trillion in regular government appropriations. Trump, who was represented in the negotiations by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and had not objected to the terms prior to the House and Senate votes, complained that the package was too full of money for special interests and foreign aid, and said the \$600 in direct payments was not enough. **REUTERS**

## AFTER DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT

## Nepal's Supreme Court issues showcase notice to Oli govt

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE  
KATHMANDU, DECEMBER 25

A CONSTITUTIONAL bench of Nepal's Supreme Court issued a showcase notice Friday to the KP Sharma Oli government, asking it to furnish reasons for the dissolution of the House of Representatives, along with the original letter of recommendation for dissolution and the response from the President's office, by Jan 3.

A faction of the ruling Nepal Communist Party, led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', has accused Prime Minister Oli of dissolving the House in a bid to retain power.



At a march to protest against the dissolution of Parliament, in Kathmandu Friday. **Reuters**

Amid the feud between rival factions of the NCP, China's ambassador Hou Yanqi met the party's dissident leaders for a third day in a row. She met senior NCP leader Madhav Nepal and former Speaker Krishna Bahadur Mahara separately, a day after her meeting with Prachanda.

Meanwhile, Oli said in a TV interview that he would take more

stem measures if he was instigated further, drawing speculation that he could move to dismiss all the seven provincial governments, or at least some of them, and put them under the Centre's rule.

Protests have erupted in parts of Nepal against the dissolution of the House, with some protesters burning effigies of Oli and President Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

## Russian history professor who murdered, dismembered student gets over 12 yrs in jail

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ST. PETERSBURG, DEC 25

A COURT in St. Petersburg on Friday convicted a prominent history professor on charges of murdering and dismembering a female student and sentenced him to 12 1/2 years in prison.

The court found 64-year-old Oleg Sokolov, who taught at St. Petersburg State University, guilty of shooting and killing 24-year-old doctoral student Anastasia Yeshchenko at his apartment in November 2019.



Oleg Sokolov

Sokolov was detained after being pulled from the Moika River outside his St. Petersburg apartment with a backpack with



GOLD

₹49,624



RUPEE

₹73.55



OIL

\$51.29



SILVER

₹66,954

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market; gold per 10g, silver per 1kg. Brent crude as of 23:30 IST

SENSEX: 46,973.54 ▲ 529.36 NIFTY: 13,749.25 ▲ 148.15 NIKKEI: 26,656.61 ▼ 11.74 HANG SENG: 26,386.56 ▲ 43.46 FTSE: 6,502.11 ▲ 6.36 DAX: 13,587.23 ▲ 169.12

Domestic equity, currency and bullion markets and international stock markets were closed on Friday on account of Christmas

## FINAL DECISION LIKELY TO BE TAKEN AFTER SPECTRUM AUCTION IN MARCH

## Consumer in focus: DoT &amp; Trai may dash telcos' hopes of fixed floor price

AASHISH ARYAN  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE DEPARTMENT of Telecommunications (DoT) is not in favour of allowing or fixing a floor price for voice or data services offered by telcos as there has been substantial hike in tariffs by the operators in recent months without any corresponding drop in user numbers, senior government officials told *The Indian Express*.

A final decision on the issue is likely to be taken after the spectrum auction in March. The DoT, however, does not want to be seen taking an anti-consumer stance and therefore may avoid the floor pricing altogether, officials said.

"We have a forbearance model. In the past few months, the data consumption for all players has been very high...pattern is likely to continue now. They (telcos) have

EXPLAINED  
E Long-term productivity is key

DEMAND FOR floor pricing for data and voice services has been unanimously supported by telecom operators, and industry representatives too have asked expedition of the process. However, authorities have pointed out that data consumption has been quite high and telcos have raised tariffs in recent months.

While the industry has pressed for the need for a floor price, doing so may not be as productive until it is for the long run, policy experts said.

raised tariffs also in recent months," an official said.

Apart from the DoT, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) is also learnt to have supported the idea of not fixing a floor price for the services, sources said.

Though Trai had started

consultations on the issue of floor pricing in December last year, a nationwide lockdown in March this year, put in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19, brought these open-house debates to a halt.

Former Trai Chairperson RS Sharma, who had kick-started

discussions, however, retired in September this year, without having achieved the finality on this issue.

It is now likely, officials said, that the new chairperson P D Vaghela may either start a fresh consultation process or drop the matter altogether based on his meetings with DoT officials.

The issue of floor pricing for data as well as voice services has been unanimously supported by the three big private telcos, Reliance Jio Infocomm, Bharti Airtel and Vi (Vodafone Idea). Industry body Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), which represents the three telcos, has also in recent months written to the Trai to expedite the process of fixing a floor price for both data and call services, but without any success.

In its letter to the DoT, the industry body had said that the demand for a floor price on both data and voice services was a "legitimate" demand

given the financial health of the telecom players.

"Given the financial pressure on the sector and the fact that ARPU (average revenue per user) and tariffs of the Indian telecom sector are the lowest in the world, floor pricing is imperative to ensure that the sector is sustainable," COAI had said in its letter.

Of the three, both Bharti Airtel and Vi are under pressure following the Supreme Court's October 2019 ruling on adjusted gross revenue (AGR).

The court had ruled that Bharti Airtel and Vi must pay long-pending AGR dues, the penalty for non-payment over the past years, and the interest on penalty for non-payment.

Bharti Airtel owes DoT more than Rs 43,000 crore, of which it has paid close to Rs 18,000 crore until now, while Vi owes more than Rs 58,000 crore, of which it has paid nearly Rs 6,900 crore.

## INTERVIEW WITH CEO, GENNOVA BIOPHARMACEUTICALS

## 'Vaccine price to be outcome of scale; have output capacity of 30 mn doses per month'

THE MRNA Covid-19 vaccine by Gennova Biopharmaceuticals will hopefully not only achieve a similar efficacy to the candidates developed by Pfizer and Moderna, but will also be more affordably priced for a country like India, according to CEO Dr SANJAY SINGH. In an interview to PRABHA RAGHAVAN, Singh details how the Pune firm's vaccine works and delves into plans to test and scale up production for a vast population. Edited excerpts:

## How does your mRNA vaccine, which uses a self-amplifying model, compare with Pfizer and Moderna's candidates?

Our vaccine will work in a similar fashion to Pfizer's and Moderna's candidates. Regardless of the fact that this is based on the self-amplifying mRNA platform, it allows you to give the message to the cells, which converts it into the antigen, generating a neutralising immune response against the Covid-19 virus. Unlike ours, Moderna's and Pfizer's vaccines use non-replicating mRNA.

A self-amplifying type mRNA is much more beneficial in such a pandemic situation, where the vaccine deployment is not in millions, but billions. For the country's population, this will be the most appropriate vaccine candidate. The advantage is that you can give maybe a lower dose of the vaccine.

Moderna's vaccine is reported to work at 100 micrograms in two doses, while Pfizer's works at 30 micrograms in two doses. We are targeting 5, 10 and 25 micrograms and we hope that any one of these doses will prove to be efficacious.

In a self-amplifying module, one mRNA molecule enters the cell and produces multiple copies, which will then make higher quantities of protein antigen compared to a similar dose of the non-replicating mRNA. Therefore, the effective dose can be quite less, providing a similar protection to disease. Another advantage of mRNA in general is that it never enters the nucleus and, thereby, there is no possibility of integration in the organism's genome, where the DNA resides. It does its work in the cytoplasm, and because of this chemical structure, it is a naturally self-degrading molecule — it goes away within a limited time.

We did extensive preclinical animal testing, starting somewhere in March for nine months. This is important because it will reduce our risk, improve safety and help us understand the possible efficacious doses of our vaccine.

## What timelines are you looking at for the testing of your vaccine candidate in India? What is the scope for

For phase 1, we have got two sites where we will be starting enrollment soon. These are KEM Hospital in Pune and a government hospital in Kolhapur. The first phase will include 120 participants. We are looking at enrolling 500 participants for phase 2 trials and this will go into many sites. I hope it will be 6-10 sites.

We hope to start phase 1 soon. We will present our phase 1 data to the DCGI (Drug Controller General of India), before starting the second phase, and so the timeline for the trials to be completed will depend on these factors. I hope this will take around two and a half months, but this can vary.

We are aiming to start phase 1 trials in the US also with our partners. The NIH has funded us — around \$8.2 million — and we will expand this globally.

At present, we are in discussions with the US FDA, but we expect somewhere in the middle of February to be able to start phase 1 trials. The number of participants (in the US) will be decided by the FDA there, the way the participants in India have been decided by the CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation).

There is a possibility that we might go in for larger global trials, and I presume the target countries for these trials will include Brazil and South Africa.



Dr Sanjay Singh

## global testing of this vaccine?

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## What correlates of protection (correlates of protection are signs that the vaccine is able to develop the immune response required) will you be looking at to ensure that your vaccine is efficacious?

We will be looking at correlates similar to what Pfizer has studied in its trials, and some additional correlates. For instance, (we would be looking at) the humoral response in terms of antibody and neutralisation titers. Another correlate is how good the cellular (T-cell) response is. If a vaccine which has been approved uses the same platform, we know

what the correlates of protection are. During our phase 1 and 2 trials, we will have to see whether we are getting a similar kind of response. We will also look at additional correlates of protection, but these are the most important.

## Pfizer and Moderna's vaccines seem to be expensive for developing countries. How do you expect your vaccine to be priced?

The price of the vaccine is directly correlated with its mass production. It has to be affordable and competitive, but right now the priority is safety and efficacy. Our vaccine's pricing will certainly be in the affordable range — we are committed to that — but it will also depend on how many doses we are asked to manufacture. The price will be an outcome of scale.

## How are you overcoming potential supply chain issues with your vaccine? What capacity are you aiming for?

We already have installed a production capacity of 30 million doses per month, but we can ramp it up fairly quickly with our parent group, Emurec. In terms of raw materials, we are already doing backward integration to make sure we are self-sufficient in this crucial part of the supply chain. If we have to produce billions of doses, the raw material will certainly crop up as an issue. But, for the level we are at, currently, we have sourced the raw materials in such a fashion that we can produce a few hundred million doses annually in a very short time.

Once we complete phase 2, we will be in a much better position to understand what kind of production capacity we're going to aim for.

## Realistically, when do you expect a Covid-19 vaccine becoming available in India?

I feel we can have some bright prospects close to March to April. This means a vaccine in visibility with established safety and efficacy data.

## How has financing and support from CEPI and BIRAC help in the development of your vaccine?

Other than the initial seed funding and support from DBT, the most important thing that came to us is that we have gone through a multi-layer review process, and these expert comments were an added advantage for us.

Every second month, we are presenting to the committee, and they are evaluating our data. So, Gennova has a unique advantage of having such an expert group available for their vaccine development apart from just seed funding.

## AMID COVID

## 'Stronger growth likely for auto sector in FY22, EVs to benefit'

After recovering from the Covid impact, auto industry is likely to see stronger growth in 2021-22, with EV sales, especially two-wheelers, also likely to be positive, a Nomura report said



**33,77,436:** PV UNITS SOLD IN 2018-19, UP 2.7% FROM 32,88,581 UNITS IN 2017-18, AS PER SOCIETY OF INDIAN AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURERS (SIAM)

**2,11,81,390:** TWO-WHEELERS SOLD IN 2018-19, UP 4.86% AS COMPARED WITH 2,02,00,117 UNITS IN 2017-18

**PV recovery to take time:** In the personal vehicle (PV) segment, the levels reached in 2018-19 would be reached only in 2022-23, whereas for two-wheelers, it will be achieved maybe a year after that

**Boost for EV components:** On the EV components side, cell level manufacturing could start off with technological collaborations focusing on new tech like LTO (lithium titanium oxide) batteries

**Positive outlook for EVs:** Electric vehicles (EVs) would also see positive movements in FY22, especially in two-wheeler EV segment, with new players like Ola Electric coming in

**Higher competition:** Wider participation by local players as well as entry of some new players could be seen in terms of EV components such as motors and controllers

**Export opportunities:** Further, export opportunities for EV components as well as batteries could emerge for domestic players as the world struggles to find alternative sources for supply chain resilience

**Why is it important:** After recovering from the pandemic, the auto industry would see stronger growth next fiscal, with some price hikes — expected with introduction of new regulations — being a key factor

Source:

Nomura/PTI

## Manufacturing cos see recovery with softer Q2 sales contraction

Data drawn from results of listed NGNF cos by Reserve Bank

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

DEMAND CONDITIONS in the manufacturing sector returned to the recovery mode, with a softer year-on-year (y-o-y) contraction of 4.3 per cent in the second quarter of this financial year, in terms of nominal sales after shrinking 41.1 per cent in the previous quarter that was hit by countrywide lockdowns due to Covid-19, according to RBI data.

The recovery was led by iron and steel, food products, cement, automobile and pharmaceuticals companies, showed the data on the performance of the private corporate sector during the second quarter of 2020-21.

Manufacturing companies reported sales of Rs 5,99,479 crore in Q2, as against Rs 3,97,233 crore in April-June of FY21. The data has been drawn from abridged quarterly financial results of 2,637

NOMINAL SALES SHRINK 4.3%

■ Manufacturing companies posted a 4.3% year-on-year contraction in Q2FY21, in terms of nominal sales, after shrinking 41.1% in the preceding quarter, as per RBI data

listed non-government non-financial (NGNF) companies, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

Nominal sales of non-IT services sector too posted lower contraction of 14.5 per cent (y-o-y), led by expansion in sales of telecommunication and real estate companies. Sales growth of IT sector companies remained steady at 3.6 per cent (y-o-y) in Q2 FY21.

As per the data, sales of non-IT firms and IT firms during the sec-

ond quarter stood at Rs 80,842 crore and Rs 1,01,353 crore, respectively. "Operating profits of manufacturing companies increased on the back of savings in expenditure; operating profits of services (both IT and non-IT) companies also increased in Q2:2020-21," the RBI said in a statement.

On expenditure, it said input cost pressure from raw materials remained subdued for manufacturing sector in the July-September quarter of the fiscal.

Meanwhile, staff cost growth (y-o-y) decelerated for IT companies in the second quarter, whereas it remained in contraction zone for the manufacturing and non-IT services sectors.

As per the data, with rise in profits, interest coverage ratio (ICR) of manufacturing companies improved to 4.6 in the second quarter of 2020-21 from 2.4 in the previous three-month period. The ICR of non-IT services companies remained below one.

## RIL to buy out IMG Worldwide from sports management JV

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

RELIANCE INDUSTRIES Ltd (RIL) has agreed to buy out IMG Worldwide LLC from their sports management joint venture for Rs 52.08 crore.

The company, in a stock exchange filing, said it will buy IMG Worldwide's 50 per cent stake in IMG-Reliance Ltd (IMG-R) for no more than Rs 52.08 crore in cash.

RIL will rebrand the company after the closure of the deal.

RIL had formed an equal joint venture with IMG Worldwide, an international sports marketing and management company, in 2010 to develop, market and manage sports and entertainment in India.

IMG is a global leader in sports, fashion, events and media, operating in more than 30 countries, and is a part of the Endeavor network.

## EU nations start assessing post-Brexit trade deal with UK

REUTERS  
BRUSSELS, DECEMBER 25

EUROPEAN UNION ambassadors were convening on Christmas Day to start assessing the massive free-trade deal the bloc struck with Britain that should kick off next week but the acrimonious Brexit divorce process finally comes to an end. After the deal was announced on Thursday, EU nations already showed support for the outcome and it was expected that they would unanimously back the agreement, a prerequisite for its legal approval. Speedily approving the deal is



EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier at a meeting of the Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union, in Brussels. AP

essential, since a transition period during which Britain continued to trade by EU rules despite its January 31 departure from the bloc runs out on New Year's Day.

The UK parliament is expected to approve the deal in the coming days, but the agreement will have to be applied provisionally, since the EU's legislature can only give its nod next month at the earliest. There, too, approval is expected.

The strong show of unity is testament to EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier, who has worked relentlessly to keep all EU nations and groups within the EU parliament in the loop of developments throughout the negotiations.

## 'India should seek FTAs with EU, UK'

New Delhi: With European Union and the UK clinching a post-Brexit trade pact, India should now aggressively pursue free trade agreements (FTAs) separately with both the regions, according to experts.

Although it is premature to assess the gains for India from the agreement between European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom, Indian goods would not get much benefit from this pact, they said.

However, India can explore opportunities in service sectors like information technology, ar-

chitecture, research and development and engineering in both the markets as the EU-UK pact does not cover services, they added.

"There is not much gain for Indian goods, but we can gain in services sector in both the UK and EU markets. We will gain more in the UK market as we are an English speaking country," Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) director general Ajay Sahai said.

He said there are no specific customs duty benefits for domestic goods from this agreement.

"Now we should push the FTA negotiations with both the EU and the UK. Indian competitors like Vietnam have greater duty advantage in sectors like apparel and marine goods," Sahai said.

Sharing similar views, Biswajit Dhar, a professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said India had a lot of contentious issues while negotiating FTA with the EU. However, after Brexit, the UK could have different stand on those issues and now "India should pursue FTA talks again with both the regions". PTI

# Why Jadeja for Kohli is a radical selection shift

All-rounder's return gives this team the option of fielding five genuine bowlers

TUSHAR BHADURI  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

FOUR CHANGES in a Test match side will normally be considered drastic, but the playing XI picked by Team India's think tank for the Boxing Day Test match is understandable in the backdrop of the Adelaide debacle.

Shubman Gill for Prithvi Shaw, Mohammed Siraj for Mohammed Shami and Rishabh Pant for Wriddhiman Saha can be termed like-for-like replacements, but the one that seems a bit radical is Ravindra Jadeja coming in for regular skipper Virat Kohli. It changes the whole dynamic and balance of the side. India seems to be taking the aggressive options for the Melbourne Test starting on Saturday.

## Can an all-rounder replace batsman No.1?

The left-arm spinner's batting has improved considerably in recent times, but he will not be expected to contribute to Kohli's quantum of runs. What he brings to the table is a fifth bowling option, probably the best in the world right now. He will not be considered a specialist batsman, but he has shown in the past that he can come to the party when the chips are down. And if the MCG pitch is slow and flat as it has been in recent times, the extra spin option will be handy, both as a wicket-taking and containment option.

## Gill for Shaw was expected.

Shaw's technical deficiencies on pitches that do a little bit were laid bare in Adelaide. Gill is a much more solid and technically-proficient batsman, and his game is well suited to the Aussie conditions with the extra bounce. He has scored most of his First-Class runs as an opener for Punjab, and a Test debut has been considered long overdue. He could protect the middle order, already missing Kohli, from the new ball. The dressing room will be a calmer place.

## Is Pant for Saha a gamble?

There is hardly any doubt that Saha is the most accomplished govtman in India, but there's a line of thinking that his skills are required more in sub-continental conditions while standing up to spinners. The Bengal player is a stubborn batsman who



Ravindra Jadeja is likely to bat at No 7. PTI

## EXPLAINED

**E** has scored vital runs in the past, but Pant has the ability to change a game with the bat in a short period of time. With Kohli absent, the team management may have been looking for someone to take the aggressive option and put pressure back on the Australian bowlers. And Pant is likely to be reliable behind the stumps against seamers. They will keep their fingers crossed that he doesn't make any mistakes while 'keeping to spinners.

## Siraj preferred over Saini.

This is a forced change. Shami bowls a heavy ball and can run through a batting order if he is in the mood. Siraj is more a swing bowler who can be effective if there's assistance available. He also has a better First-Class and A-team record than Navdeep Saini, who was the other option for this spot. Siraj and Umesh Yadav can be a handy new-ball pairing, keeping the threat of Jasprit Bumrah as first change. Saini would

have been preferred if the pitch was expected to be quicker.

## Finally, what about KL Rahul?

Rahul's pedigree with the bat is not in doubt. He is on his third Test tour of Australia and even has a hundred there. He also gives the team management options—he can keep wickets, bat in the middle order, or even open the batting.

But Rahul has been a wicketkeeper only in white-ball games so far, and giving him the big gloves would have been a big risk. As far as opening goes, he has struggled in overseas conditions when the ball moves off the straight, and Gill was considered the more solid player at this stage. And as Rahul doesn't bowl, he was piped by Jadeja who could give a genuine wicket-taking option if conditions are favourable.

As Rahul didn't feature in either of the warm-up games before the first Test, it's evident that he isn't quite in the think tank's scheme of things as far as Tests are concerned.

## SERIE A

# Resurgent Milan challenge Juventus' dominance

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MILAN, DECEMBER 25

LIKE 2020 in general, it's been a strange year for Serie A. For the first time since 2009, both Milan clubs are at the top of the Italian league standings heading into the winter break.

Inter Milan went on to win the title that season, with city rival AC Milan claiming it the following campaign. Neither of them has won it since, in a nine-year domination of Serie A by Juventus, but Milan ends the year one point ahead of second-place Inter.

Juventus uncharacteristically finds itself in sixth, trailing Milan by 10 points — albeit having played a match less. Milan can't quite claim the symbolic title of "Winter Champion," however, as that goes to the team top of Serie A at the halfway stage. With the season having started later than usual — because of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the last campaign — only 14 of the 19 rounds making up the first half of the season have been played. The Serie A season will resume on 3 January.

## Mesmerising Milan

What a difference a year makes. Milan has collected 34 points from its first 14 league matches, exactly double the number it had at the same stage last year. It is also the only unbeaten team across Europe's top five leagues, with 10 wins and four draws and is within touching distance of a record.

Milan is only the second side in those five leagues to have scored at least two goals in more than 15 successive matches reaching back to last season. The Rossoneri have done so in 16 and are closing in on Barcelona's record of 18, set in 1948. The key difference between this year and last is that Milan now has forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic. The team was 12th when Ibrahimovic returned to the club in January, eight years after his departure — and that of others — sparked a spiral of decline.

Ibrahimovic has helped transform the club not only with his goals on the field but also his leadership qualities off it. The 39-year-old Ibrahimovic has played less than half his team's matches this season as he has been sidelined with the coronavirus and injuries. He has nevertheless managed to score 10 goals in his six league matches. Ibrahimovic has also helped coach Stefano Pioli bring out the best in Milan's young players. So youthful is Milan's squad that this season it has fielded the two youngest starting lineups in Serie A since at least 2004-05 when statistics supplier Opta started collecting that data. "Pioli told me that there (Sweden) I have two children but here I have 25 and they need me," Ibrahimovic said in a recent interview, when asked if he had



Zlatan Ibrahimovic has scored 10 goals in Serie A so far this season. Reuters

thought of going to his native Sweden when he was injured.

Ibrahimovic has also instilled a never-give-up mentality in his teammates and that was clearly evident on Wednesday when Theo Hernandez scored in stoppage time to secure a 3-2 win over Lazio and ensure Milan headed into the winter break above Inter.

While ending the year top of the table might only be symbolic, its importance to the players was clearly shown by their wild celebrations. It matters as much to their fans as around 500 of them welcomed the team bus to the stadium, letting off flares and chanting their support, with spectators still banned from stadiums in Italy because of the pandemic.

## Flailing Juve

Things are not going to plan at Juventus for new coach Andrea Pirlo. Pirlo was tasked with turning Juventus into a more attractive side and ending the club's quarter-century wait for Champions League success, despite it being his very first coaching position.

But the Bianconeri are faltering in Serie A, which it has dominated for the previous nine seasons. Under the 41-year-old Pirlo, Juventus is having one of its worst starts since 2010 and is 11 points worse off than it was after 13 matches last season under predecessor Maurizio Sarri. Juventus' problem is drawing matches it would have previously won. Pirlo's side has already drawn six of its matches — more than it has in any of the last eight seasons apart from 2014-15.

Juventus also appears to have become too dependent on Cristiano Ronaldo and struggles when its star forward has an unusually sub-par performance.

## BRIEFLY

### Centre sanctions Vinesh's training camp in Hungary

New Delhi: The central government has sanctioned a 40-day training camp for champion wrestler Vinesh Phogat along with her personal coach Woller Akos, sparing partner Priyanka Phogat and physiotherapist Poomima Raman Ngomdir for a total cost of Rs 15.51 lakh. The camp was sanctioned under the government's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS). The camp will take place from December 28 to January 24 at the Vasas Sports Club in Budapest, Hungary and from January 24 to February 5 at the Olympic Training Centre in Szczyrk Poland. The total cost includes airfare, local transportation, boarding and lodging charges and out of pocket allowance. Vinesh is a part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme and is a medal prospect at the Tokyo Games. The training camp has been planned by Vinesh's personal coach Akos, giving her the opportunity to spar with many European wrestlers in her weight category and improving on her technical and tactical aspects.

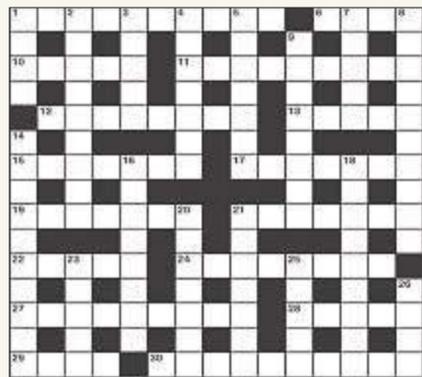
### 'Amir incident will have negative impact on team'

Lahore: Former Pakistan captain and chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq believes that the recent Muhammad Amir retirement controversy will have a negative impact on country's cricket. Amir recently retired from international cricket due to his differences with team management comprising chief coach Misbah ul-Haq and bowling coach Waqar Younis. "It is not about what impact Amir's decision will have on our bowling resources or strength because life moves on. But what bothers me more is the negative impact such incidents have on our cricket and its image," Inzamam told the media in Lahore on Thursday. The batting great felt that the Amir incident didn't reflect well on Pakistan cricket.

### Lampard seeks improvement at Chelsea

London: Chelsea boss Frank Lampard said he is pleased with the progress made by his team in the Premier League so far this season, but has called for further improvement in their quest to become genuine title contenders. "I'm happy but we always want more as managers," Lampard told Sky Sports on Thursday. "The reality is at the start of the season, we had some new players while others were missing, and we lacked a pre-season. Looking at our early results, we saw some good and some not-so-good performances." AGENCIES

## CROSSWORD 4312



- ACROSS**
- Food put in the meadows for the birds (10)
  - An indistinct impression of speed (4)
  - Time taken to muse (5)
  - Thought new item dated (9)
  - Extreme scepticism (8)
  - He tangles with cop — that will mean time (5)
  - Nautical way to the top (7)
  - Fancy me being found in a broken chair (7)
  - Plunder piled so haphazardly (7)
  - Stays to enclose a number in some armour (7)
  - Kicking oneself for getting rug in bad condition (5)
  - Ten girls gone astray, yet still of excellent character (8)
  - All agreed to distribution of a union sum (9)
  - Is involved in one dreadful row (5)
  - Almost drain a pitcher (4)
  - Of use to writers still, we hear (10)
- DOWN**
- Hurriedly left without having eaten (4)
  - Wastes time; a case for improvement (9)
  - Hob I'd built for the Indian washerman (5)
  - Cupboard that will give more air (7)
  - Death to various mice found in the area (7)
  - Game many take to (5)
  - Uncivil and it may be drunk, but it's enjoyed by the fit (4,6)
  - Let's hire out a place in Jersey (2,6)
  - Main thoroughfare used by merchants (5,5)
  - Inflexible hold on a club? (4,4)
  - An inelegant sort of plant (9)
  - Endure the French type of beer (4,3)
  - The secret's out; it's come to light (7)
  - Not in the best of moods, I reckon! (5)
  - Language used in telling one off? (5)
  - Fed up youth begins to resist (4)

Solutions Crossword 4312: Across: 1 Ejected, 5 Amass, 8 Shipyards, 9 Sum, 10 Yaws, 12 Falsetto, 14 Pliant, 15 Relate, 17 Altering, 18 Asia, 21 Inn, 22 Practical, 24 Tepid, 25 Annexes. Down: 1 Essay, 2 Eli, 3 Toys, 4 Dorsal, 5 Assessed, 6 Alsatiens, 7 Someone, 11 Written up, 13 Intrepid, 14 Pianist, 16 Ankara, 19 Atlas, 20 Stun, 23 Cox.

## 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. The golden rule is that \_\_\_\_\_ golden rules - G B Shaw (5,3,2)

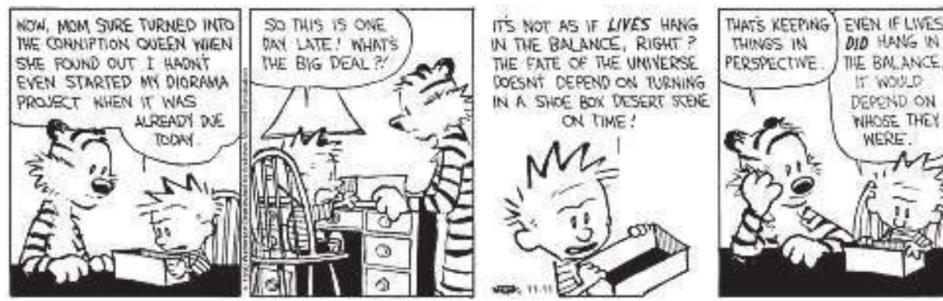
- PVEEE      ILPSNT  
 OWARR      LLOWHO

ANSWER: THE GOLDEN RULE IS THAT THERE ARE NO GOLDEN RULES - G B SHAW

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

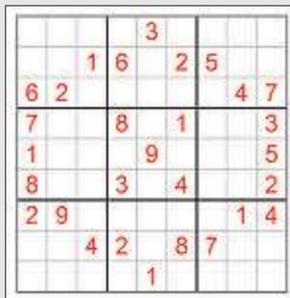


## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



Difficulty Level 2s  
**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 4333



## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

**ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**  
 This is a moment to boast, believe in yourself and generally aim for the top. If you imagine that it is best to be humble, and to hide your talents under a stone, you will miss out. The one important condition is to avoid bad-tempered people, especially the ones who don't believe in you.

**TAURUS (Apr. 21 - May 21)**  
 You have long ago realised that there are situations in which the best plan is to stay still and avoid being noticed. This may be your most effective strategy unless, that is, you are prepared to turn your life upside down. It all depends on how much confidence you have and courage.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**  
 You have no doubt discovered what other people have been up to, but don't imagine that you know the whole truth. This is a very useful time for travel, partly because the results will exceed your expectations. It's possible that an unexpected encounter could take your life in a new direction.

**CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**  
 Think about what you can do for others. Within the family it seems to be children and younger relatives who need maximum unconditional support. Your behaviour may be largely dominated by events which took place a long time ago, and memories which may be buried deep in your unconscious.

**LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23)**  
 You are probably unaware of just how much you can influence other people, and it's therefore very important indeed to be positive, to encourage, cajole and enthuse them, creating a sense of hope. This is in spite of the fact that you may be a little wobbly emotionally.

**VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)**  
 You may well have hidden fears and suspicions, perhaps because you imagine that an agreement is coming unstuck. Careful and practical action is the answer. Also, raise your spirits with pleasant day-dreams, and spend a little time planning those much-needed improvements.

**LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)**  
 Seen from one angle your stars are positively riotous, although social costs may spiral out of control unless you take firm action. Old friends may be on your mind, so get in touch. Steer clear of conflict; even if that does mean postponing a particular appointment.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)**  
 Your stars have seldom looked more competitive. Put aside any doubts, overcome all qualms, and set out to be number one in love, at home and at work. Only accept those social taboos and constraints which suit you. And don't let everyone else know your intentions - unless you absolutely have to.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 22)**  
 Life is in the balance and could swing either way, whether towards confrontation or towards great joy. The choice is yours. The main consideration, though, is always to aim for the most adventurous options, broadening your horizons and catching a glimpse of the larger picture.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 - Jan. 20)**  
 You seem to be going through an extravagant phase and, in some cases, that may be an understatement! Domestic and family commitments could add to the monetary burden, while personal relationships are heading for an intense period. The next few weeks could bring surprises, so get ready.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)**  
 Matrimonial and partnership affairs become even more important, if such a thing were possible. It is necessary to put your own interests to one side ever so briefly, offering your full emotional support to people you love. I hope they'll appreciate your sacrifice.

**PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar 20)**  
 The one thing which really bothers you now concerns the extent to which you have been exploited. It is never pleasant to have your emotions taken for granted, but that is what seems to have happened. Perhaps you should pick the right moment and explain how you feel.

## TIM PAINE CALLS FOR SYDNEY SACRIFICE

Australian skipper Tim Paine on Friday invited broadcast and events staff to make a "small sacrifice" of joining them in a bio-secure bubble and ensure the third Test goes ahead as planned despite a spike in COVID-19 cases in Sydney. **PTI**

## BOXING DAY TEST

## 'If Kohli is angry Amitabh, Rahane is Amol Palekar'

In Kohli's absence, India is expected to see a drastic change in leadership style. However, it is Rahane who actually reflects the true character of this team

DEVENDRA PANDEY &  
SRIRAM VEERA  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

"IF KOHLI is the angry Amitabh Bachchan, then Rahane is the Amol Palekar of Indian cricket," former Mumbai player and coach Vinayak Samant, Rahane's roommate in the domestic team, nails the persona for us.

Palekar is a man of substance and a talented actor who made his name with gentle, modest characters with a discernible middle-classness; *aapla normal mulga* (our normal boy), as they say in Marathi, words that would perfectly describe Rahane. With the pressure of expectations diluted in the absence of Kohli and Mohammed Shami, Rahane's earthy lot stand a pretty decent chance in the second Test, in particular because of the conditions in Melbourne (the MCG pitch is expected to be a bit dry, and not offer steep bounce or excessive pace).

It's Rahane's image that this team of characters actually reflects. They might dream about being Amitabhs and Kohlis, but parse through the line-up, from top to bottom, and one doesn't get the image of any outlandish hero wading through burning decks. They seem more like a common man waiting for the bus or local train, ready to take a deep breath and thrust themselves into the seemingly insurmountable odds of everyday life. Like Rahane.

"He is not the type who will talk loudly or mouth curses. He will talk sensibly even in crunch pressure situations. He doesn't get hyper. He is the silent man like Palekar. I never remember



Ajinkya Rahane has captained India twice in Tests, winning both the games. **AP**

ber him being loud. Even if upset, he won't show it in his reaction. That's his nature," Samant says.

There is a popular story in the Indian dressing room, shared by Rohit Sharma in the show *Breakfast with Champions*. Once, in Australia, the senior players had convinced Rahane that he needs to sledge back the Australians who were needling him. "Two or three players were sledging him, saying 'f--- you, play shots and such, Aju went towards them and did' — Sharma mimicked Rahane, sticking his tongue out and showing it to the player, and Sharma convulses with laughter in the retelling. Rahane doesn't mouth cuss words or reach out for middle fingers; he sticks his tongue out.

Rahane, the earnest sincere somewhat sly person — who is always punctual — is known but it doesn't tell anything about how he would captain. Someone who observed him at close quarters for two months, just recently, is

**He is not the type who will talk loudly or mouth curses. He will talk sensibly even in crunch pressure situations. He doesn't get hyper. He is the silent man like Palekar. I never remember him being loud. Even if upset, he won't show it in his reaction. That's his nature.**

VINAYAK SAMANT,  
FORMER MUMBAI TEAM-MATE

Mohammad Kaif, the assistant coach at Rahane's IPL franchise Delhi Capitals.

"I was really impressed. He is honest and trustworthy, two qualities that all players look forward to in a captain. He is a team man, and that's just not an empty praise. He wasn't able to crack into the playing XI in the initial games

this IPL and he might have felt disappointed within, but never showed it. He was the most eager at training, fielding like a fresh youngster, encouraging the rest. In the games, he would willingly go in as substitute and give it his all, and increased the energy levels of the team. He has often run in to give drinks as well, and even then would shout out some words of encouragement.

"Total team spirit; players notice all this and take inspiration. An India vice-captain not throwing tantrums, but eagerly doing everything. In fact, it was I who felt compelled to tell him that his name was discussed in every selection meeting and we are trying to find a way to get him in etc. He never once asked me in our numerous breakfast chats or anytime else about why he hasn't been picked," Kaif says.

Kaif was also impressed by the cricketer's intelligence. "He doesn't talk too much in team

meetings, but whenever he said something, his views were spot on and hence, respected by everyone. He will also be good for the youngsters like Mohammed Siraj; they will know that he will be patient with them and listen them out. My gut feel is that he is a bowler's captain; he would respect the bowlers' individuality, ask feedback, and then make his own call."

Rahane started to trust his own instincts as captain when he led Mumbai in the U-19 Cooch Behar Trophy. It was a four-day game against Odisha, who needed 10 runs for the first-innings lead, with a few wickets in hand. In the past, he has talked about how he was confused whether to go with a spinner or a fast bowler, as there was tum and low bounce.

He backed his instinct and went with a fast bowler, who exploited the low bounce to claim all wickets and Mumbai took the lead. One of the chief lessons he learnt from the only Test he has captained in before (against Australia in Dharamsala in 2017), he says, was about backing his own instincts. In 2015, he led India on a tour of Zimbabwe for three ODIs and two T20Is, which also had a learning moment for him. In the first ODI, Bhuvneshwar Kumar defended 10 runs in the last over of the chase, conceding just five. That taught him the need to back, trust, and support his teammates, he has said in the past. "I feel he would use R Ashwin really well," says Kaif. "I got the feeling from the IPL that he knows and respects Ashwin's skills a lot, and on this pitch in MCG, I expect him to turn to Ashwin pretty early in the game."

Aditya Tare, Mumbai's captain, much junior to Rahane, also spoke about his strengths and innate sense of decency. "He likes to talk to bowlers. He had maintained such a decorum that he will not mess with the captain leading that time. I always noticed he will keep on giving ideas to bowlers, will be fielding near them. He will play his role silently," Tare says.

There is a perception that Rahane won't take a stand on issues, preferring to avoid conflicts, a view probably attributed to him because he hardly spoke up for even himself, when he was

dropped from the Indian ODI team.

Samant, who was the Mumbai coach during the phase Rahane was captain, disagrees. "There is a misconception that he doesn't take a stand. Some show it in public about the stand they took and there are some who do it silently. Rahane is among the latter." Former India opener Wasim Jaffer dismisses talks about the perceived lack of aggression. "Without it, he couldn't have played for India for so long. He is like (Rahul) Dravid; he will not show it but knows how to channelise his aggression to the benefit of his game. Aggression doesn't mean using bad words or doing certain things overtly; everyone is different. There are lot of quiet but very aggressive individuals. Rahane is one of them."

Jaffer isn't getting carried away, either. "He has the temperament of a captain, has good judgement but it's still too early to judge him as a leader. He has done it in IPL, but there are other factors involved in IPL. We shall now know, over the course of three Tests, how good he is. It will be a tough situation; no Virat, no Shami, no Rohit either. How he motivates his team re-

mains to be seen. Everything is against him, situation is adverse." Kaif feels that the adverse situation will actually have a liberating effect on Rahane and Co. "Look, no one is expecting miracles from him, especially after the way the first Test was lost. But given the conditions in MCG, if it does play out slow and doesn't have that tennis-ball spongy bounce seen in Adelaide, I think India have selected a good team, with Ravindra Jadeja in. Not many will believe me, but I think Rahane has a great chance of leading this team to a win in these conditions."

Bollywood might have long given up on the Basu Chatterjee-type movies but in the world of web series, we have seen a quiet return. A few days back, movie site IMDb rolled out its top 10 web series of the year. Second on the list, behind the series on Harshad Mehta, was Panchayat, an idyllic show set in rural India. A Malgudi days meets Wagle ki Duniya -type series. Perhaps, the time is ripe for *Aapla Mulga* Rahane, on the sporting field.



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