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WORLD

**DEMOCRATS SEEK ANSWERS FROM JUSTICE DEPT ON TRUMP'S ROLE****MASSIVE POWER OUTAGE LEAVES PAK IN THE DARK**
[PAGE 13](#)Protesters walked through the fields to reach the venue of the 'kisan panchayat' at Kaimla village in Karnal district of Haryana on Sunday. *Jasbir Malhi*

Protesters disrupt BJP event in Karnal, force CM to cancel visit

SUKHBIR SIWACH
KAIMLA VILLAGE (KARNAL),
JANUARY 10

AROUND 1,000 farm protesters stormed the venue of a high-profile "kisan panchayat" organised by the ruling BJP in Haryana Sunday, forcing Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar to cancel his visit to the site on the outskirts of Kaimla village in Karnal district.

The incident also saw clashes between supporters of the BJP event and opponents of the Centre's new agriculture laws, with leaders on both sides saying

that several persons suffered injuries during the confrontation.

On Monday, the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a clutch of petitions related to the laws, with talks between the Centre and farmer unions failing to make any headway despite protesters camping on Delhi's outskirts for over a month.

The panchayat in Kaimla, organised by local BJP MLA Harvinder Kalyan, was part of the party's plan to hold such meetings to mobilise support for the laws. However, the protesters had warned that they would

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**EXPERT EXPLAINS****SIRAJ HUSSAIN**
From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight**FARM PROTESTS, BIG PICTURE EXPLAINED**
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Khattar hits back: only amendments, Govt won't repeal farm laws

VARINDER BHATIA
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

FORCED TO scrap his visit to Karnal Sunday after farm protesters took over the venue, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar accused Opposition parties and state BKU leader Gurnam Singh Chadhuni of inciting people to disrupt law and order, and insisted that the Centre will not repeal its new agriculture laws.

**Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar**

Addressing a press conference in Chandigarh after his visit to the venue of a BJP "kisan panchayat" in Karnal's Kaimla village was cancelled, Khattar said: "The Government is not going to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**THE EDITORIAL PAGE****BUDGET: INDIA'S NEW DEAL MOMENT**
BY SAJJID Z CHINYOY
[PAGE 8](#)**HIGH SPEND SCHEMES LIKELY**

Govt looks at 'expenditure' budget to aid higher growth

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

WITH THE uptick in the economy better than what most economists estimated post easing of lockdown restrictions, the Union Finance Ministry is of the view that higher spending at this stage of recovery — rather than earlier — will give a bigger push to growth.

According to sources, the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, Niti Aayog and the Chief Economic Advisor's office, have pushed for an expansionary budget to reinforce the nascent recovery. All have advocated the Keynes mantra to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during pre-Budget consultations.

British economist John Maynard Keynes had argued that free markets cannot be relied upon to fuel GDP growth when there is a recession, of the kind India and the world, has witnessed in 2020 following the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, consumer confidence hit a new low, and they avoided discretionary spending; this led to a demand collapse, forcing firms

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**BUDGET '21****COUNTDOWN**
IN & OUT OF COVID SHADOW**EXPLAINED**
E Spend more when growth low

A FISCAL stimulus in 2021-22 will be most effective to spur growth, particularly with many parts of the economy showing clear signs of a nascent recovery. Having preserved its spending power, the government plans to spend more in sectors such as healthcare, housing and construction-heavy infrastructure, which positively impact many industries.

Soon after bail, police pick up Para in another terror case

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, JANUARY 10

SOON AFTER he was granted bail by the NIA court in a case of terror funding, PDP youth wing leader Waheed-ur-Rehman Para was detained again for questioning in a separate terror-related case.

The Counter Intelligence wing of Jammu and Kashmir Police detained Para immediately after his release from District Jail, Ambphalla, on Saturday evening.

"We had received a message

from Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) to collect Para from jail as he was wanted by them for questioning in connection with FIR No. 31 registered with them in

Waheed Para

Srinagar," a senior jail official said. The official expressed ignorance about the details of the FIR. While the police's counter-intelligence wing remained silent, sources said the FIR pertains to a terror funding case.

"It is an open FIR and Waheed's name is not mentioned. Several of (PDP chief) Mehbooba Mufti's relatives and aides have already been questioned in this case," a source said. "This case was filed after Waheed was arrested by the NIA," the source added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Racism stops play in Sydney as India draw hard line on abuse

MIHIR VASAVDA & SRIRAM VEERA
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI, JAN 10

RACISM STOPPED play at the Sydney Cricket Ground Sunday.

In line with the recent global trend, where sportspersons are starting to draw the line between banter and racist abuse from the stands, the Indian cricket team put their foot down and ensured that the Test against Australia in Sydney was halted for 10 minutes Sunday till a group of unruly spectators were evicted.

The break in play followed an incident on Saturday when Indian pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj said racist comments were directed at them as they fielded on the boundary line. "We had decided

**Police remove a group of spectators after Mohammed Siraj complained to umpires, in Sydney on Sunday. Reuters**Saturday evening that if something like this happens again, we will immediately identify them," an Indian team management official told *The Indian Express*.

On Sunday, Day 4 of the Test, as Bumrah was about to start running in during the 86th over

of Australia's second innings, Siraj walked up to stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane, and umpires Paul Reiffel and Paul Wilson.

The 26-year-old debutant from Hyderabad said that a section of the crowd racially abused

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Explosion in equipment likely began fire in which 10 kids died

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, JANUARY 10

THE FIRE that killed 10 babies in a hospital in Bhandara, Maharashtra, early on Saturday was likely caused by an explosion in one of the several radiant warmers in the Sick New-born Care Unit (SNCU), believe the officials who carried out a preliminary inspection at the hospital on Sunday.

The radiant warmer burst into flames after the explosion — the first of two loud noises heard by hospital staff that night — and the seven-day-old baby inside "was found burnt like coal", officials said.

The baby had been abandoned on a roadside, and brought to the hospital by police. This and nine other babies were

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Covid curve doesn't bend in Kerala but why state isn't overly worried yet

AMITABH SINHA & LIZ MATHEW
PUNE, NEW DELHI, JAN 10

IN THE last four months, Kerala has recorded more than 7 lakh coronavirus infections, more than any other state in India. For the last 45 days, it has consistently been the top contributor of new cases. The state now has the highest number of active cases in the country, comprising almost 30 per cent of India's total.

But while Kerala is the worst hotspot of the epidemic in the country now, what is remarkable is that the rise in cases has not resulted in a similar increase in the

**'OUR DAILY TOLL NEVER WENT BEYOND 25'**
K K SHAILAJA
KERALA HEALTH MINISTER

number of deaths. In fact, Kerala has one of the lowest death counts among the major states.

With more than 8 lakh confirmed infections so far, Kerala has the fifth highest caseload in the country. But there are 11 states that have recorded more deaths than Kerala, including states like Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Punjab, that have three to five times fewer cases.

The state government says that unlike many other places, Kerala had managed to avoid a "sudden peak", and that has ensured fewer deaths.

"In other states, the cases

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IDEA EXCHANGE

'Our culture is different. They (BJP) can't create fear of other religions here. It won't work in TN'

KANIMOZHI
LOK SABHA MP, DMK

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

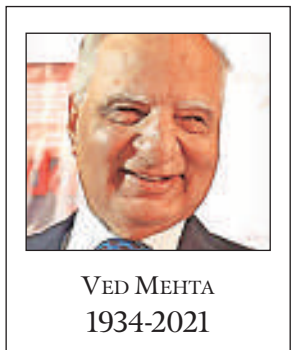
From Lahore to London to New York via India: Ved Mehta's unflinching gaze — and prose

PAGE 1 ANCHOR**AMRITA DUTTA**
BENGALURU, JANUARY 10

IN THE beginning, arguably, was Ved Mehta. Long before writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Vikram Seth would become the ambassadors of Indian English writing to the West, a young man born in pre-Independent India found a voice and space in the New York literary scene in the 1960s. Mehta died in New York at the

age of 86.

"We are extremely sorry to learn about the passing of Ved Mehta. He was a master of the autobiographical genre and a pioneer of Indian writing in English. We will remember him for his keen insight into Indian society and what it means to bridge the gap between the east and the West," said Meru Gokhale, publisher, Penguin Press, Penguin Random House India.

Mehta leaves behind a remarkable legacy as a memoirist, and essayist for *The New Yorker* — and a man who, early on, seized upon his subject: the remarkable life and times of Ved**VED MEHTA**
1934-2021Mehta and his family, which he wrote about, over three decades, in his 12-volume autobiography, *Continents of Exile*.

Born in 1934 in Lahore to a Punjabi family, young Ved lost his vision at the age of three. Remarkably for that time, his father, a London-educated public health officer refused to believe that was a permanent setback; he sent him first to a school for the blind in Bombay — and then, at the age of 15, to another blind school in Arkansas, US.

He was a student in California when he began writing his first book, *Face to Face* (1957) — the autobiography of a young man in his 20s, who had overcome great odds, from blindness to the tumult of Partition, to fashion a sturdy self-independence. It was

the first instance of what novelist and critic Nilanjana S Roy described as Mehta's "need to set it all down". "It was written out of a feeling that I could partly alleviate a life of deprivation by writing about it," Mehta wrote.

In the next two decades, Mehta found a mentor in *The New Yorker* editor William Shawn, who encouraged him to write on subjects as varied as theology and philosophy. R K Narayan and Satyajit Ray. In a 2009 Idea Exchange held in the Delhi office of *The Indian Express*, he recalled: "One thing I learnt from *The New Yorker* was the**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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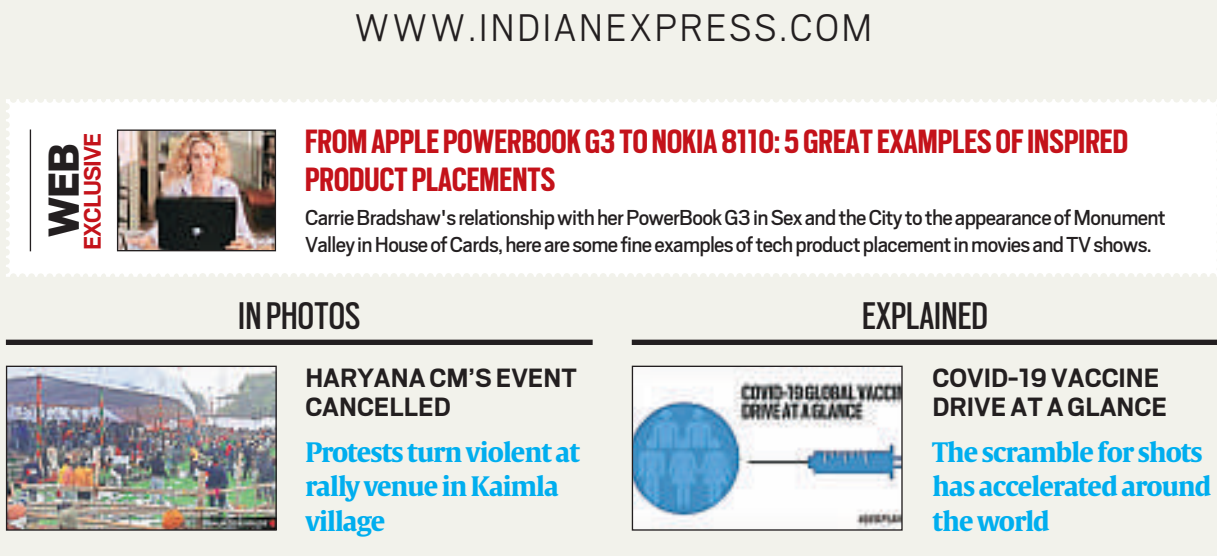
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However, local farm leader Rajender Arya accused BJP supporters of stone-pelting and attacking farmers. "The Chief Minister should understand the feelings of farmers and avoid such

Senior INLD leader Abhay Singh Chautala said the opposition to “BJP’s *kisan* panchayat has sent a clear signal that the anti-farmer laws won’t be tolerated.”

Para, who is considered to have been instrumental in the revival of the PDP in south Kashmir, was arrested by the NIA on November 25 following a disclosure statement by Hizbul Mujahideen's Naveed Baba, who had been arrested along with then DySP Davinder Singh on

"It will be more an 'expenditure Budget' than a revenue Budget; after consultations with various stakeholders, the areas where the ministry is keen to in-

Besides, the government may also consider allowing states to borrow more. In the current financial year, under a special assistance scheme, the Centre has already approved capital expenditure worth Rs 9,879.61 crore and released Rs 4,939.80 crore of the total Rs 10,250 crore allocated to states.

District officials said hospital management services firm Faber Sindoori conducted an equipment audit at the SNCU on September 2, 2020, and found all equipment working and in good condition. A bi-annual calibration of equipment was conducted on September 16, and the reports were normal.

FULL REPORTS ON
www.indianexpress.com

WHERE KERALA STANDS

Kerala has the fifth highest caseload, but ranks 12th in the number of deaths

State	Caseload
Maharashtra	51,138
Karnataka	12,153
Tamil Nadu	12,208
Delhi	10,054
West Bengal	9,902
Uttar Pradesh	8,469
Andhra	7,127
Punjab	5,437
Gujarat	4,335
Madhya Pradesh	3,691
Chhattisgarh	3,469
Kerala	3,305

"We can see some supporting evidence in the cases that are being reported from Mumbai and Pune, for example. In these adjoining cities, the numbers have not reduced considerably over the last one month. Of course, they have reduced drastically from their peaks. But in the last one month, these numbers seem to have stabilised. These urban pockets would also have better reporting of cases compared to the interior areas, for example," Prof Menon said.

"It is intriguing, no doubt. And in the absence of sero-survery data, it is difficult to say what exactly is resulting in these numbers in Kerala. It is possible that because Kerala managed to contain the spread in the first phase, it is now left with a larger proportion of people who are uninfected, and susceptible. In susceptible people left. But as I said, this is just a guess. It is not based on any data or evidence," Prof Gagandeep Kang of Christian Medical College, Vellore, said.

Dr Shahid Jameel, director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University, agreed. "That can surely be a possibility,

Dr Shahid Jameel, director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University, agreed. "That can surely be a possibility."

"They have been quite nasty and hurling abuses as well. But this is the time they have gone one step ahead and used racial abuses... It is definitely not acceptable in this day and age. Sometimes this roots back to upbringing. This must be dealt with an iron fist and (officials must) make sure this doesn't happen again," Ashwin said.

killed in the fire that broke out in
the SNCU of Bhandara District

Sydney

him while he was fielding in front of the Brewongle and Clive Churchill stands — the same area of the ground from where the racist chants were made Saturday. As he pointed to the alleged

Play resumed only after police evicted six people from the ground for their actions. Cricket Australia said they have launched an investigation into the incident "parallel with the New South Wales police". The International Cricket Council, too, condemned the incident.

Captain Virat Kohli said "racial abuse is absolutely unacceptable". "Having gone through many inci-

After the day's play Sunday when India were 98 for two and needed 309 more runs to win, spinner RAshwin acknowledged that players had experienced "this in the past, especially from peo-

			Total	Vacant
TOTAL CASES			12,115	10,691
HOSPITAL BEDS			1,438	1,063
VENTILATORS				
	Daily cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
Jan 9	519	603	12	80,275
Jan 10	399	602	12	77,600
Total	3,468*	6,16,054	10,678	93,92,354

*Total active cases

BRIEFLY

Labourer killed in building collapse

New Delhi: A 34-year-old labourer died after a portion of an under-construction house collapsed on him at Dwarka Sector 12 Sunday. "The labourers were constructing the basement when the part of the structure collapsed," said DCP (Dwarka) S K Meena. The victim, identified as Shek Angar, was taken to Venkateshwar hospital where he was declared dead on arrival. Police said they are taking legal action in the case. **ENS**

Gambhir inaugurates football field

New Delhi: East Delhi BJP MP Gautam Gambhir Sunday inaugurated a professional football field in Ambedkar Sports Complex in Trilokpuri area of his constituency. The field, measuring 30 meters by 50 metres, has been overlaid with a 50-mm thick artificial turf.

2 held with heroin worth Rs 50 lakh

New Delhi: A 35-year-old woman and an auto-rickshaw driver were arrested for allegedly supplying drugs in the national capital, police said Sunday. A total of 150 grams of heroin worth Rs 50 lakh in the international market was recovered from them, they said. **PTI**

ONE CENTRE IN EACH HOSPITAL: JAIN

Vaccine to arrive this week, 89 sites finalised for drive

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

THE DELHI government has finalised 89 sites — including government and private hospitals — for the Covid-19 vaccination drive, set to begin from January 16 across the country.

Health Minister Satyendra Jain said, "The central government has finalised around 5,000 sites across the country. As per the Centre's instructions, Delhi government has prepared these 89 sites — 40 government and 49 private hospitals. There will be one vaccination centre in every hospital and 10 healthcare staff will be deployed at each centre to handle the drive."

The government has prepared a list of 2,25,000 healthcare workers who will be vaccinated.



Covid testing underway at Anand Vihar Sunday. *Gajendra Yadav*

nated in the first phase. "The first batch of vaccines will arrive by Tuesday or Wednesday. In the first phase, healthcare workers will be vaccinated. Thereafter, frontline workers and those aged above 50 will be given the dose,"

Jain further said. The list of frontline workers will also include teachers who worked during the pandemic.

Jain said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has already requested the Centre to provide

vaccines free of cost to every one across the country: "We are monitoring the situation very carefully. From our side, every decision regarding Covid vaccination will be for the benefit of the citizens of Delhi."

Meanwhile, the city reported 399 new cases of Covid-19 and 12 deaths in 24 hours, taking the total number of cases and the death toll to 6,30,200 and 10,678 respectively. The overall positivity rate has been recorded at 0.51%, while the death rate based on data from the last 10 days is 2.94%.

Jain said the city has been witnessing less than 1,000 cases a day for the last 15 days. "The positivity rate was 0.65%. For the last 15 days, Delhi has continuously witnessed a lower positivity rate... The Covid-19 situation in Delhi has improved a lot and is now under control," he added.

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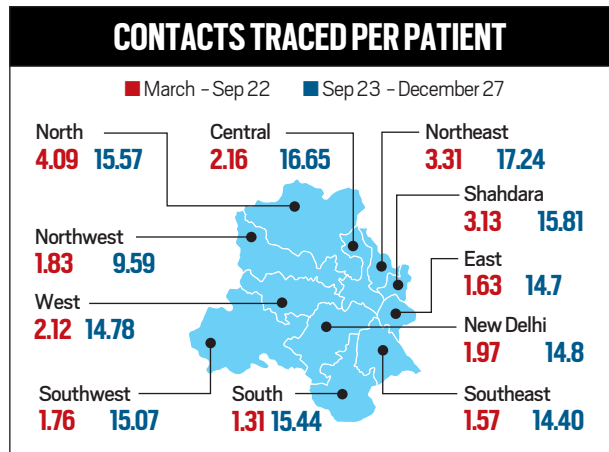
SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

FOR EVERY Covid-19 patient in Delhi, two contacts were traced and isolated between March and September 2020, which sharply rose to 14 during the rest of the year. This is as per official figures obtained by *The Indian Express* through the Right to Information Act. The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), with which the RTI application was filed, said that between March and December 27, as many as 40,96,410 contacts of 4,63,422 patients were traced in total, of which 1,17,981 tested positive.

The improvement in contact tracing between September end and December is reflected in data — between March and September 22, when Delhi had 2,05,014 positive cases, 4,29,766 contacts were traced. Between September 23 and December 27, 2,58,408 cases came up and 36,66,644 contacts were traced.

The low rate of contact tracing possibly explains why a large number of cases between March and September 22 went undetected, official figures show. During this period, only 28,624 contacts who tested positive could be isolated. During the later period, due to enhanced contact tracing, as many as 1.18 lakh positive contacts could be isolated.

A break up in numbers shows that contact tracing figures improved uniformly across all 11 revenue districts of the capital. For example, Southwest district — which had 58,661 infections till around December 31 and comes

EXPLAINED
Why contact tracing?

HEALTH EXPERTS around the world have stressed on the importance of tracing and testing to tackle the pandemic as not isolating potential Covid-19 suspects carries the risk of exposing more people to the virus. According to the Covid-19 protocol for contact tracing, asymptomatic, direct and high-risk contacts of a confirmed case should be tested once "between day 5 and day 14 of coming in contact". It also says that low-risk contacts "does not mean no risk contact and equal emphasis must be given for low-risk contacts as they are potential sources for transmitting the disease".

second in terms of district-wise case count — managed to trace 36,192 contacts between March and September. The same district traced as many as 5,97,274 contacts between late September

and December 27. Out of all the contacts it traced and isolated in total, 2.46 lakh were tested out of which 21,964 were positive.

However, data also shows that only in a fraction of the cases did district surveillance teams manage to trace contacts of positive cases within 72 hours. Out of the 40.96 lakh contacts, only 1.19 lakh were traced within three days, according to DGHS data.

Delhi government officials said that initially, teams managed to track down over 10 people per infected patient but tracing figures dipped as cases surged. "Figures once again improved towards the end, especially during the third wave of the virus in November. The wave could be contained to a large extent due to enhanced contact tracing and isolation," said a senior official.

According to central government guidelines, persons with a history of close proximity to Covid positive patients are identified as contacts. Among this category, those with co-morbidities are categorised as high-risk and the rest are grouped as low-risk. High-risk contacts are advised home quarantine for 14 days. Data shows that 33,48,468 contacts finished 14-day home quarantine till December 27.

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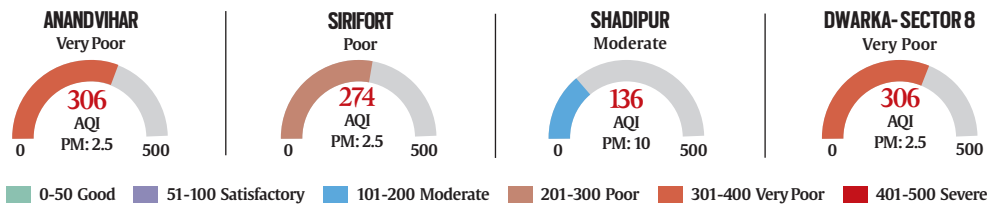
-Arvind Kejriwal
Chief Minister, Delhi

Floral tribute organized by
Government of NCT of Delhi
on 11th January, 2021 at 9 AM
at Vijay Ghat, New Delhi.



दिल्ली सरकार
आप की सरकार

General Administration Department, Government of NCT of Delhi



S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: Jan 11
Mainly clear sky. Mist or shallow fog in the morning
MAX: 17 | **MIN: 7**
3°C below normal | 0.4°C below normal

THOUSANDS SIGN UP FROM PUNJAB

Ahead of R-Day protest, drive to recruit volunteers

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

AS PART of preparations for a large protest on Republic Day during which farmers would bring their tractors into the capital, farm unions are carrying out a mass recruitment drive in villages across Punjab. Over the last two days, thousands have signed up.

Farmer unions had earlier announced they would march to the capital on January 26 if their demands to repeal the farm laws are not met. Rajinder Singh, vice-president, Kirti Kisan Union Punjab, said: "We began the drive last Friday and it has received a good response. This is being done so that our movement is well organised. We will note down details of all volunteers who will travel to Singhu ahead of Republic Day. We are expecting lakhs of people from Punjab to turn up..."

The drive is being held in rural areas of the state, where union members are carrying out awareness programmes for the upcoming event. Meetings are also being held with local panchayats to garner support from locals.

Volunteers are likely to arrive in tractor trolleys for the protest, and a meeting will be held by the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha to decide when they should arrive.

"There is an unofficial call for at least 1 lakh tractor trolleys, but that is our minimum estimate. The numbers will be way more since many are eager to join. Talks have been inconclusive and we have plans for Republic Day. A database of the new recruits will help us manage everything," said Jatinder Singh Pal, an IT professional from New Zealand who has been volunteering in the security team since the protests started.

On the first day of the recruitment drive by the Kisan Kirti Union, more than 3,500 persons signed up. According to the unions, most volunteers are men aged between 18 and 25. Organisers claimed the number of registrations will increase after Makar Sankranti and Lohri.

Last week, farmers across

protest sites had taken out a tractor march on the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways in preparation for the main event.

Events this week

To mark the festival of Lohri, farmers have called for burning copies of the bills on January 13. On the occasion of Mahila Kisan Diwas on January 18, women will be leading the movement at the tehsil, district and city level and at the protest sites. The day will mark the contribution of women in the field of agriculture, said farm leaders.

On January 20, the occasion of the Prakash Parv of Guru Gobind Singh, farmers said an oath will be taken to make this "struggle successful".

Meanwhile, the Navnirman Kisan Sangathan is set to take out a 'Delhi Chalo Yatra' from Bhubaneswar to the capital's borders between January 15 and 21. Hundreds of NAPM workers have already reached the Shahjahanpur border in Rajasthan, farmers said.



At the dangal organised at Ghazipur border on Sunday. Union leaders said the wrestlers came from Delhi, UP, Rajasthan and Haryana. Abhinav Saha

Over 50 professional wrestlers turn up: 'Won't let them fight alone, farm bills must be repealed'

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

AT 1 PM on Sunday, farmers at the Ghazipur border gathered in a circle around a large mat placed near the stage where two wrestlers stood facing each other. Within minutes, the crowd erupted in cheers as one of the players held her opponent in a headlock and threw her on

the ground.

The two were among a group of over 50 professional wrestlers from different states who arrived at the border to lend their support to the farmers' protest.

Meenakshi, a wrestler from UP, said, "We have come here to support the farmers who have been protesting here for more than a month... Our coach invited us to come here. We are their brothers and sisters and won't let

them fight alone. I have participated in national-level matches and love wrestling; I am happy I was able to entertain the farmers."

Hundreds of farmers huddled near the stage to see the players. Rajkishor Singh, a farmer from Punjab, said, "There were a lot of people near the stage. We had to stand on roadblocks to see the matches but it was fun. Many of us have never seen a wrestling match. This was

something new and we were all surprised to see different locks and positions. We are happy that they came here to support us."

Leaders of the Bhartiya Kisan Union leaders said the wrestlers came from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. Some of them have participated in state-level and national championships.

Suraj Pehelwan, a wrestler from Haryana, said, "I have fam-

ily members who are farmers and these farm laws must be repealed. I came here to support farmers... They cheered for me when I threw my opponent out of the ring. It felt good. We will come here again if we get time."

The matches went on for three-four hours, with each bout lasting five-ten minutes, after which the players interacted with the farmers and raised slogans with them.

SC, OBC scholarship deadline extended

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

AFTER SC and OBC students were given less than 10 days to produce requisite documents to apply for a government post-matric scholarship, the education department has extended the deadline after schools pushed for the same.

On January 1, Delhi government-run and government-aided schools received a notice from the education department asking that they complete the online entry of those eligible for the 'postmatric scholarship' for students belonging to Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Classes, in class XI and XII by January 10. In both cases, students are required to produce an income certificate from the SDM office showing that the student's annual family income is less than Rs. 2.5 lakh.

The time crunch caused many teachers to worry that their students would miss out on these scholarships.

"The income certificates are a big problem. We know from experience that it is not possible for parents of our SC and OBC students to get the document in such short time. Our school's scholarship in-charge said she was afraid that there might be zero applications from our school this year," said a teacher at a South Delhi government school.

Following appeals from schools, the planning branch of the education department has now notified an extension till the end of the month. "This branch has been receiving telephone calls and some schools have also visited this office citing difficulty faced by students in obtaining documents/certificates within the short span of time and then entering details by last date January 10, 2021. They requested that the last date may be extended," it said.

Beneficiaries of the scholarship for SC students receive Rs 230 per month for 10 months, while beneficiaries of the OBC scholarship receive Rs 160 per month for 10 months.

CBI arrests 2 men for purchase, sale of child porn on social media sites

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

THE CENTRAL Bureau of investigation has arrested two men for the alleged sale and purchase of child pornography on social media. The accused have been identified as Neeraj Kumar Yadav, a BTech engineer, and Kuljeet Singh Makan.

According to the CBI, the "accused (Yadav) was advertising sale of objectionable material, including child pornography, on an

CBI said an accused was advertising sale of objectionable material including child pornography on Instagram

Instagram account. It was further alleged that the said accused had purchased large volume of data from another accused person (Makan), which was stored over

cloud-based websites containing objectionable material, including child pornography, and paid him via Paytm."

CBI spokesperson R C Joshi said the accused, thereafter, allegedly published an advertisement for sale of said material on Instagram. "On receipt of payments via Paytm/Google Pay from customer(s)/seekers, the accused allegedly shared the said objectionable material with them through WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram and other social media platforms. It was also alleged that

he has gained monetary benefits and was indulging in these activities since 2019," Joshi said.

The accused were produced before a Saket court and remanded to judicial custody till January 22.

On November 16, the CBI had arrested a junior engineer from UP's Chitrakoot district on allegations of sexually abusing over 50 children in Chitrakoot, Banda and Hamirpur districts. Later, it arrested a man from Kashmir for running a child sex abuse racket along with his US-based wife.

Help found hanging at employer's residence

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

A 19-YEAR-OLD woman who worked as a domestic help was found hanging at her employer's flat in Dwarka last Friday. Her family said she had been working there for four-five months.

Police said the apartment is owned by a couple who work as software engineers in Gurgaon. At the time of the incident, the couple and their two children were at home.

Police said the body was found hanging from the ceiling fan. DCP (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said the woman lived with the family at their apartment and would occasionally go home: "The crime team has collected samples. We are waiting for the postmortem report to ascertain the cause of death."

Meanwhile, the woman's family alleged she was killed by her employers and protested outside their home. Her brother alleged: "We want police to arrest them. We met her a day before and she was fine. On Friday, we received a call at 6 pm. They told us my sister was unwell and we should take her home. When we got there, we found her hanging... When I asked them about the incident, they said they were busy and didn't notice."



At Sanjay Lake, Sunday. Abhinav Saha

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

TEN MORE ducks were found dead in Sanjay Lake at East Delhi's Trilokpuri Sunday, taking the total number of deaths to 27 over the last three-four days. Authorities have declared it an "alert zone". Ninety-one crows have also died across DDA parks at Begumpur, Sarita Vihar, Dislhad Garden and Dwarka in the last week.

According to a senior DDA official, samples of the birds have been taken by officials of the Delhi government's Animal Husbandry department.

Amid bird flu fears, the Delhi government Saturday had banned the import of live birds and closed

the Ghazipur poultry markets for 10 days. A senior government official said, "Four crows were also found dead near Red Fort and a few other places on Sunday."

The DDA said parks at Hauz Khas and Dwarka Sector 9 and Sanjay Lake have been closed for visitors as a precautionary measure, and disinfection is being carried out in areas where bird deaths have been reported. "Medicine is being given to the other birds as per instructions," said a DDA official.

Around 104 samples have been sent to a Jalandhar lab for testing and the reports are expected on Monday. CM Arvind Kejriwal had said surveillance teams and rapid response teams are working under all district magistrates.

Govt official missing since return from Covid facility

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

A 45-YEAR-OLD Delhi government officer has been missing for a month, following his discharge from a Covid facility. Nalin Chauhan, a deputy director at the Directorate of Information and Publicity, was last seen outside his home in North Delhi's Tis Hazari on December 10.

According to his family, Nalin tested positive for Covid on November 20 and was admitted to Lok Nayak Hospital for two weeks. He was in the ICU and underwent plasma therapy, and was discharged on December 5.

Nalin, who lives with his wife and their two children aged 13 and 15, and his father, aged 70, was staying in a one-room flat next to their home after his discharge.

His wife Alpna filed a missing person's complaint at Civil Lines police station on December 10. "I last saw him outside our house at 11 am. A



Nalin Chauhan is a deputy director at the Delhi govt's Directorate of Information and Publicity

team of doctors had come to test us for the virus. Nalin got the test done outside and went back to the apartment. After 20-30 minutes, I went to the apartment to give him coconut water and food but he wasn't there. All of us had Covid and couldn't meet each other... The test reports came after he went missing; he doesn't have Covid now. I wish he comes back home," she said.

The security guard outside the apartment told the family that Nalin left after telling him he would be back in a few minutes.

Additional PRO Delhi Police Anil Mittal said the investigation is on.

A senior police officer told The Indian Express, "Nalin left his wallet and phone behind. The teams were asked to look at CCTVs and conduct local enquiries. Last week, we found that Nalin walked from his house to Mori Gate. We are looking there."

Meanwhile, the family has shared Nalin's photo on social media and pasted his picture on walls and at other public places.

Nalin's brother Bharat Chauhan has also come to Delhi from Poland, where he lives, to look for him. He said the family doesn't know what happened. "We would text each other almost every day. I wanted him to come to Poland and stay with me for some time. After he tested positive, he was taken to the ICU and was alone. I can understand he might have been worried but we don't know why he left. His condition was better when he came back home," he said.

Traffic Police: CCTV footage for violations, not street crime

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

THE Delhi Traffic Police has asked all district police and specialised units not to seek CCTV footage from their surveillance cameras as these are only meant to capture traffic violations and not street crimes such as snatching and robbery. The order was issued after JCP (traffic) Manish Kumar Agrawal noticed that several investigating officers were repeatedly asking for CCTV footage, even when it was refused.

"...Investigating officers (IOs) from various police stations visit Red Light Violation Detection (RLVD)/Over Speed Violation Detection (OSVD) branch of Delhi Traffic Police headquarters, Todapur, seeking CCTV footage of suspected vehicles involved in

The order was issued after JCP (traffic) Manish Kumar Agrawal noticed that several IOs were repeatedly asking for CCTV footage

roadside crime. Some IOs even give notice under Section 91 CrPc to the in-charge of RLVD/OSVD branch... to provide CCTV footage and related information..." states the order, issued on December 29 by JCP Agrawal.

CrPc Section 91 deals with "summons to produce document or other thing for the purpose of any investigation".

The order further states, "Traffic surveillance cameras are meant only to capture specific traffic violations. These are not

CCTV systems meant to record movement of vehicles passing on that stretch or specific incidents. Even images/recordings captured by these cameras are not preserved for long durations. However, traffic violations which are recorded are only of five to six seconds' duration and are kept for record."

Agrawal, in his order, categorically said these cameras do not record incidents such as snatching, robbery, etc. "These cameras, at the most, can provide specific traffic violation-related information only. Therefore, all IOs at the ground level as well as SHO, ACPs are required to be properly briefed in this regard. Anyone who needs information about any traffic violation, there is no requirement to serve a notice under Section 91 of CrPc. Instead, a letter may be duly forwarded by the DCP of district/unit concerned," it states.

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

"This has helped in setting the foundation for getting ac-



Home Ministry sources said the government is currently fo-

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

It is usual for the poll panel to issue such directions ahead of Lok Sabha or assembly polls to ensure that officials do not interfere in the election process in any way and the exercise remains free and fair. "To ensure free and fair election, the Commission has been following a consistent policy to the effect that officers directly connected with conduct of elections in an election going state/UT are not posted in their home districts or places where they have served for considerably long period," the advisory said.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

IN PROUD MEMORY OF THE 36 VEER BIHARIS OF THE 2ND BATTALION, THE BIHAR REGIMENT, WHO LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES ON 11 JANUARY 1948, WHILE ESCORTING A REFUGEE TRAIN FROM PAKISTAN, AND, THROUGH THEIR SACRIFICE, SAVED THE LIVES OF 1200 REFUGEES.

Capt Gurbachan Singh Grewal, SC, Jem Shyam Bahadur Singh, KC, Sep Shankar Hembrom, SC, Nk Rama Pati Singh, L/Nk Sita Ram, Sep Hari Charan, Sep Dharam Nath Singh, Sep Manki Jarika, Sep Barnabas Soy, Sep Pothlu Singh, Sep Junas Dangwar, Sep Ram Autar, Sep Sena Bhadrur Singh, Sep Harnand Singh, Sep Bala Din, Sep Roen Surin, Sep Ram Raj Singh, Sep Jawahar Singh, Sep Sheo Charan Birua, Sep Ishwar Dutt Topno, Sep Joseph Tuti, Sep Sani Charan Karwa, Sep Jamuna Singh, Sep Budhwa Munda, Sep Sheo Kumar, Sep Pirthi Singh, Sep Gopi Nath Singh, Sep Sheo Nandan Rai, Sep Dwarka Singh, Sep Babuni, Sep Lal Dhari Singh, Sep Sheo Prasad Singh, Sep Ram Prasad, Sep Sudarshan Singh, Sep Muni Lal, Sep Paika Dhan

Your gallantry will always serve as an inspiration for us. We, the fraternity of The Veer Biharis, salute you.

The Bihar Regiment Association

TAMIL NADU GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LTD.

Expression of Interest Notice :TANGEDCO/PP-01/2021

TANGEDCO invites Expression of Interest (Eoi) from the eligible consulting firms across the nation to indicate their interest in providing assistance/support to TANGEDCO for the effective load forecasting, suggesting schedule of power, optimizing purchase/sale of power and Deviation Settlement Mechanism. The prescribed format of the application form, Eoi document and any other details required may be downloaded from TANGEDCO website (www.tangedco.gov.in) from 11.01.2021 / 12.00 hrs.

Last date for Submission of Eoi: 10.02.2021 before 15:00 hours.

DIPR/112 /Tender/2021

Chief Engineer/PPP, TANGEDCO

INDIAN RAILWAYS

Government of India
Ministry of Railways
(Railway Board)

E-Tender No. 2020RS11745TC

1.0 Executive Director, Railways Stores(S), Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, Government of India, invites e-tender for procurement of 1,44,000 Nos. Friction wedges with specified range of coefficient of friction for broad gauge freight bogies.

2.0 The interested tenderers are advised to visit the website <http://ireps.gov.in> for details of the tender and submission of their e-bids.

3.0 No manual offers will be accepted against e-tender.

4.0 Tender will be closed at 15.00 hours on 10.02.2021.

Director, Railway Stores (W),
Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, New Delhi,
for and on behalf of the President of India.

61-21

Serving Customers With A Smile

UPSIDA

कार्यालय महाप्रबन्धक (अभिवर्धन),
उपग्रो राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण
ए-1/4, लखनपुर, कानपुर

ई-निविदा सूचना

एतद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है, कि प्राधिकरण के विभिन्न जगहों में स्थित औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में विकास कार्य और अपरुषण एवं रख-रखाव कार्यों हेतु सरकारी विभागों/सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों/सिगमों/प्राधिकरणों/परिषदों/नगर निकायों में अर्ह ए/श्रेणी में पंजीकृत फर्मों/हेक्टेडारों से ई-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। जो दिनांक 11.01.2021 को पूर्वाह्न 11.00 बजे से दिनांक 30.01.2021 को अपराह्न 5.00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है। जिन्हें दिनांक 01.02.2021 को पूर्वाह्न 11.00 बजे खोला जायेगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा केवल शपथ पत्रों की मूल प्रतियाँ दिनांक 05.02.2021 को शाम 5.00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती हैं। ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है:-

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत रु. (लाख में)
1	Construction of Boundary wall upto plinth level at Boundary of Mega Food Park Baheri Distt. Bareilly	122.09
2	Maintenance/upgradation of Roads at IA Ramnagar Phase-I Distt. Chandauli	344.66
3	Patch Repair of Roads at IA Sandila Phase-II Distt. Hardoi	183.62
4	Upgradation of Road No. 18 & 3 (C.C Pavement) at Phase-II I.A Sandila Distt. Hardoi	533.49

नोट:- निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर एवं जीएसटीएल सहित दरें अंकित करें। अलग से कोई कर देय नहीं होगा।
निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी प्राधिकरण की [website:www.upsida.com](http://www.upsida.com) पर स्थित ई-लिक एवं यूटिलिटी की [website: http://etender.up.nic.in](http://etender.up.nic.in) पर देखी जा सकती है।

वरिष्ठ प्रबन्धक (यू)
उपग्रो राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण, कानपुर

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
DIRECTORATE OF FLORICULTURE SRINAGAR KASHMIR
Tel-0194-2474234 Fax -2482032 e-mail:-
kashflori@rediffmail.com

Subject: - Extension No.01.

In view of no response, the last date for submission of bids invited vide this office e-Tender Notice **No.13 of 2020 dated.12.12.2020 for Outsourcing of Entry Ticketing System of Mughal Garden Nishat, Shalimar, Cheshmashahi & Green Park Harwan Srinagar** is hereby extended as per the details given below: -

1. Period of downloading of bidding document	11/01/2021 from 11:00 AM to 27/01/2021 up to 2:00 PM
2. Bid submission Start Date	12/01/2021 from 10:00 AM
3. Bid submission End Date	27/01/2021 up to 2:00 PM
4. Date & time of Opening of Tenders	01/02/2021 at 2:00 PM

Other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid Tender Notice.

By Order
Sd/-
Accounts Officer
(Member Secretary)
No:-DFK/GS-519/4327 Dated:- 09/01/2021
DIPK-11526/20

KARNATAKA CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' FEDERATION LTD.
KMF Complex: Dr. M. H. Marigowda Road, DRC Post, Bangalore-560 029. Tel: 080-25536625 / 25536789 fax: 080-25536105

IFTNO.KMFHAMUL-MEGADAIRY/Mech-Consultant/2020-21 Date:08-01-2021

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

Appointment of Technical Consultant – Mechanical for Dairy Project [TWO COVER SYSTEM] [THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY]
Karnataka Milk Federation Ltd., Bangalore on behalf of Hassan Milk Union Ltd., intends to establish a "State of Art technology Mega Dairy of capacity 10 LLPD expandable up to 15 LLPD along with 60 MTPD Milk Powder Plant with other Value Added Milk Products" at Hassan. KMF Intends to avail the services of competent Technical Consultant for Planning, Designing and periodical work inspection for the proposed new Mega Dairy project which includes Mechanical, Electrical and service facilities of the Project. The interested and reputed Consultants who have handled similar kind of Mega Dairy Projects may participate in the tender as indicated below, by logging on to website www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in and also contact Help desk E-mail: hphepdesk.blr@intarvo.com and helpline no. 080-23010900/23010901.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Project Outlay (Mech) Rs.	Qty	EMD (Rs)	Period of completion
1	Technical Consultancy service (Dairy Plant Mechanical works) for Establishment of 10 LLPD expandable to 15 LLPD capacity Mega Dairy along with 60 MTPD Milk Powder plant Project for Hassan Milk Union at Hassan.	225.00 Crores	1 Job	5.00 Lakh	24 months

1) Tender schedules may be downloaded from Dated 11-01-2021 to 30-01-2021 upto 4-00 pm. 2) Last date for Tender submission on Date:30-01-2021 upto 4.00 pm 3) Tender [Part 1] to be opened on Date: 03-02-2021 at 11-30am.

For Karnataka Milk Federation Limited
Sd/- DIRECTOR [ENGINEERING]

Cabinet rejig likely on Jan 13: BSY after Delhi meet with Shah, Nadda

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

THE LONG-AWAITED expansion of Karnataka cabinet may take place on January 13, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa said Sunday night after returning to Bengaluru from Delhi. Earlier in the day, Yediyurappa had an hour-long meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president JP Nadda and party general secretary in-charge for the state Arun Singh.

"Around six to seven ministers will be inducted. The list will be finalised on Monday. We will probably have the induction on January 13 ahead of Sankranti festival. We want the BJP national president to attend the swearing-in," Yediyurappa said after his arrival in Bengaluru. "There are some differences on the names that will be finalised. We will announce it tomorrow," he added.

Earlier in the day, asked about the reshuffle, Yediyurappa told reporters in Delhi, "The party leaders will give good news soon. I have discussed the political situation in the state. The party leaders asked me to send a list of party candidates to Belagavi Lok Sabha, Basavakalyana and Maski Assembly bypolls."

The state, which can have a to-



Home Minister Amit Shah with BJP chief JP Nadda, CM BS Yediyurappa and BJP Karnataka in-charge Arun Singh in Delhi, Sunday. PTI

tal of 34 ministers, has 27 now. Besides representatives from different factions and the old guards, the Chief Minister would have to accommodate some of those who entered the Assembly through recent bypolls. The aspirants include BJP MLCs A H Vishwanath, R Shankar and MTB Nagaraj, whose resignation as MLAs in the previous Cong-JD(S) combine brought the government down and paved the way for the BJP coming to power, said sources. As many as 11 out of the 17 Congress and JDS rebels have already been inducted in the cabinet.

Sources close to the Chief Minister said there have been fresh moves by his rivals in the party to "unseat" him. However, the cen-

EXPLAINED
Bid to boost strength

ALTHOUGH Yediyurappa has always enjoyed the backing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his rivals in state BJP have recently intensified their demand for a replacement at the top post. The CM wants to strengthen his position by inducting some leaders of his choice into his government. Amit Shah's presence in Sunday's leadership is being seen as a positive signal from the BJP leadership in favour of Yediyurappa.

tral leadership, sources said, was of the view that the 78-year-old is the best bet for the party as there is no one else in the Karnataka unit to match his popularity.

Yediyurappa's son B Y Vijayendra had accompanied him to Delhi. While some of Yediyurappa's rivals had labelled him "super CM", the central leadership has appointed him as vice-president of state BJP.

While his rivals have been mobilising leaders against the veteran, he has been playing his cards carefully. Recently, when the central leadership stalled his plan to grant backward castes status to Lingayats, the community he belongs to and his key support base, the Chief Minister told the media that he would do it after the central leadership gives a green signal.

Meanwhile, a section of party leaders are talking about the possibility of a leadership change. The BJP leadership, they argue, could make some offers to Yediyurappa, including a suitable position for him and a Union Minister berth for one of his sons, in exchange of him allowing a change of guard.

"No clear plans have been drawn up yet about a leadership change. There has to be a plan to rehabilitate Yediyurappa before anything is done since he is a mass leader," a BJP legislator stated two months ago.

Recently, BJP in-charge Singh had stated that no leadership change is on the cards, but party MLA Basavaraj Patil Yatnal had said the central leadership is considering a change of guard. On Sunday, Yatnal said big changes are likely after Sankranti but did not elaborate.

WITH INPUTS FROM ENS, BENGALURU



DELHI **CONFIDENTIAL**



THE HUDDLE

CAT A meeting of Congress general secretaries and in-charges of states on Saturday, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the party should do something outside the box or think about an innovative way of protest over the farmers' issue to force the media to take notice. She felt regular press conferences by the party attacking the government is perhaps not having the desired impact, according to those present at the meeting. The party should think about something different, she said. In that context, she gave the example of US Democratic lawmakers taking a knee for George Floyd in June last year. At the end of the meeting, the party, however, decided to take out rallies to Raj Bhawans in all state capitals on January 15. And in states where the farmers' issue does not have much traction, the protest would be over fuel price hike.

KEPT OUT

WHEN PRIME Minister Narendra Modi formed a 85-member high-level committee to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on Sunday, it had members not only from the BJP, but also from the Congress, NCP and BJD and even the ailing Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. But no one from the All India Forward Bloc (AIFB), a party founded by Bose, found place on the panel. The AIFB in fact had been campaigning for formation of such a committee and they had given memorandum twice to the Prime Minister with this demand. But when the panel was indeed formed, none from the party was included.

DIFFERENT STROKE

AT A time when many in the BJP are expressing their angst against the protesting farmers, R P Singh, a prominent Sikh face of the party, has been expressing sympathies for the farmers in such a manner that it does it does not cross his party lines. After his tweets in Punjabi, in which he poured out sympathies for the farmers for the hardships they are facing at the protest sites, a number of people have come out on social media, suggesting that the party make him part of the talks. Sources said Singh himself had suggested to the party leadership that he would go and sit with the farmers at the Singhu border to talk to them and convince them. However, as it appears, the BJP leadership is not yet convinced.

Farmers to discuss R-Day tractor march after January 15 meet with govt

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, JANUARY 10

FARMERS WILL plan the January 26 tractor parade after their January 15 meeting with the Union Government. This was decided at a meeting of Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) at Singhu border on Sunday evening. Joginder Singh Ugrahan, president of BKU Ugrahan, said, "The issue of tractor parade on R-Day was kept pending for the time-being. It was decided unanimously by SKM to discuss it after the January 15 meeting with the Union Government. We will have an exclusive meeting on this subject after January 15."

The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) Sunday evening said that if talks fail yet again, tractor parade will not only be held in Delhi but in all 718 districts of India. Krishanaprasad, member of Working Committee of AIKSCC and a former Kerala MLA, said, "It will be the biggest public movement in India post-Independence. Over 500 unions are with AIKSCC.

There is mobilisation of farmers in every district whether they are connected with AIKSCC or not as it is a people's movement now." Punjab's farmer unions are recruiting volunteers for the January 26 programme. Kirti Kisan Union (KKU) held a recruitment drive at Sangrur. "Though planning for the march is yet to be done, we have to ready volunteers. The duties can relate to maintaining discipline, sanitation and traffic control," said KKU general secretary Rajinder Singh.

Solanki cremated

Ahmedabad: Former Union minister, Gujarat CM and Congress veteran Madhavsinh Solanki was on Sunday cremated with full state honours in Ahmedabad. The 93-year-old died Saturday at his Gandhinagar residence. PTI

Classifieds

PERSONAL

IJAG ROSHNI W/o HEMANT YADAV, H.No.- 88/21 STREET NO-4, NEAR POST OFFICE, GURGAON (HARYANA)-122001, have changed my name to JA-GROSHANI. 0040559534-5

LOST & FOUND

LOST AND FOUND The original Sale Deed doc bearing No. 4837, registered at DLF Housing & Construction Pvt. Ltd. of property no E-27 Greater Kailash Part I, New Delhi registered by Smt. Lila Vati w/o Sh. Dina Nath Gandhi is misplaced. If anyone finds it, kindly contact- Poonam Gandhi at 9717328613, 9968701752. 00405595839-1

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is given to the general public that my client Sh. Om. Prakash Malhotra S/o. Lt. Sh. Ved Prakash Malhotra R/o C-43, Lajpat Nagar-I, New Delhi 110024 from this day onward severs all his relations and disavows his son namely Sh. Sachin Malhotra S/o Om. Prakash Malhotra, R/o C-82 Lajpat Nagar-I New Delhi 110024, daughter-in-law Mrs. Minu Malhotra W/o Sh. Sachin Malhotra R/o C-82 Lajpat Nagar-I New Delhi-110024 and granddaughter Ms. Ishika Malhotra D/o Mr. Sachin Malhotra R/o C-82 Lajpat Nagar-I New Delhi-110024 absolutely and irrevocably, consequently takes away all their rights and entitlements with respect to all his movable/immovable properties on account of their delinquent conduct which has caused significant discredit to the family. If any person deals/transactions with the aforesaid persons with respect to me, such persons shall do the same at their own risk, cost and consequences.

Ravesh Thakral (Advocate)
Enrolment No. 017071/14
Dated:- 11.01.2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Pandit Dayashankar Sharma S/o Lt. Damodar Sharma Address: F1/253, F1/254 Sangam Vihar New Delhi has Severed all relations and disowned his son Sharad Sharma, Hemant Sharma, Shashi Sharma W/O Hemant Sharma, Grand Son Yash Sharma S/O Hemant Sharma from all his properties, both movable, immovable due to disobedience. My client shall not be responsible for their criminal activity and their any acts. Mohit (Advocate)

EDUCATIONAL

National Central Council of Vocational Training Invited Application for Start Training and Study Centre
www.nccvt.in Mob:-7499647774
0090280260-1

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

Open Tender Notice No. - JSHW-M-WNET-2020-21-31
Date : 08.01.2021

E-Tender Notice

E-tenders are invited from experienced or interested contractors on behalf of the President of India for the under mentioned work :- **Name of work-** Computerization of all shops of workshop and Account office with proper networking through LAN & OFC & internet at all shops of workshop & account office JHS along with 02 year CAMC under PH-17. **Cost of work - 22,31,497.00 (inclusive 18% GST). Earnest money - ₹ 44,600.00. Time of completion - Thirty Nine Months. Online tender closing date and time - 29.01.2021 upto 11.00 hrs., Detailed information about tender and tender format is available at website www.ireps.gov.in. 38/2021 V**

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"IMPORTANT"

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Linguistic Minority Education Institute

Managed by Hyderabad (Sind) National Collegiate Board, Mumbai
Approved by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
Recognized by Directorate of Technical Education (DTE), Maharashtra
Affiliated to University of Mumbai
(College DTE Code: MB3131)

ADMISSION NOTIFICATION 2020-21
MMS

Applications are invited from eligible and registered candidates for admission to Institute level quota seats of sanctioned intake and seats remaining vacant (if any) after all CAP rounds for First year MMS as per rules of Directorate of Technical Education (Maharashtra) MMS programme.

Total Intake: 120 students
Eligibility criteria, admission rules and selection procedure shall be according to the DTE Notification - <http://www.mahacet.org> & **Website: <http://www.mahacet.org>, MBA 2020.**
Application forms for admission along with the prospectus are available at the college office against payment of Rs.1250/- in cash or DD favoring Director, H. & G. H. Mansukhani Institute of Management, payable at Uthanasagar, Admission dates and required documents are notified in the prospectus. Institute website and on Institute notice board. **The last date of Issue & Acceptance of Admission Forms is 30.01.2021, till 5.00 pm.**
Note: - All admissions are subject to the approval of the University of Mumbai/ Directorate of Technical Education Maharashtra and Admission Regulating Authority

H. & G. H. Mansukhani Institute of Management
CHM Campus, Smt. Chandibai Himathalal Mansukhani Road, Opp, Uthanasagar Railway Station, Uthanasagar -421 003, District Thane (Maharashtra) Telephone: 0251 2571 867, Tele fax: 0251 2562662
Website: www.hghmim.edu.in, Email: ld:hsnbc.mgmt@gmail.com

Sd/-
Director

MAGH MELA 2020
Prayagraj Mela Authority
Triveni Bhawan, Triveni Bandh, Daraganj, Prayagraj
+91 532 2500775 / +91 532 2504011, maghmelamp@gmail.com

Notice Inviting E-Tender- For Provision of Tentage and Temporary structures for Magh Mela 2021-Public Accommodation by Prayagraj Mela Authority

The Prayagraj Mela Authority Invites Bids of Tender No. 20/MM 2020-21 for "Provision of Tentage and Temporary structures for Magh Mela 2021-Public Accommodation" The Request for Proposal Documents shall be made available on the Uttar Pradesh E- Procurement website <https://etender.up.nic.in> from 11/01/2021 for Tender No. 20/MM 2020-21. Interested parties may download/upload their proposal from 1400 hrs 11/01/2021 till 1600 hrs 16/01/2021 for Tender No. 20/MM 2020-21 via Digital Signature Certificate (DSC). The bids received by interested parties shall be opened in the presence of the respective bidders at 1700 Hrs on 16/01/2021 for Tender No. 20/MM 2020-21. Details regarding the tender shall be made available on <https://etender.up.nic.in>

District Magistrate, Prayagraj
/Vice Chairperson,
Prayagraj Mela Authority

पत्र संख्या- 1826(1)/पन्द्रह-मा.मे.(2020-21) दिनांक 10 जनवरी, 2021

BRIEFLY



The teachers' protest

TRIPURA

Job losses: Another teacher dies by suicide

Agartala: The mass retrenchment of teachers has allegedly led to a second suicide by an educator even as a sit-in stir in Agartala entered its 35th day Sunday. Rumi Debbarma, 30, died after consuming poison on Saturday. While authorities blamed family issues, her colleagues claimed she was depressed due to job loss. On January 2, Uttam Tripuram 32, was found hanging in South Tripura district. Both were among 10,323 teachers who lost jobs over a "fauly" recruitment process. Protesting teachers meanwhile, blocked a road near the protest site on Sunday. **ENS**

RAJASTHAN

Man arrested on espionage charge

Jaipur: Rajasthan Police has arrested a 42-year-old man on the charge of spying for Pakistan, police said. Satyanarayan Paliwal, a resident of Jaisalmer, was picked up by police and interrogated by intelligence agency. He was arrested under the Official Secrets Act, police said. Paliwal was in touch with a Pakistani intelligence agency and was sharing information related to the Indian Army through social media, Additional Director General (intelligence) Umesh Mishra said. Documents on the Army were found on his phone, he said. **PTI**

MAHARASHTRA

Sailor dies on warship from bullet injury

Mumbai: A Navy sailor was found dead on board a warship on Sunday with a bullet injury, an official said. Ramesh Choudhary (22) was posted on board INS Betwa, a Navy spokesperson said in a release. The sailor's service issue rifle was found next to him, the release said, but did not specify if it was suicide. The sailor, who recently returned to the warship after leave, hailed from Jodhpur in Rajasthan. The matter is under investigation by the police. **ENS**

GUJARAT

Man held over trafficking racket

Rajkot: The police have arrested a man from Giridih in Jharkhand for his alleged involvement in the trafficking of women. According to the police, Rakesh Singh (30), from Kodarma district in Jharkhand, was involved in sending women to people in Gujarat, Delhi and other states. Police officials in Rajkot said that they were tipped off about the presence of Singh in Jharkhand after a few arrests were made in Rajkot in the past three days in connection with the trafficking case. **ENS**

'Daily toll never went beyond 25... Kerala's achievement has been limiting deaths'

KERALA HEALTH Minister **K K SHAILAJA** speaks to **LIZ MATHEW** on why the state government is not worried about the high number of active cases being reported from the state.

Kerala has the highest number of active cases, it is reporting the maximum number of cases every day, almost one fourth of the national tally. Why are the numbers not coming down?

Kerala has been making a systematic effort to control the pandemic. In a pandemic, there will be a peak, no matter how we try to control it... And our strategy has been delaying the peak, to avoid a sudden peak which would lead to crisis in hospitalisation and a rise in the number of deaths. With our tracing-quarantine-break the chain programme, we delayed the peak which helped us to improve our health system – more beds, more ICUs, oxygen flow etc. We got that time. In some states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the peak came quite fast and the number of deaths went up... But in Kerala, our daily death toll never went beyond 25 – mostly elderly people or those

with comorbidity. Kerala's achievement has been limiting deaths. Even now, a state with such population density, the death rate is half per cent.

Kerala's surge started in September and the festival season of Onam and some political activities were blamed. Other states also had festivals like Diwali and Chhath etc, but no other state faced this kind of a situation.

Actually, there was no such rise in the festival season. In a pandemic, it gets spread to maximum number of people and then comes down. In other states, cases went up and started coming down, but resulted in more deaths. Our main strategy was to prevent the spread to maximum number of people at once and limit the number of deaths. We never faced a crisis with hospital beds or shortage of health workers...

Are you satisfied with the results of your efforts?

We have taken maximum care and efforts. I do not feel guilty at all. But we did not want any deaths to happen. However, in a normal year, we have many



THE EXPRESS INTERVIEW WITH **K K SHAILAJA** KERALA HEALTH MINISTER

deaths due to infectious diseases. In fact, the number of deaths in Kerala in 2020 is less than that of the previous year. That's what the statistics till November showed. We are waiting for the December tally. Once it is done, we will publicise the data.

Are people following social distancing and wearing masks?

No matter how intense our awareness campaign is, a small

section of people will always flout protocols. We cannot expect 100 per cent compliance in any society. With widespread and intense campaign, 80 per cent of the population started wearing masks and using hand sanitisers.

Otherwise, the state would have been worse than Maharashtra. We have good health facilities, but we have three big challenges – population density, the high number of old age population, and lifestyle diseases.

The state government has requested the Centre to give Kerala priority in providing the vaccine. What is its response?

The Centre points out Kerala still has the highest number of cases. But there is another issue – the reporting system. It will get exposed soon. While we were told about other states which do not project the actual number of cases, Kerala's reporting system is really effective.

We do not leave a single case unnoticed. The Centre is aware of it also. Even in Thursday's meeting, the Centre did not blame the state...

In the meeting on vaccine, I told them that Kerala should get it on an emergency basis. I also demanded that keeping the population and its vulnerability in mind, the state should get more vaccines.

I informed them the state is ready for vaccine distribution and waiting. There was no denial from their side, nor was there an assurance. I think we will get priority.

Has the outbreak of other diseases like bird flu or mutated strains complicated the state's efforts?

Kerala's terrain is fertile for infectious diseases. It is our effective health system and the state government's effort that prevent grave calamities in the state.

The number of water bodies in Kerala attract a lot of migratory birds and the state becomes prone to diseases like avian flu.

There is also an issue – a single death in Kerala is reported nationally and internationally. Some other states had so many deaths, but it never got such attention from the media...

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

J&K: Heavy snowfall declared state-specific natural calamity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE JAMMU, JANUARY 10

TO EXPEDITE disbursement of relief and ex-gratia for damage caused by snowfall, Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday declared 'Heavy Snowfall' as a state-specific natural calamity under the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) norms.

The Lieutenant Governor was chairing a virtual meeting with all DCs and SSPs of Kashmir division to take stock of the administration's winter management measures, especially snow clearance efforts.

Earlier, 'Heavy Snowfall' did not figure in the list of Natural Calamities under SDRF norms, due to which disbursement of relief and ex-gratia for damage due to heavy snowfall was not possible for the districts' disaster management authorities.

Now, processing of ex-gratia relief under SDRF will become faster, thereby giving huge relief to the affected people living in snowbound areas, said an official statement.

During the meeting, the Lt Governor sought a detailed report on issues faced by the pub-



Manoj Sinha

lic due to heavy snowfall and the future course of action.

On being apprised about shortage of small rescue vehicles for movement of people requiring medical assistance, particularly in remote areas and areas with narrow lanes, the Lt Governor directed that 4x4 rescue vehicles /ambulances be provided to snow-affected districts with immediate effect.

He asked the officers to be more sensitive and responsive to the issues of the public and take necessary measures.

"Be visible and take early measures. Need more feet on the ground. Quickly reach out to the people to address their needs and requirements," the Lt Governor told the officials.

Taking cognizance of media reports, social media posts and grievances received from the public, the Lt Governor asked the administration to identify gaps and take immediate measures to fill them to redress the issues faced by the people.

Cave-in halts movement on Jammu-Srinagar highway

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE JAMMU, JANUARY 10

WITHIN HOURS of the restoration of vehicular traffic from Jammu to Srinagar on Sunday, a nearly 150-ft-long stretch of road caved in near Ramban, snapping the surface link between the two cities again.

The 300-km highway, considered the lifeline to the Kashmir Valley, was opened for movement of all vehicles in the morning after seven days.

The road had been blocked due to heavy snowfall and landslides last week, sources said, adding that during Friday and Saturday the authorities had

cleared the stranded vehicles and those carrying essential supplies to the Valley.

On Sunday morning, the road was opened for movement of all vehicles from Jammu side towards Srinagar. The vehicles were plying smoothly until evening, when a nearly 150-ft-long stretch of one lane of the road connecting a vital bridge caved in at Kela Morh near Ramban.

"There shall be no vehicular movement on Jammu-Srinagar national highway towards Kashmir Valley and vice versa due to sudden damage of bridge at Kela Morh, Ramban. There is no optional carriageway available," said a traffic advisory.

Yogi: Land mafia leaders troubled by demolition

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, JANUARY 10

IN AN apparent dig at his predecessor and Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said leaders of the land mafia were troubled that land belonging to the poor and traders was being freed by his administration.

On Friday, Yadav had said that the government's drive to demolish illegally constructed houses and buildings seemed like action targeting political rivals. He warned that the party that comes to power in next year's state elections would take similar action against those in power at present.

Responding to the SP chief while inaugurating the 'Mukhyamantri Arogya Mela' in Farrukhabad district, Adityanath said those who used to spread fear among people were now visiting police stations with plac-



Yogi Adityanath

ards around their necks and begging for mercy while bulldozers raze down the properties of mafiosos and their henchmen.

He added, "Earlier, the mafia used to capture the land of the poor and businessmen. Today, when bulldozers are running over the chests of these land mafiosos, the criminals have run away but their 'rehnuma' [leaders] are feeling troubled. They did not feel troubled when the land of the poor, of traders or a common person was taken. They are having problems when these properties are freed from such criminals... The leaders of these criminals have uneasiness, because their henchmen are to-day begging for their lives. They are scared that the bulldozer might turn towards them."

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

CASES: 10,450,284 **ACTIVE CASES: 223,335** **DEATHS: 150,999**
TESTS: 181,096,622 **RECOVERIES: 10,075,950**

	CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERIES	TESTS
JAN 9	18,645	201	19,299	843,307



STATES WITH RISING ACTIVE CASES		
	ACTIVE CASES	RISE IN LAST WEEK
Meghalaya	163	27
Daman	36	-6
Puducherry	328	-11

STATES WHERE ACTIVE CASES ARE DECLINING		
	ACTIVE CASES	DECLINE IN LAST WEEK
West Bengal	8,034	2,974
Rajasthan	6,730	2,065
Uttar Pradesh	11,422	1,894

STATES REPORTING MAXIMUM CASES		
	ON JAN 9	TOTAL
Kerala	5,528	806,604
Maharashtra	3,581	1,965,556
Uttar Pradesh	1,286	592,896

STATES REPORTING MAXIMUM DEATHS		
	ON JAN 9	TOTAL
Maharashtra	58	51,196
Uttar Pradesh	24	8,493
Kerala	22	3,327

Data as on January 9, 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

MoE suggests survey to enrol students, relaxing detention norms

New Delhi: The Education Ministry has asked states to conduct a door-to-door survey to identify out-of-school children and prepare an action plan for their enrollment as part of efforts to mitigate impact of the pandemic, especially on migrants, according to officials.

The ministry has also recommended relaxing detention norms to prevent drop-outs this year and measures to address

learning loss due to the shut-down of schools.

The move is particularly aimed at identification, admission and continued education of migrant children, they said.

Exploring the option of classroom-on-wheels and classes in small groups at the village level, increasing access of children to online and digital resources, are among the recommendations made by the ministry. **PTI**

65% turnout for civic body polls in Himachal

Shimla: Local body elections recorded a turnout of 65.80 per cent with several Covid-19 patients casting their votes, state election commission officials told reporters.

With Covid protocol in place, around 1.97 lakh people cast their votes for 401 wards in 29 municipal councils and 21 nagar panchayats of the state.

Though municipal and panchayat elections in the hill state are not held on party symbols, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur thanked voters for the BJP's "historic win".

Himachal Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathour too claimed victory in 70 per cent of the civic bodies where the polling was held on Sunday. **PTI**

ON ARRIVAL

Passengers who arrived from the UK undergo Covid-19 tests at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru on Saturday. **ANI**

Making arrangements for free vaccine for everyone: Mamata

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, JANUARY 10

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Sunday announced her government was making arrangements to provide free Covid-19 vaccine to people in the state. In response, the BJP accused Banerjee of trying to take credit for the Centre's efforts.

In an open letter, Banerjee said that "Covid warriors" or frontline workers such as police personnel, home guards, civil defence volunteers, and correctional home and disaster management employees would be administered the vaccine on a priority basis.

"I am happy to inform that our government is making arrangements for reaching the vaccine to all people of the state free of any charge," the chief minister wrote in the letter ad-

ressed to the frontline workers. Banerjee also expressed her gratitude for all such workers for their selfless service to the people of the state.

"The government is taking steps to ensure that every citizen of the state receives free doses of the Covid-19 vaccine," she added.

India is set to launch a Covid-19 vaccination drive from January 16, with priority given to nearly three crore healthcare and frontline workers across the country.

Banerjee's announcement of free vaccination for everyone comes months ahead of the state elections that are likely to be held in April-May.

"We have seen how you dedicated yourself to your jobs despite the fear of the pandemic. Keeping that in mind, I want to assure you that your vaccine doses will be sent to you in a

timely manner," Banerjee added. Earlier, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had made a similar announcement. Kerala will also go to the polls along with Bengal. The Bihar Cabinet has also given the nod to provide free vaccines to the state's residents, a promise the BJP made in its manifesto for the Assembly elections held in October-November last year.

The BJP, meanwhile, took a dig at Banerjee. BJP IT-Cell chief Amit Malviya accused the chief minister of "rushing to take credit" for the Centre's efforts.

"Pishi [Banerjee] was a disaster when it came to managing Covid. From doctors to policemen, everyone protested against Chief Minister's apathy. But now that the Centre has announced free priority vaccination for 3 crore frontline workers across the country, Pishi is rushing to take credit," he tweeted.

Ahead of minister's India visit, Oli says issues should be settled by dialogue

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE KATHMANDU, JANUARY 10

NEPAL PRIME Minister KP Oli on Sunday said the country is determined to bring back the 370 sq-km area of Kalapani-Limpiadhura-Lipulek at the trijunction of Nepal-India and China (Tibet) under its possession through dialogue with India.

Addressing the Rastriya Sabha, the Upper House of Nepal Parliament, Oli said the issue would be raised during the Foreign Affairs Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali's visit to India starting January 14 and hoped that the issue will be resolved peacefully through negotiation. He said the area that has



KP Oli

been "under possession of India during the last 58 years belongs to Nepal". "It was under Nepal's possession during the previous 146 years," he said. "Some people blame me for the downside in Nepal-India relations. Do I have to seal my lips and maintain silence on issues?" he said.

"I believe all pending issues should be settled through dialogue as I want Nepal-India rela-

tions to reach a new height, and things are moving in that direction," he said.

Oli addressed the 59-member Upper House amid the boycott by 23 members from the rival Communist Party of Nepal in protest against the dissolution of the House of Representatives on December 20.

The issue is being fought in the Supreme Court of Nepal and Oli has asserted that the House cannot be reinstated by the court.

Oli has been criticised by his political opponents and the civil society over the dissolution of the House. "How can a Prime Minister not dissolve the House in a democracy? How is it against the Constitution?", he asked the Rastriya Sabha.



The IndianEXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

OWNING THE CRISIS

Solution to impasse on farm laws lies primarily in political domain — more with government than court

THE NARENDRA MODI government, it seems, is turning to the Supreme Court to extricate itself from the political mess arising from the farmers' protests against its agricultural reform laws. At Friday's failed talks with the farm unions, the government side is reported to have suggested that the farmer unions can go to the court, which can be requested to hold daily hearings to decide on the constitutional validity of the three laws. On the face of it, nothing wrong — courts are the only place where any law can be challenged. But this lobbing of the ball to the court — with the Union Agriculture Minister, Narendra Singh Tomar, saying that the apex court has the right to examine legislation enacted by Parliament — is fraught. More so with the unions claiming they aren't interested in the court's intervention in what is a "policy matter". In a strange reversal of roles, the government is the one seeking judicial review whereas the purportedly affected party insists on an out-of-court resolution.

What the current standoff clearly reflects is a political failure on the part of the government beginning with the unseemly haste with which the three laws were passed, first via the ordinance route and then in Parliament, with little debate and no proper stakeholder consultation during drafting and then the badmouthing of critics as rogue elements. The laws, of course, are well-intended. Allowing crop purchases outside state-controlled mandis, creating a legal framework for contract farming agreements and removing stockholding and movement restrictions on produce are much-needed reforms for Indian agriculture in the 21st century. The ultimate beneficiaries of these reforms, which address the reality of the country's transition from a structurally deficit to surplus producer, are the farmers themselves. The government's readiness to discuss the farm laws "clause-by-clause" with the unions, and even to undertake amendments, could well have been shown at the time of introducing the bills. Equally ironical is the Supreme Court now proposing an "independent" expert panel to break the impasse — over the same bills that the government refused to refer for scrutiny to Parliament's own select committee. A court-appointed panel sitting on judgment on a law passed by Parliament has its own consequences, intended and unintended.

The situation at Delhi's borders is taking a mounting toll. The Centre's strategy to tire out the protesters does not seem to be working. With Republic Day approaching and Parliament convening for the Budget session, the images of protesting farmers, already braving winter nights out in the open, are especially disquieting. They also send out disturbing signals in the midst of the world's biggest anti-COVID-19 drive. The government must find a practical solution — which can only be political. And it should do this quickly. Hoping for the courts to do it is not policy.

TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

Suspension of hostilities by Qatar and Arab Quartet could be first step in ending heightened conflict among Gulf kingdoms

IT IS NOT yet a real reconciliation, but Qatar and its Gulf Arab neighbours have agreed last week to suspend three years of intense hostilities. Nudged by the United States and local mediation from Kuwait, the Arab Quartet — Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates — lifted their unsuccessful blockade against Qatar at the summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The agreement to normalise relations was part of the shared commitment to "solidarity and stability". Pessimists say the agreement to normalise relations between the Arab Quartet and Qatar merely papers over deepening mutual distrust. Optimists would hope that is the first step in ending a destructive phase of internecine conflict among the Gulf kingdoms.

Qatar, once deferential to Saudi political guidance, has in recent years carved out an independent regional path. Doha's dalliance with Iran, Turkey, and the Muslim Brotherhood — all of whom are locked in intense ideological and political conflicts with the Arab Quartet — had steadily built up regional resentment. The negative coverage of the Arab Quartet on the popular *Al Jazeera* TV channel, owned by Qatar, added insult to injury. Led by an irate UAE and the impetuous Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, the Arab Quartet acted decisively in 2017 to cut off diplomatic ties with Doha and enforce a blockade. The Quartet also issued a list of 13 conditions for ending the siege. They included an end to *Al Jazeera's* hostile propaganda, downgrading of diplomatic ties with Iran and ending of military co-operation with Turkey. Qatar rejected the allegations, refused to implement the demands, and found ways to dodge the blockade with the support of Iran and Turkey. But as the costs of the conflicts mounted and the geopolitical landscape of the region began to change, Qatar and the Quartet have recognised the urgency of ending the standoff.

With the Joe Biden administration determined to restore relations with Iran, the Arab Quartet saw the importance of restoring a measure of Gulf unity. Qatar might be pleased that it has successfully stood up to pressures, but it can't afford a permanent conflict with its Gulf Arab neighbours. India, which has huge stakes in the bilateral relations with all Gulf countries and more broadly in the stabilisation of a region, was quick to welcome the moves towards regional reconciliation. The Gulf hosts more than 8 million Indian migrants, who send home billions of dollars in remittances every year. The Gulf is also one of the biggest markets for Indian goods and is the most important supplier of hydrocarbons to its economy. While the dangers of instability have eased for the moment, Delhi needs to sustain the current intense levels of political engagement with the Arab Gulf.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



SAJJID Z CHINOY

INDIA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY is being characterised by three distinct forces that need to be disentangled. First, India has broken the link between virus proliferation and mobility earlier and more successfully than many countries. Rising mobility and normalising economic activity, rather than sparking another wave of infections, have coincided with COVID cases falling by 80 per cent since September. India's cumulative death toll per million is now less than half the emerging market average, and an order of magnitude below developed economies. Consequently, the progressive return towards pre-COVID activity levels has occurred much sooner than expected. Activity jumped back up to 95 per cent of pre-COVID levels by October, and has been inching up since. This is being complemented by the much-awaited pick-up in central government spending, which surged in November and is expected to remain strong for the rest of the year. These dynamics should reduce the full-year growth contraction to 6.5 per cent, less than the NSO's advance estimate of 7.7 per cent and much less than previously feared.

These are very hopeful developments but, juxtaposed with a stronger-than-expected recovery, is confirmation of labour market scarring. CMIE's labour market survey still reveals 18 million fewer employed (about 5 per cent of the total employed) compared to pre-pandemic levels. The employment rate gradually improved till September but has weakened since then, even as the economy has progressively opened up. This also shows up in the PMI surveys where employment is lagging activity, and in demand for MGNREGA jobs which are still 50 per cent higher than the previous year. These labour market pressures increase risks of medium-term economic scarring, and are not incompatible with a sharper near-term rebound because the recovery appears to be led by capital and profits, not labour and wages. Even within labour, blue-collar workers are likely to have been disproportionately impacted vis-à-vis their white-collar counterparts.

A third phenomenon is large firms have endured the crisis better and are gaining market share at the expense of smaller firms. To the extent there is a migration of activity from the informal/SME firms to larger firms, tax collections and Sensex/Nifty earnings should get a boost, even holding the economic pie constant. It's, therefore, important to interpret the data carefully because some variables will reflect this

Given demand uncertainties, budget is opportune moment for a large physical and social infrastructure push

An unprecedented infrastructure push under the New Deal in 1935 created millions of jobs and regenerated regional economic development in the US. India must seek inspiration from this. Given the prevailing demand uncertainties, the budget represents an opportune moment for the Centre, in conjunction with the states, to embark on a large physical and social (health and education) infrastructure push. The benefits are self-evident. This will simultaneously boost near-term aggregate demand, crowd in private investment, create jobs to soak up the unemployed, and improve the economy's external competitiveness. Job creation, health and education, in turn, will be a start to help mitigate COVID-induced inequalities.

substitution effect as much as the pace of the recovery. Greater scale and formalisation undoubtedly augur well for medium-term productivity but could increase near-term labour market frictions and boost pricing power.

All this, therefore, increases prospects of a K-shaped recovery from COVID, a phenomenon playing out globally. Households at the top of the pyramid are likely to have seen their incomes largely protected, and savings rates forced up during the lockdown, increasing "fuel in the tank" to drive future consumption. Meanwhile, households at the bottom are likely to have witnessed permanent hits to jobs and incomes. These cleavages are already visible. Passenger vehicle registrations (proxying upper-end consumption) have grown about 4 per cent since October while two-wheelers have contracted 15 per cent.

What are the macro implications of a K-shaped recovery? With the top 10 per cent of India's households responsible for 25-30 per cent of total consumption, one could argue consumption would get a boost as this pent-up demand expresses itself. But it's important not to conflate stocks with flows, and levels with changes. Upper-income households have benefitted from higher savings for two quarters. What we are currently witnessing is a sugar rush from those savings being spent. This is, however, a one-time effect. To the extent that households at the bottom have experienced a permanent loss of income in the forms of jobs and wage cuts, this will be a recurring drag on demand, if the labour market does not heal faster.

Second, to the extent that COVID has triggered an effective income transfer from the poor to the rich, this will be demand-impeding in the steady state, because the marginal propensity to consume at the bottom is higher than that at the top, just as the marginal propensity to import at the top is higher than at the bottom.

Third, if COVID-19 reduces competition or increases the inequality of incomes and opportunities, it could impinge on trend growth in developing economies by hurting productivity and tightening political economy constraints.

Policy will, therefore, need to look beyond the next few quarters and anticipate the state of the macro economy post the sugar rush. The key, of course, is whether the private sector starts re-investing and re-hiring, and thereby sets the economy onto a more virtuous path. Barring that, the labour-market hysteresis could

sustain. With manufacturing utilisation rates below 70 per cent pre-COVID, an investment revival, in turn, will depend crucially on the demand dynamics. Exports should benefit from strengthening global growth as the world gets progressively vaccinated and the Georgia-induced blue wave results in more US fiscal stimulus. But will this be enough to stoke a private investment revival? Or will firms look through the next few quarters and remain cautious given the still elevated uncertainty?

It's against this backdrop that the upcoming budget presents India with its New Deal moment. An unprecedented infrastructure push under the New Deal in 1935 created millions of jobs and regenerated regional economic development in the US. India must seek inspiration from this. Given the prevailing demand uncertainties, the budget represents an opportune moment for the Centre, in conjunction with the states, to embark on a large physical and social (health and education) infrastructure push. The benefits are self-evident. This will simultaneously boost near-term aggregate demand, crowd in private investment, create jobs to soak up the unemployed, and improve the economy's external competitiveness. Job creation, health and education, in turn, will be a start to help mitigate COVID-induced inequalities.

The question is: How will this be financed? With the consolidated fiscal deficit projected above 11 per cent of GDP, gradual near-term consolidation coupled with a credible medium-term fiscal plan will be key to anchoring the bond market and underscoring an adherence to macro stability. How then can public investment increase meaningfully if the headline deficit must come down? Only if the public investment push is financed by aggressive asset sales (strategic sales, disinvestment, land and infrastructure monetisation). In this manner, expenditure to GDP can actually rise next year — generating an expansionary fiscal impulse to the economy — while automatic stabilisers (a normalisation of tax revenues next year) are used to reduce the headline fiscal deficit.

India's faster-than-expected rebound is very encouraging. But given labour market pressures and prospects of a K-shaped recovery around the world, the economy will need to be carefully nurtured and stoked. The budget presents a crucial opportunity to make a big down payment towards this end.

The writer is Chief India Economist at JP Morgan



REHNAMOL RAVEENDRAN

THE POSTER OF Richa Chadha's upcoming movie, *Madam Chief Minister*, stands out for its crudity in a world of political correctness. The movie apparently narrates the story of an "untouchable" woman, who becomes the chief minister of a state. The filmmakers decided to communicate their theme of a Dalit woman's success in the poster by depicting the protagonist holding a broom with the tagline "untouchable, unstoppable". The poster has aroused the indignation of many for amplifying a stereotypical portrayal of Dalit identity.

The cognitive structures of upper-caste filmmakers, unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, seem unable to think beyond a broom as a fundamental symbol of Dalit identity. The usage of the word "untouchable" in the poster hints not only at the moral bankruptcy of the overrepresented upper-caste folk in the show business but reveals the marketing strategy as one that sells dehumanising words for profit.

The poster has only vindicated the premise of Rajesh Rajamani's *The Discreet Charm of Savarnas*, a satire on upper-caste prejudices against Dalits. In the short film, the characters embark on a desperate search for an actor who "looks like a Dalit" and, thus, fits into their imagination of a "Dalit". Rajamani's film calls out the deep-rooted, often normalised, caste

THE SAVARNA GAZE

Why can't mainstream filmmakers imagine Dalits as people, not stereotypes?

prejudices and stereotypical attitudes against marginalised communities. By reducing Dalit identity to a broom, the makers of *Madam Chief Minister* prove Rajamani right.

In contrast, mainstream filmmakers represent upper-caste protagonists bereft of any caste prejudices and stereotypes, and as figures with authority and agency. That's not a coincidence. It is because caste consciousness conspicuously shapes the imagination. Case in point: The Brahmin hero of the movie *Article 15*. Similarly, the poster of a biopic on former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, *Thalivi*, depicts the subject of the biopic with respect and authority.

The Dalit imagination of their own identity, undoubtedly, is different from how the upper castes perceive them. They seek their identities in the portrayal of gallantry, virtuosity and sacrifices of Dalit leaders and assertive symbols of resistance. Badri Narayan's 2006 book, *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India* explored how Mayawati's image as a Dalit leader was built up by identifying her with a long line of historical women figures known for their valour, like Jhalkaribai, Udadevi, Mahaviridevi, Avantibai Lodhi and Pannadhai.

In any of the Dalit imaginations, Udadevi and Jhalkaribai can never be seen with a

broom nor can the valour of the Battle of Koregaon be undermined by untouchability imposed on Mahars. The portrayal of a Dalit character in Pa Ranjith's *Kaala* displays the in-trepidity of the hero. In films such as Ranjith's *Pariyerum Perumal* and Nagraj Manjule's *Sairat*, both stories of Dalit-savarna love, you will never find Dalits depicted with degrading symbols.

More importantly, the upper-caste imagination appears to promote a culture of gaslighting Dalit voices. It is unfortunate that Chadha dismissed the criticism against the casteist poster as "cancel culture". Instead of defending the stereotypical portrayal of a hitherto marginalised community and gaslighting the voices of criticism, the actor and others associated with the movie must commit to a genuine introspection.

The content of the poster can't be insulated from criticism citing the transformative content of the movie. *The Discreet Charm of Savarnas* could serve as a reference for all those who venture into creative spaces, to unlearn their preconceived notions. Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* should be mandatory reading for filmmakers.

The writer taught political science at Delhi University

JANUARY 11, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

ANJIAIAH ACTS

THE ANDHRA CHIEF Minister T Anjaiah has asked his entire cabinet to resign to help him reconstitute his ministry. He will consult the high command before finalising his team. This is in line with the thinking in the high command that his team is oversized and requires pruning. He has started consulting his cabinet colleagues about the process. The CM's decision comes after an assurance from the high command that no dissident activity will be tolerated if some of the ministers are dropped in the pruning process. Anjaiah himself is not happy with the size of his cabinet, the constitution of which owes a lot to the suggestions of former CM Chenna Reddy

and members of Parliament from the state.

CHINA LAUDS PM

CHINA HAS WELCOMED the statement of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that India and Pakistan should stand together rather than get embroiled in the big power rivalry in the Indian Ocean. "It's hard for others to guess what she meant by 'getting embroiled' but the necessity does exist for the subcontinental nations to stand together," noted the Xinhua.

AIRLINK WITH BHUTAN

BHUTAN AND INDIA will soon be linked by air, Bhutan's king Jigme Singye Wangchuk said. The outlines of the proposed link have

been worked out, the visiting monarch said. He had formal talks with the PM and informal discussions at a dinner hosted by her.

POLISH WORKERS STRIKE

MILLIONS OF POLISH workers defied the government and stayed off work demanding a five-day, 40-hour week. Small shops, department stores and some other offices remained open in Warsaw and other cities. But in other major enterprises, including shipyards and steel-making units, the workers heeded the call by the independent union Solidarity and joined the strike. Labour Minister Janusz Obodowski warned that workers who had abstained from work will lose a day's pay.

THE IDEAS PAGE

America's broken democracy

To heal itself, it will need to introspect about how a narcissistic leader was able to expose the fragility of its institutions and push them to the brink

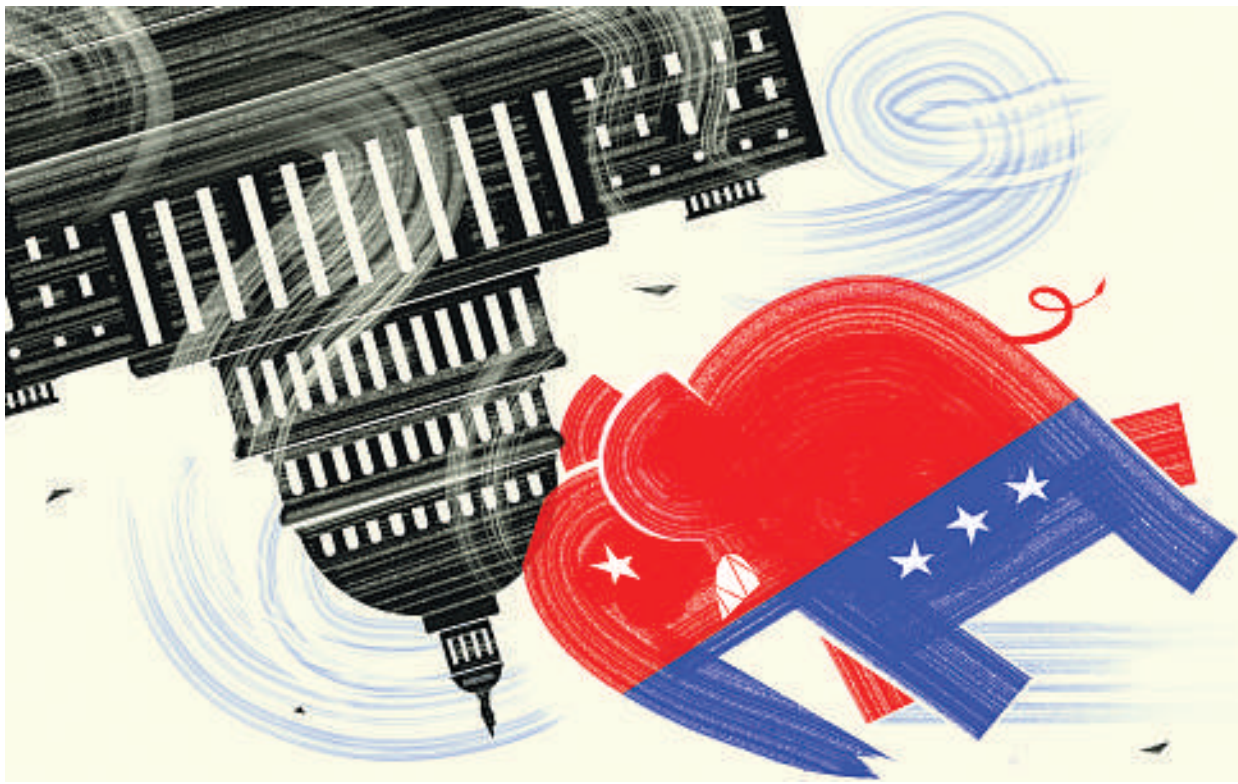


PETER RONALD
DESOUZA

ONE IS TEMPTED to see the bizarre rioting in the US Capitol by thousands of Donald Trump supporters seeking to stall President-elect Joe Biden's certification by Congress as a one-off event, a unique descent into madness by an essentially robust democracy. Such a reading is fundamentally wrong. The mobs storming the hallowed precincts of American democracy, on January 6, were not an exceptional lapse but were, in fact, a symptom of a sick democracy. American democracy is critically ill. It suffers from five disorders.

The first malady, and perhaps the one most difficult to treat, is the breakdown in the culture of bipartisanship that was so intrinsic to American politics. It kept the system working. Difference and consensus, intense competition and compromise, all produced a political pragmatism that was at the heart of American democracy. This has now been abandoned. The speeches delivered by Republican senators on the floor of the house, minutes after the assault on the Capitol, were hostile and unyielding. Instead of closing ranks and accepting the logic of defeat, of embracing the national interest which their leader Mitch McConnell had earlier in the day articulated, a large number of Republican Congressmen chose to pander to the President's narcissistic delusion of a stolen election. Partisan interest got morphed with the national interest. For them, the enemy was the Democratic party and not the mobs, the electoral system and not the hooligans who were undermining it. Bipartisanship in America is dead, killed by an ideological chauvinism that sees competitors as the enemy within. This is a mindset that is difficult to treat. It is built on a psychology of hate that resides deep in the soul of its proponents. It is incapable of compromise and challenging to cure.

The second malady feeding the first, and perhaps dependent on it, is the rise of the plebiscitary leader. The more appropriate term is to see Trump not as a populist leader but as a plebiscitary one. A plebiscitary leader speaks directly to his followers over the heads of institutions that are supposed to constrain him but have, as shown, little power to do so. A relationship of devotion develops between the leader and followers that is unmediated by the institution's tempering logic. The leader provides the followers with meaning, with a view of the world that speaks to their anxieties and insecurities. This is essentially Max Weber's thesis on the charismatic personality. Trump fits it to a T. He built his constituency with phrases and slogans such as "make America great again", "drain the swamp", "lock her up", "stop the steal", that created a partisan constituency both in the street and within the elected chambers. It was willing to walk with him to the ends of the earth. Social media aided the process of partisan constituency formation. It exaggerated the feeling of grievance and promised that the leader would address the problem. Trump was playing for a



C R Sasikumar

"winner takes all" stake since defeat is for losers. In such a politics, institutions get enfeebled, democratic conventions get ignored, and the locus of power shifts from the office to the political leader. Officials, seen as Wilhelm Reich's "little men", develop an attitude of complicity with the leader. In Trump's America, the little men have come to the centre of government.

The third political illness, which thrives in tandem with the above two, is the debilitation of institutions. Institutions are the life and soul of a democracy. They check the excesses of power, socialise elected representatives into the do's and don'ts of democratic politics. They embody the rules and conventions that maintain the balance between private and public interests. Trump tore into these checks and balances. When his chiefs of staff, and several of his secretaries opposed his views, he just replaced them. When the mainstream media, such as CNN, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, wrote about his transgressions, he mocked them describing them as purveyors of "fake news". In his drive to dominate institutions, Attorney General William Barr became his bulldog. The leader of the Senate, Mitch McConnell, became his praetorian guard and Lindsey Graham his dancing cheerleader. Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who accompanied Trump for a photo-op to a church in Washington, after it had been forcibly cleared of protesters, apologised for this compromise.

One has, over the last four years, watched with horror and disbelief as the custodians of America's democratic institutions succumbed to the narcissism of their plebiscitary leader. Even small conventions, although symbolically significant, that established the principle of conflict of interest were cast aside by Trump when he appointed family members to high office and refused to release his income tax returns as had been the convention with previous presidents. Trump took a sledgehammer to institutions. They were unable to corral him. He exposed the fragility of their checks and balances. Biden will have to work hard to repair them.

The fourth malaise is the elite capture of not just institutions but of the political

The more appropriate term is to see Trump not as a populist leader but as a plebiscitary one. A plebiscitary leader speaks directly to his followers over the heads of institutions that are supposed to constrain him but have, as shown, little power to do so. A relationship of devotion develops between the leader and followers that is unmediated by the institution's tempering logic. The leader provides the followers with meaning, with a view of the world that speaks to their anxieties and insecurities. This is essentially Weber's thesis on the charismatic personality. Trump fits it to a T.

discourse. Much has been written about elite capture of institutions, so let me dwell here on the capture of discourse. Gaetano Mosca, the Italian theorist of elites, referred to it as "political formulas". These are arguments and explanations used by elites to get those over whom they rule to accept their ideas and arguments. Political formulas give legitimacy to elite rule. American democracy today is a textbook illustration of how the political formula of neo-liberalism has been used by capitalist elites to not just accumulate wealth but to make the non-elite feel that such accumulation is in the public interest. From the World Economic Forum to the humble corridors of Niti Aayog, the "political formulas" of neo-liberalism economics rule. As Jean Paul Satre would have said, Davos speaks and Niti Aayog provides the echo. Trump is neo-liberalism's loudest spokesperson.

The above maladies have gained a life, and become possible, because of the fifth malaise in American society — its increasing inequality. It provides the soil for Trumpian mobilisation. This increasing inequality of American capitalism needed a spokesman and a cover, to convert a lie into a truth. Trump provided both. He changed the vocabulary of politics, making it respectable to mock, deride, denounce and heap scorn on one's political adversaries. Attention had to be distracted from the real challenge of increasing equality. Trump made vigilante politics, especially of the White supremacist variety, a legitimate aspect of American politics. It is worrisome that his model of politics is now available for other plebiscitary leaders. With his politics of hate, in this climate of inequality, it is little wonder that the master of vituperative social media posts brought the Capitol under siege. To heal itself, American democracy will need more than just the replacing of Trump with Biden. It will need to examine why a narcissistic leader, with plebiscitary power, was able to expose the fragility of its institutions and push them to the brink.

The writer is D D Kosambi Visiting Professor at Goa University. He has just published with Rukmini Bhaya Nair a book titled *Keywords for India*. Views expressed are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The crisis the US is currently facing cannot be resolved through violence, but only through peaceful, legal and democratic means."
— THE DAILY STAR

The open classroom

The pandemic is an opportunity to reimagine schools as places for community learning, where children of all backgrounds can study together



ARVIND GUPTA

THE CRITIQUE OF school as an institution has developed and grown in the past half a century. Education theorist Everett Reimer wrote *School is Dead* in the 1960s. *Danger School*, a classic published by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's group in the late 1970s, captured through scathing cartoons the harm which schools inflict on our children. Most schools are caged jails, where an alien curriculum designed by some "experts" is thrust down a child's gullet.

Today, many schools are gargantuan corporate enterprises with thousands of children on their rolls, and for all practical purposes they are run like factories, or better still like mini-armies. The website of a private school in Lucknow boasts of 56,000 students, for instance.

But progressive thinkers have always envisioned "free schools" for children. The great Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, founded a school for the children of poor peasants at his home, Yasnaya Polyana, without any strict schedule, homework or physical punishment. Maria Montessori was the first Italian woman to become a doctor; she went on to work out the "stages of development" in children which became the basis for her educational philosophy, which too emphasised children's freedom and choice. Tagore's critique of rote learning is articulated in the classic tale *The Parrot's Training* (*Totaakahini*). A small progressive school in Japan run by a visionary principal has been immortalised in the best-selling *Tottochan*. Perhaps, the longest lasting libertarian school in the world is Summerhill. It was founded in 1921, a hundred years ago in England, by A S Neill with the belief that school should be made to fit the child rather than the other way round.

Usually, government schools hit headlines for all the wrong reasons — a wall caves in, a roof collapses, or children fall sick after a mid-day meal. But the AAP government in Delhi vowed to make government schools better than private ones. They achieved this success by improving infrastructure (no stinky toilets), giving dignity to teachers, constituting school management committees and by involving many good NGOs for innovating learning methods. In 2015, there were only 17,000 classrooms. In just three years, AAP added another 8,000 classrooms; 11,000 more classes are under construction. Once completed there will be 36,000 classrooms.

In India, schools have always been deeply segregated. The 1966 Kothari Education Commission's recommendation for a common school system was never implemented. Today, which school a child goes to depends on her socio-economic status. The pandemic has furthered and exacerbated this divide. COVID-19 hit parents economically. Many were unable to pay school fees. Some removed their children from private schools and put them in government schools. But the government is trying hard to withdraw from

public schools, or hand over their precious land and managements to private organisations. Why is the government going headlong with this privatisation? Doesn't it know that in America, England, Japan and Finland — the most advanced countries — the best schools are government schools? The digital divide between the rich and poor has also widened. The poor do not have access to mobiles, laptops and internet connectivity.

In such a scenario, one can try and conceive of neighbourhood learning spaces. The pandemic forced millions of adults to work from home. Many people realised that an office is not needed to do productive work. In the process, some have realised the boring nature of routine office and factory jobs and, simultaneously, discovered their own potential. Many have left busy, polluted cities, and returned to small towns and villages.

We must strive for more neighborhood learning spaces as we reimagine the school. Large housing societies already have community halls. Smaller ones can easily allocate a dedicated space, where adults can share their skills and experiences with young ones. Every housing society should have an "activities centre", where children can make and do things.

In the 1960s, England had a lot of community colleges. Here, anyone who had any skill could offer a course. And anyone who wanted to learn a skill or subject could join in. No degrees were required. The courses were wide-ranging, from haiku, Chinese art, limerick writing, pottery to bicycle repairs! We need to reimagine schools — as places for community learning. Schools have a very narrow vision of a teacher — someone with a B Ed degree. How about envisioning tens of thousands of retired professionals as teachers? They will bring years of practical experience to learning.

The government can use the pandemic to better its own schools. First, by improving the infrastructure and making the schools more welcoming. Clean toilets, drinking water, library, a tinkering lab, and a playground will help. Second, by making learning fun. Instead of segregating children by age they can have classes with mixed age groups. The children can also learn at their own pace. Third, locate the champions — the "heroes" within the government system — and use them as effective resource people. Without any cash incentives, simply by bringing innovators to the fore, many teachers will feel motivated. Fourth, by inviting established NGOs to help bring in best practices from all over.

During the pandemic, 1.5 million people logged into archive.org every day. It is the largest repository of books with 28 million books for free downloads. We need to build such a free archive for Indian languages. The recent announcement that the government will buy bulk subscriptions of scientific journals so that everyone can access them is a step in the right direction.

We need schools where children with different backgrounds — class, caste, religions, abilities — can study together and learn to care and empathise. In David Horskburg's Neel Bagh School in Kolar, Karnataka, children could learn at their own pace. They could study Class V Telugu, Class III English and Class VII math all at the same time. They learnt to work with people with different skills and abilities. They also learnt cooperation, group work, compassion, human dignity and plurality of opinions.

Arvind Gupta is a toymaker and educator



SYED ZAFAR ISLAM

THE LATEST ROUND of talks between the government and farmers' representatives has once again concluded without an agreement. The good news is that the two sides have agreed to meet again on January 15. Let's hope the farmers from the country's northern states show flexibility in understanding why the government has undertaken to reform the agriculture sector.

Time is non-partisan and it judges us ruthlessly. If we do not embark on reforms in agriculture and allied sectors now, we will have failed the future generations. They will not forgive us when they look back at today's stubborn but misguided opposition to the new farm laws.

The need for reform has been felt for the last three decades and that's why the M S Swaminathan Committee was set up to come up with solutions to address the malaise in the sector. You need huge political will and courage of conviction to initiate reforms in agriculture, on which nearly 60 per cent of the country's population is dependent. The two UPA governments had neither any interest in the welfare of farmers nor the political will to implement the Swaminathan Committee report.

If Prime Minister Narendra Modi had so desired, he could have easily let things drift. He is being accused of initiating these re-

A reform for the future

New farm laws are meant to usher in modern practices in agriculture

forms for the benefit of his alleged capitalist friends. But nothing can be farther from the truth. PM Modi has launched these reforms for the benefit of the farmers and their future generations. The new laws are meant to take not just the farm sector forward but benefit the entire country.

Even if the Modi government had not framed these new laws, I would have demanded reforms in the farm and allied sectors. We need reforms because much of our agricultural practices are trapped in the past. The production of crops is lopsided and distribution is even more skewed. We produce much more wheat and rice than we need. But our fruit, lentils and vegetable production is much less than our requirement. We do not find much use for science, modern machines and satellite images for data analysis and are not imaginative about irrigation. The sector is starved of capital and bereft of start-ups.

The paddy and wheat farmers appear to have little or no regard for the demand and supply cycle in the market because they know that the government will buy their produce, demand or no demand. This is not an ideal farm practice.

Just imagine this: The farm and allied sectors contribute only 17 per cent to our GDP, while they constitute 60 per cent of the country's population. The services sector, the back-

bone of India's economy, contributes a massive 55 per cent while the share of industries is 26 per cent. The two together make up much of the GDP but the population dependent on them is just about 40 per cent.

Year after year, the GDP contribution of agriculture and allied services is going down. We should have arrested the decline a long time ago. The UPA government never did so. The Narendra Modi government has done that.

Consider this as well: Only the US has more cultivable land than us. But we produce four times less crops than the US. China has less arable land than us and yet, as agriculture expert Ashok Gulati says, it produces three times more crops than us.

Forty per cent of our arable land is afflicted with degradation and infertility. It produces fewer nutrient crops and at less than its capacity. Deforestation is chipping away at cultivable land. Monsoon rains bring floods and deficient rainfall causes drought. Our water management system is outdated and uses a lot of the underground water, causing the water table to deplete fast.

China began its farm reforms in 1980. Agriculture scientists believe it takes more than 30-40 years or at least two generations to enjoy the fruits of reform. If we start now, we will be doing a great service to our future gen-

erations. PM Modi's vision should be seen in this backdrop.

In fact, it's not all doom and gloom. We have bits of everything going in the farm sector, largely due to market forces. For example, big private players already operate in the agriculture sector. The ITC's annual farming sector turnover is Rs 7.5 thousand crore. They have been doing contract farming of sorts through the "E-Choupal" scheme that has brought 40 lakh farmers under it. The company aims to hit the one crore mark soon. There are private players in agro-businesses too and thus far it's been a happy relationship between the two sides — cases of exploitation, if any, are negligible.

A few start-ups are using new technologies such as drones and satellite images to analyse the quality of soil and seeds and determine how much water a particular crop needs at what time.

But the development is uneven and not spread across the country. It needed government intervention. It needed to be given a direction. Hence the new farm laws. In fact, we need more reforms. This should just be the beginning. Hopefully, the entire agricultural system is remodelled to serve the farming community.

The writer is a BJP MP

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

US TRUMPED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The attack on America' (IE, January 8). The audacity of Donald Trump-inspired goons to besiege the US Capitol places an indelible stain on the world's oldest democracy. True to his name, he did trump the democracy. The country which is considered a beacon of light for other democracies now must be itself groping in the dark to know why this has happened. The answer is not far to seek. The country, riven by contradictions and conflicts on various issues, did not take notice of the shadows being cast by Trump's demonic demagoguery and actions. This assault is also a message for other countries, where his counterparts are trumpeting him as a role model.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

BUILDERS' HOUSE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A House for new India' (IE, January 8). While the GDP is likely to contract by 7.7 per cent this financial year and 1,663 "major projects" worth Rs 25.47 lakh crore are pending for years (as per the latest MoSPI report), what explains the logic — and the hurry — behind splurging Rs 20,000 crore on a new Parliament and other buildings unless it's to appease the builders?

Varin Dhir, Ahmedabad

IDEAS ONLINE

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AMAR PATNAIK

● REDEFINING AGRI
MARKETS:
SHIRISH JOSHI

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BEHOLDEN TO OPTICS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Discomfort zones' (IE, January 7). The quantifiable achievements in the India-US relationship during the Donald Trump administration was the outcome of a strong bilateral partnership built over years. This administration has narrowed down the scope of this engagement to a transactional relationship that is very high on optics, aligned to serve domestic political interests. Contrary to the submission made by Ambassador Juster that US CAATSA sanctions were never designed to harm friends, they have directly impacted India's strategic interests.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

10 EXPRESS NETWORK

Student with a drone turns saviour for four fishermen lost at sea

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JANUARY 10

AFTER THE Covid lockdown was announced last year and campuses were shut, 19-year-old Dewang Subil returned to his village in Kerala from Bengaluru. Four months ago, the computer science student with a passion for photography bought a battery-operated drone — he wanted to capture the best images.

Last week, Dewang and his drone did much better. They saved the lives of four fishermen who went missing in the high

seas, making him the toast of his coastal village, Thalikulam, in Thrissur district.

According to Dewang, around noon on January 5, he heard from his father Subil E J, who owns a jewellery shop, about a vessel with four fishermen from the village going missing in the high seas.

The fishing vessel had left the village in the early hours of the day. Hours later, it was caught in rough sea, and got damaged. Before the huge waves sank the vessel, one of the fishermen on board managed to make a distress call to a fellow fisherman in mainland.

Within minutes, teams of fishermen ventured into the sea, launching their search operation. The Coast Guard was also informed and they sent a rescue boat. But the search teams returned empty handed hours later.

"I heard from my father about the incident around noon and seven hours had elapsed by then [since the fishermen went missing]. When I rushed to the coast, I saw the dejected fishermen who had returned after failing to trace the four," says Dewang, a fourth semester B-Tech student at Christ University, Bengaluru, who is currently attending classes online.

Almost immediately,



19-year-old Dewang Subil

Dewang made up his mind. He wanted to pitch in and help locate the fishermen, and he knew his drone can help.

"At first, I thought about flying from the shore. But for better results, I decided to venture in the sea," he says.

After obtaining permission from the authorities, Dewang hopped on to a vessel along with a few fishermen for another search operation.

Local legislator Geetha Gopi says initially they were reluctant as Dewang was new to sea.

"We dissuaded him from going into sea as he does not even know swimming. Also, chances

of the expensive drone getting lost in the sea were high. However, he insisted and we allowed him to try his drone to help locate the fishermen," says Gopi.

Dewang says the fishermen on the rescue vessel guided him initially about the possible location of the missing persons. "They told me the incident might have happened around 11 nautical miles from the shore. Though I flew the drone towards the directions they suggested, nothing could be spotted. In a flash, I decided to try another direction," he says. "This led to the spotting of the four missing fishermen."

Local panchayat member A Mehaboob says the village is indebted to Dewang. "He has no links with the fishing community nor our coast. Yet, in an hour of crisis, the young man extended his helping hand. Had it not for him, the missing fishermen would have floated away," he says.

Kappam Veetil Iqbal, 49, one of the rescued fishermen, says after their vessel sank, they clung on to floating wreckage and empty kerosene cans for hours.

Iqbal was on the vessel with Chembanadan Kuttan, 59, Chembanadan Vijayan, 58 and Puthanparan Subramanian 60. "For some time, we were to-

gether, trying to keep afloat. Later, we got tired and one of us, Vijayan, felt he would drown. Others also started floating away in different directions. Finally, we were spotted by a drone, leading to our rescue," says Iqbal.

Dewang says it did cross his mind that he may lose his drone, which cost Rs 1 lakh, in the water. "While flying it, twice I feared that the drone would be lost while landing. But then my thought was only to find the fishermen," he says.

The DJI Mavic Air 2 drone has a range of 8 km and can fly at a height of 500 m. It has 30-minute battery backup.

UP: Rape victim nephew still missing, police file charges

All five accused are kin of those arrested over the gangrape, murder

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 10

POLICE HAVE filed a chargesheet against five people arrested in connection with the alleged kidnapping of a six-year-old nephew of the Unnao gangrape victim who was burnt to death in 2019.

All five accused are the family members of those arrested in connection with the gangrape and murder of the 23-year-old woman, who was set on fire while she was on her way to court to attend a hearing in her case.

Although the boy is still missing, sources said the police filed the chargesheet as 90 days of stipulated time from the day of the arrests was ending. Unnao Superintendent of Police Suresh Rao A Kulkarni said the chargesheet was filed on the basis of circumstantial evidence against the accused.

"The accused are lodged in jail and we filed a chargesheet under IPC Section 364 (kidnapping or abducting in order to murder) last week. Efforts are being still made to trace the boy," said Santosh Kumar Singh, Station House Officer of Bihar Police Station.

A reward of Rs 1 lakh has also been announced for any information on the missing boy. Several police teams have been formed and searches are being carried out, sources said. A writ petition seeking a direc-

A reward of Rs 1 lakh has been announced for information on the boy who went missing on October 2

tion to transfer the investigation to the CBI is pending in the High Court.

"The report of a polygraph test conducted on the accused is awaited. We have been sending letters to the Forensic Science Laboratory in Lucknow to send us the polygraph test report," SHO Singh said.

The boy, a Class I student, went missing on October 2 last year while he was playing outside his house with friends. In her complaint to the police, the rape victim's sister alleged that two local residents had seen the boy last time with the accused. After the boy went missing, three police constables, who were deployed for the security of the rape victim's family, were suspended.

Although the accused who have been arrested in connection with the rape-murder case were also questioned in connection with the kidnap, they denied any involvement, the police said.

The 23-year-old woman was raped in December 2018 but the case was registered in March 2019. On December 6, 2019, she died in a Delhi hospital, a day after she was set ablaze while travelling to the court.



ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Ahead of the Tamil Nadu elections, Makkal Needhi Maiyam (MNM) chief Kamal Haasan takes out a rally in Coimbatore on Sunday. *PTI*

Bird flu in 8 states; culling ops on, advisories issued

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, PUNE, LUDHIANA, SHIMLA, JANUARY 10

THE BIRD flu outbreak has been confirmed in eight states.

The Centre's Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying put out a statement on Sunday, confirming the outbreak in seven states — Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

Late in the evening, Maharashtra's Animal Husbandry Commissioner Sachindrapratap Singh told The Indian Express that samples from the state have tested positive for the avian influenza virus. Results of samples from Delhi are awaited.

On Sunday, as many as 215 migratory birds were found dead in Pong Dam Lake wildlife sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh, taking the total number of migratory water birds suspected to have died of bird flu to 4,235, officials said.

Meanwhile, for the fourth day in a row, a large number of dead poultry birds were found dumped by the side of the Chandigarh-Shimla highway in

Solan district on Saturday. A number of crows have been found dead in different parts of the state over the last few days.

In Maharashtra, which last reported cases of avian Influenza in 2006, Animal Husbandry Commissioner said orders have been issued for culling birds within 1 km of the epicentre in Parbhani and Latur. "A 10-km surveillance zone has been created and we are keeping very strict watch on the situation," he said.

The Uttar Pradesh animal husbandry department is putting in place several precautionary measures, while urging people to avoid going to zoos and bird sanctuaries and coming in contact with any kind of bird.

Authorities have been asked to ensure that any unnatural death of a bird is reported.

Two red jungle-fowls found dead at Kanpur Zoological Park earlier this week tested positive for the influenza.

Kanpur Chief Veterinary Officer R P Mishra, the culling of birds in a one-km area of the zoological park has started. Principal Secretary (Animal Husbandry) Bhuvnesh Kumar said the outbreak "isn't at a large scale in the state as just two birds in Kanpur have been tested pos-

itive" and added that the steps taken are "mainly preventive".

"Our basic effort is to stop the spread to humans at any cost," he said.

Earlier, in a letter to all Divisional Commissioners and District Magistrates, the department directed that strict surveillance of migratory birds coming near water bodies and poultry farms should be ensured. It said poultry birds and eggs should not be transported in open vehicles and all poultry markets should be closed at least one day in a week for sanitisation.

Meanwhile, the state-run Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University in Punjab on Sunday issued an advisory for poultry farmers and chicken consumers.

The advisory said that though there is no report of any bird flu case in Punjab, poultry farmers need to be more vigilant and follow proper personal hygiene and safety measures.

"Proper cooking on more than 70°C kills influenza viruses. Farm-to-farm transmission usually occurs through the movement of the live birds, people and contaminated vehicles, equipment etc," the advisory said.

WITH PTI INPUTS

Bastar visit: Baghel unveils projects worth Rs 328 crore

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BIJAPUR, JANUARY 10

CHHATTISGARH Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday announced and inaugurated works of over Rs 328 crore in Bijapur district of Bastar division.

Baghel, who is on a two-day visit to Bastar division, interacted with children after inaugurating a bio-diversity park in the LWE-hit district.

The CM announced that the state would purchase millets grown locally under the Minimum Support Price from the next sowing season. He did bhumi-poojan of two river overbridges and more than 10 rural roads.

While inaugurating the Loha Dongri bio-diversity park in Bijapur city, Baghel played soft-ball and volleyball with school children. "People of Bastar have immense talent and skills. We will provide platforms and all help possible to make their talent shine," he said.

The CM also handed out Forest Land Right certificates to tribals. "In Bastar, no one will be landless. If because of some reasons the applicants don't get for-



Bhupesh Baghel

est land, we will work on schemes to provide them with land parcels," he said.

Speaking to the public, the CM said that the state government is working to provide electricity to the entire region. "We are already fighting and winning against malnutrition. Our priority is to make the people of Bastar self sufficient by linking them to small businesses, so that they have enough opportunities to grow economically," he said.

The CM visited Atmanand English medium school, where he stressed the importance of learning English as it is a global language. He also visited Gothans and met self-help groups of women involved in making compost out of cow-dung among other businesses like rearing of fish and chicken and growing mushrooms. "In Bijapur, more than 8,000 people are benefitting from bamboo-related activities," Baghel said.

Varanasi: BJP ex-MLA thrashed for remarks about college student

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 10

VARANASI police have begun an inquiry after a video emerged in which former BJP MLA Maya Shankar Pathak is seen holding his ears and seeking forgiveness from a group of people beating him for allegedly passing remarks about a college student.

The police found that the incident occurred on the campus of a college in the Chaubepur area of Varanasi on Saturday. The 70-year-old former legislator is the chairman of the institution.

The police said they came to know from local people that Pathak was attacked for allegedly making remarks about a woman student of the college. On reaching home, she informed her family about the incident. A group of people, including the woman's family members and neighbours, then went to the college and accosted Pathak.

In the video posted the rounds on social media, a group of people are seen pushing Pathak and thrashing him. The former BJP MLA is repeatedly heard apolo-



A screengrab of the incident

gising to the mob while they assault him.

Pindra Circle Officer Abhishek Kumar Pandey said that after coming to know about the video a police team went to the college and found it locked. The police failed to contact Pathak. "Pathak has conveyed that he does not want to lodge any case," said a police officer.

The police contacted the student's family but they also refused to lodge a complaint. The police claimed that the former MLA and his alleged attackers knew each other for a long time.

BJP Varanasi chief Hans Raj Vishwakarma said, "Pathak twice won the Assembly elections from Varanasi. He is not active in party activities."

Hindu Mahasabha opens Godse library: 'Will show that he was true nationalist'

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, JANUARY 10

TO MARK the occasion of Vishwa Hindi Diwas, the Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha on Sunday opened a library in Gwalior dedicated to the life and ideology of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse.

The Godse Gyan Shala was inaugurated at the Mahasabha's office at Daulat Ganj. It contains literature on how Godse plotted the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, his articles and his speeches.

Jaiveer Bharadwaj, vice-president of the Mahasabha, said, "The library was opened to put before the world the true nationalist that Godse was. He stood and died for an undivided India. The purpose of the library is to instil true nationalism which Godse stood for in today's ignorant youth."

Bharadwaj said India was divided to fulfill the ambitions of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who both wanted to govern a nation, while Godse opposed it.

Gwalior was chosen as the site of the library dedicated to

Godse as the assassination of Gandhi was plotted in the city—with a pistol also being purchased there.

Previously, a temple dedicated to Godse was set up by the Mahasabha at their Gwalior office. It was removed following an uproar by the Congress.

Meanwhile, protest Speaker Rameshwar Sharma on Sunday called the partition of India a mistake by Mahatma Gandhi. "It was Mahatma Gandhi's mistake that Mohammad Ali Jinnah succeeded in dividing India into two parts," he told reporters in Bhopal.



Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy during the protest. PTI

Puducherry: Cong, allies call off stir against Bedi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUDUCHERRY, JANUARY 10

THE RULING Congress-led Secular Democratic Alliance (SDA) in Puducherry on Sunday ended its three-day agitation demanding the recall of Lt Governor Kiran Bedi, a day ahead of schedule, citing Pongal festivities.

Chief Minister V Narayanasamy, who addressed participants on Sunday, said that as Pongal festival was being celebrated in the Union territory, the number of days of the protest was reduced from four to three.

The protest was launched on January 8 with the ruling party accusing Bedi of "impeding developmental plans and welfare measures of the elected government."

Narayanasamy said the agitation against Bedi would be carried out in different modes, adding that a signature campaign would be held on January 22 and a demonstration on January 29. He said a day-long bandh between February 15 and 20 was among the other protests planned by the SDA.

He lashed out at Bedi who allegedly had been "impeding all developmental plans..."

"There is a clear plan on the part of the NDA government at the Centre to dismantle the separate status of Puducherry and to merge it with neighbouring Tamil Nadu," he alleged. "We will not let this happen."

The opposition AIADMK and BJP described the agitation as "a politically motivated initiative and an attempt to cover up the Congress government's failure to fulfill poll promises."

The Centre has deployed CAPF and CISF personnel to maintain law and order here.

The SDA had planned to picket Raj Nivas, the office-cum-residence of the Lt Governor, as part of the protest against Bedi for her alleged failure to approve the proposals of the government for various welfare and developmental schemes.

Man shot dead in Meerut; kin, MLA seek police action

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MEERUT JANUARY 10

TENSION PREVAILED at Meerut's Sardhana town on Sunday morning as dozens of local residents and family members led by the BJP MLA, Sangeet Som, refused to perform the last rites of a 25-year-old man who was shot dead by two unidentified persons on Saturday night. The restive crowd raised anti-police slogans and put up a blockade by placing the dead body near the bus stand, demanding immediate arrest of the culprits.

Sachin Prajapati, a resident of Sardhana's Khewan locality, was shot dead by two bike-borne assailants around 10 pm on Saturday when he was returning home after having dinner with a friend at a local restaurant. The killers fired two bullets at him, causing instant death, the police said.

As news of the killing spread, Sachin's family members and local residents marched to the Sardhana police station where they were joined by the local BJP legislator, Sangeet Som.

"He (Sachin) has been killed a short distance from the local police outpost... This has exposed



BJP MLA Sangeet Som

lack of policing in the area. We are not ready to tolerate laxity on part of the law enforcers especially when our Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has repeatedly been assuring people of the state to provide a crime-free society. We will not sit idle till the killers are arrested," the ruling party MLA told the SP (Rural) Keshav Kumar Maurya, who along with other officers, reached the spot after Som intervened.

The protesters were placated Saturday night but tempers ran high again on Sunday morning when the family members backed by local residents refused to perform last rites of Sachin after the police handed over the body to them after the post-mortem.

"We have launched a massive manhunt to trace the killers and are hopeful of getting success very soon. The blockade was lifted after around two hours on Sunday afternoon," said Vinay Kumar, the acting in-charge of Sardhana police station.

Dalai Lama, Greta Thunberg discuss need for climate action

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, JANUARY 10

PEOPLE NEED to enhance their knowledge about the environment and demand action against climate change, said young environmental activist Greta Thunberg while virtually interacting with Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, and climate change scientists Sunday during a livestream event.

During a discussion on The Crisis of Climate Feedback Loops — self-perpetuating natural warming systems which feed upon themselves to amplify — at a webcast organised by the Mind and Life Institute, she said: "We need to educate ourselves to understand the global processes linked to the climate crisis, to see what's happening to our planet. People must learn as much as they can — there's unlimited amount of information — and spread this information to create a social movement and shift the



Greta Thunberg and the Dalai Lama

social norm. Because if we are enough people who demand change and advocate climate action, we will reach a critical mass and will no longer be possible to ignore."

"It's not a small task but it's something that we simply need to do because there's no other option. Restoring Nature is not only a solution to the climate crisis, but also to the biodiversity crisis and so on," added Thunberg.

Speaking during the event, the Dalai Lama said that all 7.8 billion humans must act as a single community to battle the climate crisis, and shed their past

habits of thinking of themselves as part of a small circle of individuals. "According to today's reality, thinking in terms of 'my self, my family, my nation' has become unrealistic. An individual's future is now linked to the entire humanity and planet, to a happier humanity and a healthier world," he said, adding that it's an encouraging sign that young people like Thunberg are genuinely concerned for the future of the planet.

He said that when he was young, he saw plenty of snow in the high mountains of Tibet but it had started decreasing gradually, and a similar trend is noticeable around Dharamshala, his present home. "Eventually Tibet may become a desert, some scientists say," he said. The Dalai Lama suggested that areas such as Australia and Western Africa which have vast deserts may start converting sea water into potable water on a large scale to support human populations and cultivation in desert areas.

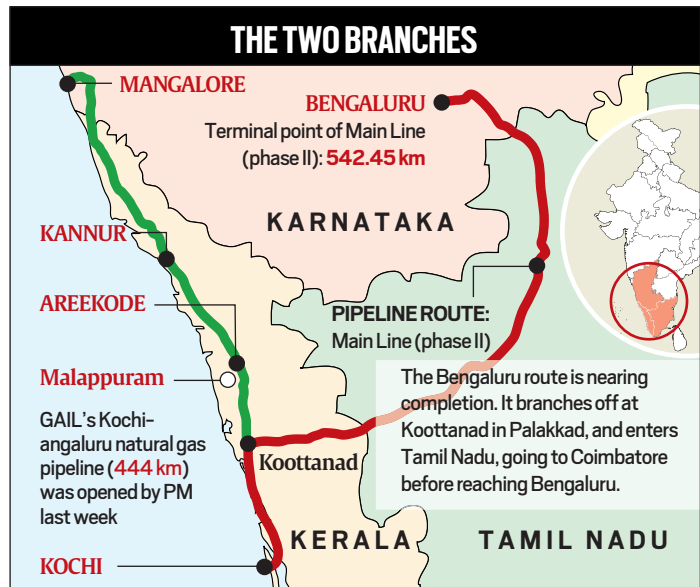


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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

Gas pipeline from Kochi to Mangaluru: hurdles crossed, and why it matters



SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 10

ON TUESDAY, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline of the Gail Authority of India Limited (GAIL). The key infrastructure project has come about after overcoming protests in Kerala, misconceptions about safety, and a long delay.

The terminal, since 2013

The pipeline will deliver liquefied natural gas (LNG) sourced from a terminal in Kochi built by Petronet LNG in 2013 at a cost of Rs 4,500. However, for want of pipeline connectivity, it could not be utilised until now. The terminal's objective is to supply natural gas for domestic and industrial use in Kerala and South India. It is South India's first LNG-receiving, regasification and re-loading terminal with a capacity of five million metric tonnes per annum.

Phases and sections

The project, conceived in 2007, envisages pipelines from Kochi to Mangaluru and to Bengaluru. In the first phase, a 44-km line was laid in Kochi, linking the terminal with local industrial users, including Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited. To take natural gas to domestic consumers, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) entered into a pact with Adani Gas Ltd.

The second phase of the pipeline passes through seven districts of Kerala to carry natural gas from Kochi to Bengaluru via Palakkad, with another leg taking it to Mangaluru. The Kochi-Mangaluru line (444 km) has been opened while the Bengaluru leg is nearing completion, officials said.

Already 2,750 domestic gas connections have been given in Kochi and work for supply of natural gas in other towns is going on. The pipeline supplies 3.8 million cubic metres of gas a day to industrial and residential customers in Kochi and is set to cross 4 million cubic metres in the city itself. Menagalluru has a potential of 2.5 million cubic metres per day. The capacity utilisation of the LNG terminal will go up to 25-30%.

Delays since 2007

In 2009, the then CPM-led government headed by V S Achuthanandan gave single-window clearance to the project, which should have been completed in 2013. However, protests took place as local people wanted the alignment along a sea route rather than through inhabited areas; they felt the pipeline was a ticking gas bomb.

After the Congress-led government headed by Oommen Chandy came to power in 2011, the CPM, then in opposition, chose to stand with the protesters. When even local leaders of the ruling UDF joined the agitation, the government suspended the survey. GAIL too suspended all contracts. The government even pulled up then Chief Secretary Jiji Thomson for having said the pipeline would be laid at any cost and the protestors would be arrested. During the UDF regime, only 48 km of the 444-km pipeline could be laid.

The pipeline was planned at an estimated cost of Rs 2,915 crore in 2009. Due to the delays, its cost went up to Rs 5,750 crore.

Expedited by Vijayan

While in opposition, the CPM had stood with the agitators. But, after assuming office in 2016, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan placed the GAIL pipeline in his 100-days projects. As Vijayan had the party under his firm control, no one in the CPM or Left Democratic Front questioned his decision, and local leaders stepped back from their protest. The Centre too wanted Kerala to give top priority to the project as the LNG terminal in Kochi was incurring huge losses.

To win over landowners, Vijayan increased the compensation amount for the acquired land, and reduced the width of the land to be acquired was reduced. After laying the pipeline, farmers were allowed to cultivate, except deep-rooted crops. Although right wing Muslim outfits Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) and Welfare Party of India (of Jamaat-e-Islami) led protests in many places, and the protests turned violent in Kozhikode district in 2017, the government ensured that work proceeded under police protection.

Farm protests, big picture

The protest by thousands of farmers at Delhi's borders have brought to focus a range of issues in agriculture in India. One of the country's leading policy experts provides a primer on some important questions.

EXPERT EXPLAINS

SIRAJ HUSSAIN

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

THE FARMERS' agitation on Delhi's border is now 45 days old, and the government appears to have made up its mind that it will neither put on hold nor repeal the three laws hurriedly passed by Parliament in September 2020. Government ministers have been explaining the beneficial provisions of the laws, and social media is full of stories about how farmers in Punjab have been "exploiting" the system of procurement of crops at minimum support price (MSP). While Punjab and Haryana have become the focus of the farmers' agitation, the current scenario in agriculture is not very hopeful in other states too. Some important issues are discussed below.

What is the current situation of land in agriculture?

Area under agriculture has been shrinking — it reduced from 159.5 million hectares (mn ha) in 2010-11 to 157 mn ha in 2015-16 — but the number of operational holdings has been rising (increased from 138.3 million to about 146 million). This reflects in the falling average landholdings' size of farmers, which has come down from 1.2 ha to about 1.08 ha.

In the absence of an estimate of the number of farmers in the country, the number of landholdings is taken as its proxy. This means that India has about 146 million — or about 14.6 crore — farmers. About 86% of them have an average landholding size less than 2 hectares; they are referred to as India's small and marginal farmers (SMF). The SMFs operate on about 47.35% of the total agri-area. More than half of India's farmers reside in the five states of UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, MP, and Karnataka.

Is fragmentation of land a problem?

Smaller landholdings produce smaller pockets of produce, aggregation of which becomes essential for even a trolley-load to be carried to an agricultural produce market committee (APMC) *mandi* or a nearby market. Due to small holdings caused by fragmentation, small and marginal farmers are forced to sell their produce at farm gate itself. This is especially so in states that have a weak network of APMC *mandis*.

What% of the country's workforce is engaged in agriculture? Do the workers need to be weaned out? How?

As per recent estimates from the Labour Bureau, 45% of India's workforce is employed in agriculture. According to Census 2011, 55% of the agri-workforce comprises agri-labourers, i.e., those who do not own land and work for wages on the land of others; less than 45% are "farmers" who own and cultivate land. Indian agriculture cannot support such a large population through growth in agriculture alone.

Is rice the only water-guzzling crop?

It is said that 1 kg of sugar requires about 1,500-2,000 litres while 1 kg of rice requires 5,000 litres. There are variations across states. A kg of sugar produced from cane cultivated in UP consumes 1,044 litres of water, while in Maharashtra it takes double that — 2,086 litres. In Maharashtra, sugarcane is cultivated on 4% of the cultivable land but consumes more than 70% of irrigation water. Due to the high returns on sugarcane compared to other crop combinations and assured marketing, the area under sugarcane has been going up even in water-stressed regions.

The three Acts passed by Parliament do not touch the sugar sector. In Punjab, sugar is grown only on 1.2% of gross cropped area. So they do not benefit from policies favouring sugarcane.



Tractor rally against farm laws on Delhi's outskirts. Abhinav Saha

Are wheat and rice the only crops for which farmers receive MSP?

While the government declares MSP for 23 crops, only wheat and paddy (rice) are procured in large quantities as they are required to meet the requirement of PDS, which is about 65 million tonnes.

Is it only the farmers of Punjab and Haryana who benefit from procurement?

In 2019-20, Punjab procured 92.3% of its rice production. Haryana procured 89.2%, while Telangana procured 102% of its production. In the case of wheat, Punjab procured 72% of its production this year, while Haryana and MP procured 62% and 66% respectively.

Which other crops are protected by the government through various measures?

Since 2015-16, the government has been procuring larger quantities of pulses through National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) and Small Farmers' Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) for maintaining a buffer stock of 2 million tonnes. Cotton is procured by Cotton Corporation of India, while groundnut is procured in some states like Gujarat.

Some horticultural products are also procured in a sporadic manner, e.g., apples in J&K in 2019-20 and onion in Maharashtra almost every year.

Sugarcane is not procured by the government but its farmers are assured of Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) paid by sugar mills. In some states, the government declares State Advised Price which is higher than the FRP.

Jute is another crop protected by the government even though it is not directly procured. Under Jute Packaging Material (JPM) Act, 1987, the Government has decided that 100% of food grains and 20% of sugar shall be mandatorily packed in diversified jute bags.

If horticulture and dairy are more profitable, why are farmers not giving up MSP crops and switching to these?

Milk producers and farmers growing fruits and vegetables are equally prone to fluctuation in market prices. Except for dairy cooperatives in Gujarat, the milk federations are funded by state governments through various means.

What are the subsidies given to agriculture in India?

Farmers in India are provided support on both the input and output side. On the input side, an average Indian farmer receives subsidies on fertilisers, seeds, farm machinery and equipment, electricity, logistics, etc. On the output side, the MSP regime offers support in states having robust procurement infrastructure. However, small and marginal farmers

are able to get only a small amount of these subsidies.

A number of subsidies meant for agriculture also flow to businesses, e.g., grant given to food processing units and cold chain projects.

Then why is it said that Indian farmer are net taxed?

As per the ICRIER-OECD report, despite the plethora of schemes run to support and subsidise Indian farmers, because of regressive policies on the marketing side (both domestic and international trade policies) and the deficit of basic infrastructure for storage, transportation etc., Indian farmers suffered net losses and thus emerged to be net taxed despite receiving subsidies. Between 2014 and 2016, Indian farmers were on average net taxed to the tune of 6%.

What is the level of agricultural subsidies in other countries?

As per the same ICRIER-OECD report, while Indian farmers were net taxed (i.e., received negative support), farmers in the first world countries of Norway, Switzerland, Japan, Korea, United States, and Australia received the highest positive support. Even farmers in Indonesia received much higher positive support. Ukraine was another country like India that emerged to be

taxing its farmers.

What are the subsidies enjoyed by the middle classes and the rich? Are other sectors of the economy also subsidised?

The Economic Survey of 2014-15 devoted a section to subsidies enjoyed by the middle classes. These include higher interest rates on savings, income tax exemptions, railways, electricity, LPG, gold, and aviation turbine fuel (ATF). Higher education in government institutions is highly subsidised. The government also provides protection to industry by way of productivity-linked incentive schemes, high import tariffs, and regulatory tweaks.

Why are farmers agitating when the government says the new laws will help them? And why are Punjab farmers at the forefront of the agitation?

The farmers of Punjab, Haryana and other states that have robust APMC *mandis* and an efficient system of procurement are more fearful of the three laws. They fear that these laws signal the beginning of the end of open-ended procurement of wheat and paddy. They fear that the success of these states in creating the infrastructure for procurement may now become the reason for withdrawal of support of the Centre.

Can farming be left entirely to market

forces?

Farmers cannot be left entirely to the mercy of market forces. Farmers growing non-MSP crops, especially fruits and vegetables, have experienced huge volatility in prices over the years. The price deficiency payment scheme did not succeed in MP. So, direct income support is the only way to shield them from suffering huge losses. A predictable trade policy can also help in attracting private investment in the agriculture chain which can act as a shield against volatility. Option contracts through FPOs can also bring stability, but most farmers are not educated enough to deal with future markets, so they need support and guidance from the government.

Can procurement be abolished? What will happen to PDS then?

The procurement system in India serves two purposes — purchases on MSP supports farmers, and subsidised distribution of procured grains under PDS supports India's economically vulnerable. As per recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data on malnourishment in India, malnutrition indicators for women and children have worsened over the years. With this in focus, the PDS system is likely to stay in the coming years. But the government will do well to prepare a 10-year roadmap of PDS to 2030 so that only the required quantities of wheat and rice are procured.

Is there a genuine fear of higher consumer prices due to changes in the Essential Commodities Act and the entry of large corporates in the food business through e-commerce and modern retail?

In case of high-value agricultural commodities in which India is in deficit or has only marginal surpluses (like pulses), there is a genuine fear of stocking by corporates, especially those which are in modern retail and e-commerce. The government must make it compulsory that they keep their stock in Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority-registered warehouses only, so that the private stocks are known to the government.

What role should state governments play in getting farmers fair prices?

If India has to move away from procurement-based support, at present restricted to certain crops only, a more attractive income support scheme has to be conceived. However, it has to be coupled with much higher investment, both public and private, in agri-infrastructure. The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) incentivised the states, which increased their expenditure on agriculture. The Centre's assistance for such states should be higher.

Several Decentralised Procurement (DCP) states like Odisha and Chhattisgarh claim that they incur losses in procurement operations and these are not fully reimbursed by the Centre. However, precise data on losses incurred by them is not in the public domain.

What should the government do over the next five years to make Indian agriculture more competitive?

Several states of India have already achieved productivity levels seen in developed countries. But there are also states that have low productivity. Focused research on crops grown in low-productivity states can deliver better seeds, which can withstand the challenge of higher temperature due to climate change. Drought-tolerant varieties of seeds are also needed for crops grown in rain-fed areas. Good quality seeds can enhance productivity by 15-20%. Recent successes in higher productivity vegetables and maize prove this.

In 2018, a working group of Niti Aayog, chaired by Dr Parmod Kumar, published a study, 'Demand supply projections towards 2033', which pointed out that India will still have surplus in wheat and rice. In coarse grains the domestic requirement will be largely met, but there will be a deficit of 5-7 million tonnes in pulses. A massive deficit of more than 50 million tonnes is projected for oilseeds. To meet this gap in oilseeds, India will need the best agricultural practices of Punjab and Haryana.

Nationwide power outage in Pakistan: cause & effect, previous history

RAHEL PHILOPOSE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

CITIES AND towns across Pakistan, including Islamabad, were plunged into darkness for several hours on Saturday night following a massive nationwide electricity outage. Power supply was restored by Sunday morning in the main cities, and an investigation launched to determine the cause of the outage.

"The system is stable now and electricity supply has been restored in major cities of the country," Pakistan's Energy Minister Omar Ayub told reporters on Sunday, warning that it could take hours for electricity to return everywhere.

The nationwide blackout was the worst the country has experienced in recent memory, but it is by no means the first. Pakistan's

power distribution system has not kept pace with power generation or demand. Outages occur frequently, and have even triggered massive public protests in cities such as Lahore and Karachi.

What happened on Saturday night?

Shortly before midnight, massive power outages were simultaneously reported by residents of all major urban centres in the country, including Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Multan, as well as several smaller towns and cities.

Addressing an early morning press conference in Islamabad, Energy Minister Ayub said power supply snapped at 11:41 pm due to a "technical fault" at the Guddu power plant in Sindh province. The blackout was triggered by a sudden drop in the frequency of the power transmission system.

"It had what we call a 'cascading effect' and shut down the power system, choking about 10,320 megawatts of electricity," he explained. Urging people to remain patient, he later tweeted that he was personally overseeing restoration efforts. "Our teams are still working in the Guddu area to investigate the reasons that caused the fault, but the heavy fog is making their job difficult," the minister said.

What was the impact?

In the midst of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, many feared that the blackout would cause major disruptions at hospitals. However, since most hospitals rely on backup generators, there were no immediate reports of any such adversities.

In Karachi, people claimed to have seen long queues at gas stations in the city as people queued up to buy petrol to power gener-

ators in their homes, CNN reported.

Internet connectivity in the country collapsed. Connectivity was at "62 per cent of ordinary levels", according to Netblocks, an NGO which monitors internet outages. Meanwhile, #Loadshedding and #PakistanBlackOut quickly started to trend on Twitter, with thousands sharing images of their cities and localities shrouded in near-complete darkness. Some social media users even wondered whether the outage was a prelude to a military takeover or war.

How common are power cuts in Pakistan?

Pakistan began to experience frequent power cuts in 2009, when the Pakistan People's Party was in power. The political de-termination to keep power tariffs below the cost of supply, inability to get consumers to

pay bills or to stop theft and wastage, the high price of oil all contributed to the government's inability to pay the subsidy to private and public power generating companies, which in turn meant these companies could not pay oil and gas suppliers to keep up generation, leading to "intersectional debts" and disruptions, according to a 2015 United States Institute of Peace report (*Rashid Aziz and Munawar Baseer Ahmed*). The paper estimated that the energy crisis was shaving off about 2% from the GDP annually.

Between 2008 and 2015, there was talk on and off about how India could export power to Pakistan, but that remained talk as bilateral tensions took centre stage.

The energy crisis became a huge election issue in 2013, and one of Nawaz Sharif's main campaign promises was to rectify the situation. In his abruptly shortened tenure as PM, he

did manage to bring in some reform including augmenting power generation capacity, but the distribution system has not been improved for uptake of additional power. Hence, the demand-supply gap remains, leading to frequent tripping, and as it happened yesterday, a "cascading" failure up the chain.

While outages are frequent, especially in the summer, nationwide failures are rare. The last one was in 2018, when power supply was partially disrupted for over nine hours. Before that, in 2015, around 80% of the country was left without electricity after an alleged militant attack on a supply line. An outage similar to the one on Saturday took place in 2013. Before that, in 2006, an eight-hour nationwide blackout triggered rumours that then President Pervez Musharraf had been unseated in a coup at a time he was away on a 18-day tour abroad.

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IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

KANIMOZHI, LOK SABHA MP & SECRETARY, WOMEN'S WING, DMK

“Our culture is different. They (BJP) can’t create fear of other religions here. It won’t work in TN polls”

The DMK leader talks about fighting polls without Karunanidhi, says DMK is at forefront of fighting BJP’s polarising tactics in TN, claims Rajinikanth would not have been a factor, and rules out any tension with the Congress over seat-sharing talks. The session was moderated by National Editor (Mumbai) Nirupama Subramanian

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: You have already started campaigning in the western and southern districts of Tamil Nadu. This will be the first Assembly election that the party will contest without your father and former DMK chief M Karunanidhi. How difficult will this election be for the party as you take on the AIADMK that has the BJP’s support?

We have already faced the Lok Sabha election without him (M Karunanidhi), under the leadership of M K Stalin. He steered the party to an amazing victory. Except for one seat, Theni, we won everything else. The difference in votes between the winning and the losing candidates was in lakhs. So, I think we have already proven that we can win... Our founding leaders have made sure that the core ideology of the party is very firm in the minds of the cadre and all the leaders... It is well-established... Our present leader has been in the party for many years, he knows how to guide us in these elections. We have faith in his leadership.

Of course, there are going to be challenges. The AIADMK is going to completely depend on money for votes. The BJP, we all know, never shies away from using anything to win an election. So that will be a challenge. They (the BJP) will use their usual techniques of polarising voters, bringing in religion, which has never happened in Tamil Nadu... This is not just a challenge in these elections, it is a larger issue that the entire country has to deal with. The DMK will be at the forefront of working against it.

What I have seen during campaigning is that people are quite fed up with the AIADMK. They always give in to what the Centre wants, they never stand up for our rights. Take the farmers’ issue. Even though there are no protests in Tamil Nadu, when you speak to farmers individually, they feel very let down because of the AIADMK government’s support to the farm Bills. People are disillusioned with the AIADMK government, and they believe that a DMK government is the answer... Employment is a huge issue in these elections and when the DMK comes back to power we will bring in investments and industry so that there is more employment. Administration will also be much better under a DMK government.

LIZ MATHEW: So far it seems that in the Tamil Nadu elections you are going to follow the Bihar formula, where the DMK will contest together with the Congress and the Left. But giving the Congress more seats in Bihar didn’t work very well for the Opposition’s alliance. Will you keep that in mind during seat-sharing talks?

I don’t think there will be any issue over allocation of seats. There is a good understanding between the leadership of the Congress and the DMK. We will be able to work around it (the seats) to everybody’s satisfaction. Everybody understands that it is an important election for the state also.

LIZ MATHEW: The BJP was trying to woo superstar Rajinikanth. Will his decision to exit the poll fray before even entering it affect the BJP’s prospects in the state?

Mr Rajinikanth has given a statement saying that he will not enter politics, and why it is not right and fair to do it now and get others involved and then let them down... I don’t know if they (the BJP) can find anybody on a par with him.

Also, even if he (Rajinikanth) had come into politics, I don’t think it would have made a difference in this election.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: As somebody who has been a part of Tamil Nadu politics for many years, how do you look at the attempts at polarisation in the state that you mentioned? How does it impact the state’s secular fabric?

Fortunately, the BJP, at the most, tries to paint the DMK as an anti-Hindu party or something like that... They haven’t been able to say anything against the minorities in Tamil Nadu. And, they also understand that even the Hindus in Tamil Nadu are not like that (communal). I think, even in Kerala, people will not accept divisions on religious lines. We have all lived together comfortably... Even caste-wise... There have been no issues in living with people from other religions, or a temple being built... It’s a different kind of culture here. People don’t feel threatened. They are very comfortable. I don’t think polarisation on religious lines would be a prob-



WHY
KANIMOZHI

The DMK’s face in Delhi, Kanimozhi has emerged as a prominent woman leader in Tamil Nadu in recent years. As the state gears for polls, the Thoothukudi MP has begun campaigning, raising employment, women’s issues



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

lem here... They (the BJP) will not be able to create fear of other religions... That is what they play with, and that will not work in Tamil Nadu.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: The BJP has found resonance among some sections in Tamil Nadu. Over the next five years, do you see the party emerging as an important player in the state?

They would want to become a prominent party (in Tamil Nadu), and it cannot be denied that they are working towards it. And, I cannot deny the fact that the BJP has more cadres and leaders now in the state. But I don’t think it has had a significant growth that should worry us. They are working towards it... And, despite all the confusion within the AIADMK, eventually they will be able to sort themselves out.

ARUN JANARDHANAN: The BJP seems to be working to a plan. They are trying to become the main opposition party in Kerala and Tamil Nadu by 2026. Do you see that happening? And, can you say that the DMK will never ally with the BJP in the future?

... The DMK is one of the most vocal parties against many of the things that the BJP stands for. I don’t see the possibility of an alliance with the BJP because we stand for two different things completely... I really believe that in Tamil Nadu and Kerala politics, you cannot divide people on religious lines very easily.

ARUN JANARDHANAN: But do you think the BJP has made parties such as the DMK and the CPM in Kerala more careful while talking about religion?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: Also, how do you respond to the charge by the BJP, and by many others on social media platforms, that the DMK is an atheist party in a state where people are quite religious. They are religious in a non-communal way, but people in Tamil Nadu are religious...

Why should someone be charged for being an atheist? It’s not a crime. Why should we defend it? I don’t think there is a need to defend it. I am an atheist and I am very proud of it. The DMK has atheists, but our leader MKS (Stalin) has said that 90 per cent people in the party are Hindus also. So, it is not like the DMK is against Hindu. We have Muslims, we have Christians, agnostics and atheists. We are not saying that we are a Hindu party or an atheist party. When Anna (CN Annadurai) started the party he said there is one God, that God can be anything to anybody. Or, you don’t have to have a God. I don’t think we have to defend ourselves for being atheists.

(On being careful) They (the BJP) are saying that the CPM and the DMK are against the majority, so we have to give an explanation. We have to say that we are not against the majority. If we will fight for the Muslims, we will fight for the Hindus too... The DMK does not want to take away the right to believe from anybody. But of course, we stand against the caste system, against untouchability, against anybody who takes away others’ rights on the basis of caste or religion. We believe in social justice. We are not saying everybody should become an atheist. We don’t force it on anybody. Being an atheist also is not wrong in our party.

ARUN JANARDHANAN: Where do you place Kamal Haasan in Tamil Nadu politics, given that an alliance with his party doesn’t seem likely?

With Kamal Haasan or without him, the DMK is winning this election. If Haasan wants to work with the DMK or the latter with him, it is a decision that the leadership has to make. We did very well in the Lok Sabha elections without any new additions to the alliance. So, who comes in and goes out is the party leadership’s decision.

HARISH DAMODARAN: Do you think Tamil politics has gone beyond the Dravidian identity? Periyar (E V Ramaswamy) statue being vandalised would have been unimaginable once. Do you think the politics is now more conservative?

Periyar’s statue was vandalised because of the weak backbone-less government that we have. The police should have taken action but they are scared to do so. But in one way, I think, attacking Periyar ideologically and even vandalising his statues... it has brought in more youth who are interested in finding out about Periyar and his ideology. You can see on social media platforms that now there is a strong presence of people defending the Dravidian ideology. They are not a part of the AIADMK or DMK. So, I don’t think it has become negotiable. People are doing it (defending the ideology) from the comforts of their homes on social media and not on the streets. That is the change. And, Covid-19 also has contributed to it. Most of the exchange of ideas now

happens on social media. And, it’s political parties like us who still take to the streets and meet people. Nobody is against learning another language, whether it is Hindi, Malayalam, German or anything... We are saying don’t impose a language on us. Don’t take away our right to choose. You don’t have to make the choice for us, whether we have to learn Hindi or Sanskrit. If people just want to learn only two languages, they have the right to choose... I think we still believe in social justice. That is the core of the Dravidian ideology. I don’t think we have moved away from that.

MANOJ CG: Do you think the Congress has failed to provide leadership for the Opposition at the national level?

All the opposition parties have to come together to work towards creating a strong Opposition. We can’t expect only one party to do that... I think it (the Opposition coming together at the national level) will happen as time passes by because it has not even been two years since the Lok Sabha elections. Parties are also concentrating on state elections. We have elections in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and in West Bengal... As time goes by, the Opposition will come together more strongly and work out strategies on how

It’s not even two years since Lok Sabha elections... As time goes by, Opposition will come together and work out how to deal with issues facing the nation

The needs, the problems, the issues, everything changes, and every party has to keep reinventing and adapting to changes. That cannot be denied... The DMK is a cadre-based party and we reach out to people directly. Now, of course, with modern technology, and we know that the BJP uses social media... we also have to adopt social media to reach out. We have to make it part of our election process... This is one thing we have to keep working at. This election, investment and employment are the most important issues in Tamil Nadu. We have to talk to people about it and give them the confidence that Tamil Nadu will be put back on the growth path.

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: The DMK is focusing a lot on women’s rights in its campaign. After Jayalalithaa’s death, there is no big woman leader in Tamil Nadu politics. Do you see yourself taking that place?

I’ve always taken up women’s and human rights issues... There is a need for more women’s participation in politics, and that is why the DMK has been insisting on 33 per cent reservation for women... I don’t understand why the BJP, which made it a part of its manifesto, is refusing to bring it in.

I do see women coming in larger numbers for our election campaign because there are a lot of issues which have not been addressed. The self-help groups, for example, had created a solid base for many women, especially in rural areas, and enhanced their social participation. But because the SHGs are not getting loans and support from the government, they are not functioning as before. This has taken away empowerment from these women and they are quite disillusioned. It is a major issue in this election.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: In December 2018, Stalin had proposed Rahul Gandhi as the prime minister candidate for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Since then, there has been a lot of confusion about the UPA alliance. Do UPA members meet?

The UPA in Tamil Nadu is very strong and we are working together. We do meet... We shared the stage in support of the farmers protesting in Delhi. Our leader had invited leaders from all parties to come and be part of it. As far as Tamil Nadu goes, I don’t think there’s any confusion. We work together and there are regular meetings. At the national level, in Delhi, leaders meet when there is a need to... When Parliament is in session, we have regular meetings about how we are going to respond to a Bill etc.

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: Recently, M K Stalin’s son Udhayanidhi Stalin was elevated to star campaigner. He has also become the secretary of the youth wing of the party. Are these signs of a leadership progression in the DMK?

I don’t think we should be discussing leadership right now. We have a leader and everybody is focusing on his leadership. This whole election is about the DMK coming back to power. Our election campaign is completely focused on our CM candidate, M K Stalin.

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: The CBI has appealed against the acquittals in the 2G case. Will it become an issue in the election campaign?

We have all been acquitted. Nobody was convicted. The judge has very clearly said that there is no evidence... How can they use this against the DMK?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: Following Rajinikanth’s decision to not enter politics, do you think the space for film stars in politics has reduced?

I will not say that. Who you are, what you stand for, and what you are capable of is what is going to decide what you become in politics. Just because somebody is a popular star... If you’re talking about somebody like M G Ramachandran, he was not just a star. He came from the Dravidian movement and he worked for the DMK for many years. He had a base and that is what made him what he was. So, I will not say that no other film star can ever make it in politics... You can come from any field but you will have to understand the kind of hard work that is needed. This doesn’t happen overnight because you are a face which everybody likes or you have been popular in films. People may recognise you more than anybody else, but your face doesn’t mean that people will accept you as a leader.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Christine Aschbacher

AUSTRIA

Minister quits over allegations of plagiarism

AUSTRIA'S LABOUR Minister Christine Aschbacher has resigned after allegations that she plagiarised some of her university work, but denied any wrongdoing and said she was stepping down to protect her family. Aschbacher, a member of the conservative Austrian People's Party, allegedly copied at least one fifth of her doctoral dissertation from other sources, as well as parts of her diploma thesis, said academic Stefan Weber who specialises in plagiarism. Aschbacher said she had written her dissertation and thesis "to the best of her knowledge and belief". She said "the hostility... and the insults are unfortunately being unloaded not only on me, but also on my children, and with unbearable force". **REUTERS**

AFGHANISTAN

Roadside bomb kills 3 in Kabul

A ROADSIDE bomb exploded in Afghanistan's capital Sunday, killing at least three people in a vehicle. It was the latest attack to take place as government negotiators in Qatar resume peace talks with the Taliban. Tariq Arian, spokesman for the interior minister, said a spokesman for the ministry's public protection forces — a security force — was one of the three killed in the attack. One other person was wounded he said. No one immediately claimed responsibility. The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks in the capital in recent months. **AP**

BRITAIN

Harry, Meghan to quit social media: report

PRINCE HARRY and wife Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, have reportedly decided to quit social media as they focus on their roles in the US away from front-line British royalty. According to *The Sunday Times*, the couple who had announced their decision to step back from official royal duties to relocate with their one-year-old son Archie last year will no longer use platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. The duo are reportedly rejecting social media as part of their new "progressive role" in America. **PTI**

STORMING OF THE CAPITOL: CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY INTENSIFY

Dems seek answers from Justice Dept on Trump role amid impeachment threat

Top GOP Senator says Trump committed impeachable offences; Pence to attend Biden inauguration

THE NEW YORK TIMES

JANUARY 10

DEMOCRATS HAVE asked leaders of the US Justice Department for more information about what the department is doing to investigate and prosecute the attack on the Capitol, including the role that President Donald Trump played in the attack.

Five people died in the riot, including a police officer, and dozens have been arrested.

"We write to request an immediate and urgent briefing on the steps the Federal Bureau of Investigation is taking to investigate and pursue for prosecution the instigation, planning, and execution of the deadly terrorist attack on the United States Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, by President Donald Trump, his supporters, and outside groups," Democratic leaders said in a letter on Thursday to Christopher Wray, director of the FBI.

A Justice Department spokesman said Saturday that the department has received a separate request from Congress for information related to the riot and is working to fulfill it.

Trump's role in the carnage underpins the articles of impeachment that House Democrats have drawn up, accusing the President of inciting an insurrection.

The Democrats' bid to quickly impeach Trump has gained support, and a top Republican said the President's role in the deadly riot was worthy of rebuke.

Republican Senator Pat Toomey, of Pennsylvania, said Saturday he believed Trump had committed "impeachable



Trump has been blamed for inciting the mob that stormed the Capitol

offences". Toomey also became the second Republican senator to call for Trump to resign, telling host Chuck Todd on NBC's "Meet the Press": "I think the best way for our country, Chuck, is for the President to resign and go away as soon as possible." Last week, Senator Lisa Murkowski, a Republican from Alaska, had also called on the President to resign.

Lawmakers plan to formally introduce the proposal to impeach on Monday in the House.

Democratic Rep James Clyburn said the vote on the impeachment could happen as soon as Tuesday. But, he said the Democratic leadership acknowledged that a trial in the Senate is unlikely to be completed before Trump leaves office on Jan 20. Clyburn suggested that Speaker Nancy Pelosi was considering impeaching now but not sending the article to the Senate for trial for weeks.

Meanwhile, US Vice President Mike Pence will attend Biden's inauguration on Jan 20, an aide said on Saturday, a split with Trump's decision not to go.

Pence had always been likelier to attend the inauguration than Trump, who was an almost certain to skip the ceremony.



CLASHES IN SAN DIEGO: San Diego police clash with protesters on Saturday. Supporters of US President Donald Trump clashed with counter-protesters in San Diego, California, on Saturday, prompting police to declare the gathering an unlawful assembly because of acts of violence. Officers were hit with rocks, bottles and eggs, police said, and the crowd directed pepper spray at them. **AP**

Rioters seen in viral posts arrested

Man held for threatening Nancy Pelosi

RICH MCKAY

JANUARY 10

FEDERAL AGENTS arrested two more Capitol Hill rioters whose images had gone viral, of one carrying off the House Speaker's lectern and another who wore horns and a fur pelt.

Dozens of people have been charged following the storming of the Capitol on Wednesday, with the FBI asking the public to help identify participants.

Jacob Anthony Chansley, also known as Jake Angeli, who fea-

tured prominently on social media wearing horns, a fur pelt, face paint and brandishing a spear adorned with the US flag, turned himself in to police.

Agents also arrested Adam Christian Johnson, whose photo as he smiled and waved while carrying off House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's lectern also went viral.

Another man, Cleveland Meredith, was detained in connection with making threats to Pelosi after an FBI agent read a Jan 7 text messages in which Meredith talked about "putting a bullet in her noggin on Live TV". **REUTERS**

Amazon & Apple also cut off Parler

PARLER, A social network that pitches itself as a "free speech" alternative to Twitter and Facebook and has hosted millions of President Donald Trump's supporters, was taken off Apple's App Store hours after Google made a similar move. Later, Amazon told Parler it would boot the company from its web-hosting service on Sunday. The actions were part of a wider crackdown by tech companies on Trump and some of his most extreme supporters after Wednesday's riot. **NYT**

Gunman kills 3, injures 4 in Chicago shooting spree

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO, JANUARY 10

A MAN killed three people and wounded four others in a series of shootings over roughly four hours that started on Chicago's South Side and ended with his death in a shootout with police.

Investigators are trying to determine a motive for the attacks, which began Saturday afternoon with the killing of a 30-year-old university student who was shot in the head while sitting in his car, Chicago police Superintendent David Brown said. He didn't release any of the victims' names.

The shooter, 32-year-old Jason Nightengale, then "just randomly" walked into an apartment building a block away, where he shot a 46-year-old security guard and a 77-year-old woman, Brown said. The guard died and the older woman was hospitalised in critical condition, the *Chicago Tribune* reported. Nightengale then went to a convenience store and fired shots, killing a 20-year-old man and wounding an 81-year-old woman. He shot and injured a 15-year-old girl after leaving the store.

He then drove 16 km and shot and injured another woman in a restaurant. Soon after that, he was killed in a shootout with police.

Indonesia locates black boxes of crashed jet

FRANSISKA NANGOY & BERNADETTE CHRISTINA

JAKARTA, JANUARY 10

INDONESIAN AUTHORITIES on Sunday located the black boxes of the Sriwijaya Air jet that crashed into the sea soon after taking off from the capital Jakarta, as human body parts and pieces of the plane were retrieved.

The Boeing 737-500 with 62



Rescuers find debris of the Sriwijaya Air passenger jet in the Java Sea Sunday. **AP**

passengers and crew was headed on a domestic flight to Pontianak in West Kalimantan on Saturday before it disappeared from radar screens four

minutes after take-off.

Indonesia National Transport Safety Committee (KNKT) chief Soerjanto Tjahjono said the locations of Flight SJ 182's two black

boxes had been identified. "Hopefully, we can retrieve them soon," said military chief Hadi Tjahjanto, without giving an estimated timeframe. There were no clues yet as to what caused the crash, the first major air crash in Indonesia since 189 passengers and crew were killed in 2018 when a Lion Air Boeing 737 Max in 2018 also plunged into the Java Sea soon after take-off from Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. **REUTERS**

Zall then focused on how Earth's changing environment would most likely prompt security issues and crises. In late 2009, the CIA set up a Center on Climate Change and National Security. Its mission was to help US policymakers better understand the impact of floods, rising sea levels, population shifts, state instabilities and heightened competition for natural resources. News reports announcing the programme again made no mention of Zall.

She retired from the CIA in 2013. Medea was never the same. The agency shut it down in 2015, and the Trump administration made sure there was no revival of the programme. **NYT**



Vehicles' headlights are the only lights seen on a road in Rawalpindi on Sunday. **AP**

Massive power outage leaves large parts of Pakistan in the dark

ZARAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 10

A MAJOR technical fault in Pakistan's power generation and distribution system caused a massive power outage that plunged the nation into darkness overnight, the energy minister said.

Hours after the late Saturday outage, Energy Minister Omar Ayub said on Twitter that power was being restored in phases, starting with Islamabad. He said

later Sunday that power had been restored to much of the country.

The blackout was initially reported on social media by residents of major urban centres, including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Multan. The minister and his spokesman then took to Twitter to update the country.

Ayub urged people to be patient. He said the cause of the power outage was being investigated and work was being done to fire up Pakistan's main Tarbela power station, which would lead

to a restoration of power in the rest of the country in phases.

Ayub said in a news conference Sunday that the Guddu power plant in southern Sindh province developed a fault at 11.41 pm that triggered the shutdown of other power plants in seconds.

Later, a spokesman for the Ministry of Energy, said the Tarbela and Warsak plants, both in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, had come back online and power was being restored to the transmission system. **AP**



Linda Zall at her home in Clermont, Florida. **NYT**

cence plate.

An accident of fate let the fleet assess a top environmental concern — the extent to which vast expanses of Arctic and Antarctic ice were retreating. Many spy satel-

lites orbit on north-south paths that pass close to the poles.

Spies had little use for sweeping Arctic and Antarctic images. But they dazzled environmentalists because the Earth's poles

were fast becoming hot spots of global warming and melting ice.

"It gave us the first real measurements of the ice budget — how much loss you have from season to season," said D James Baker, who directed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration from 1993 to 2001 and served on Zall's CIA advisory panel.

In normal science, where collaborators share credit, Zall might have been listed on papers as a co-author or even a lead author. But not in a twilight zone where science was part open, part secret. For decades, hers was a hidden hand.

Zall's environmentalism for the CIA began in 1990 when former US Vice President Al Gore,

then a Democratic senator from Tennessee and now a leading climate activist, wrote a letter asking the agency to examine whether the nation's spy fleet might address environmental riddles. The agency put Zall onto the question. Quickly, she saw how the nation's archive of surveillance observations could also serve to strengthen assessments of Earth's changing environment.

By October 1992, the CIA was so confident in the ability of spy satellites to solve environmental mysteries that it established a large task force. Zall was put in charge and recruited its members, mainly Earth scientists. She named her group Medea.

Zall then focused on how Earth's changing environment would most likely prompt security issues and crises. In late 2009, the CIA set up a Center on Climate Change and National Security. Its mission was to help US policymakers better understand the impact of floods, rising sea levels, population shifts, state instabilities and heightened competition for natural resources. News reports announcing the programme again made no mention of Zall.

She retired from the CIA in 2013. Medea was never the same. The agency shut it down in 2015, and the Trump administration made sure there was no revival of the programme. **NYT**

14 ECONOMY

INSURANCE WATCH PAPERLESS POLICIES

‘Challenges exist, but e-insurance accounts seeing 100% growth’

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, JANUARY 10

THE INSURANCE sector is witnessing a 100 per cent growth year-on-year in new electronic insurance accounts (eIA), or dematting of insurance policies in the paperless format. The number of people opening new stockbroking accounts and buying insurance policies online has soared even though most offices were non-operational due to the lockdown in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

“I foresee in the near future where most of the policies would be issued only through an e-insurance account and we are working with a few of the larger insurance companies in this direction,” said Madhusudhan ML, MD & CEO, NSDL Database Management Ltd (NDML), a part of National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL), the nation’s largest securities depository.

The capital market popularised the dematerialisation of stocks in the two decades and immensely benefitted the entire ecosystem including users to seamlessly transact. “Similarly, the Irdai has taken the initiative towards the creation of an e-insurance account with an idea to help users easily access and manage their multiple policies,” he told *The Indian Express*.

eIA is the portfolio of insurance policies of a policyholder held in an electronic form with an insurance repository (IR). This will help an eIA holder keep track of insurance policies (life as well as non-life) across multiple insurers in one place. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has allowed four entities to carry out IR business: NSDL National Insurance Repository (NIR), CDSL Insurance Repository, KARVI Insurance Repository and CAMS Insurance Repository.

While the benefits of having an online account are obvious, some factors are affecting the adoption of eIA in India. “Awareness about the eIA as a product and its benefits takes the top spot as the major factor affecting the adoption. Each stakeholder will have to take a step towards educating their respective customers on the features and benefits of eIA,” Madhusudhan said.

The other challenge that usually comes up is the perceived loss of customer ownership by the distribution ecosystem as issuance of a policy digitally is seen as one less opportunity to interact with the customer. “Then is the issue of ‘unless I see a physical copy,

‘MOST POLICIES VIA eIA IN FUTURE’

■ **Madhusudhan ML, MD & CEO of NDML, said in the future, most policies would be issued only via an e-insurance account**
■ **An e-insurance account, or eIA, is the portfolio of insurance policies of a policyholder held in an electronic form with an insurance repository**

the policy is not issued’ kind of uncertainty in minds of customers. While such challenges exist, we see tremendous scope for the concept and are seeing over 100 per cent growth year-on-year in the adoption,” the NSDL chief said.

He added that Irdai has mandated the issuance of on-line policies through IR and currently all policies sold through insurance companies’ on-line portals are issued digitally through IRs. “Insurance companies have understood the importance and convenience of eIA and have adopted various strategies to drive adoption. This proactive non-regulatory initiative from a few of the progressive insurance companies has yielded immediate gain in terms of operational efficiencies and reduction in print and dispatch cost.”

H said all physical policies can be converted to electronic format and a policyholder can add their existing policies held in physical form to an eIA. “All a policyholder has to do is open an eIA and share the policy details like policy number and insurer name. This is completely a paperless process for the customer and doesn’t take more than a few minutes. As the insurance policy is issued in electronic form the hassles associated with the processing of claims for physical policies like availability of documents to the nominee, loss in transit, authenticity, mutilated document, etc. are eliminated,” Madhusudhan added.

Currently, 2.9 million customers manage their insurance policies with NIR. “The eIA helps insurers in saving costs by eliminating the requirement of printing and dispatching the complete policy kit to the customer through physical means either by post or courier. A cost-benefit analysis conducted by NIR for one of the largest insurance players showed a reduction of print and dispatch cost by over 70,” he said.

PASSENGER VEHICLE SALES SLIDE OVER LAST FIVE YEARS

Automakers seek relief on new fuel efficiency, emission norms

SANDEEP SINGH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

EVEN AS pent-up demand lifted passenger vehicle (PV) sales in the third quarter after it got derailed in the first and second quarters following the pandemic and lockdown announcement in March, the auto industry continues to languish on the growth front. Terming the recent growth in PV sales as a false euphoria, the industry has now requested the government to defer the implementation of fuel efficiency norms and second stage of emission norms to April 2024, in a bid to keep the cost of acquisition stable.

Industry data shows that while the compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of PV sales stood at 12.9 per cent for the five-year period between March 2005 and March 2010, it fell sharply to a CAGR of 1.3 per cent for the five-year period between FY15 and FY20. Between FY10 and FY15, the sales rose by 5.9 per cent.

In fact, the CAGR for PV sales between 2000 and 2010 stood at 10.3 per cent and that between 2010 and 2020 has been 3.6 per cent. So, clearly the growth rate has slowed down over the last decade and more so over the last five years. Though car sales are closely related to GDP growth

EXPLAINED

Pandemic disruption: Seeking more time for transition

SHIFTING TO CAFE-2 and BS-VI stage II would not only become more difficult for the auto industry amid the pandemic-led disruption but also raise cost of acquisition. In the current sales scenario, industry insiders say a further rise in acquisition costs for consumers could add to the concerns.

numbers, industry insiders say that PV sales have suffered despite a decent GDP growth rate.

“The primary reason for that has been the sharp rise in cost of acquisition of cars in India. Almost 50 per cent of the car buyers in India are first-time buyers and since price elasticity for car purchase is high in India, it is a major factor for slowdown in growth,” said Shashank Srivastava, ED, sales and marketing, MSIL.

If rising cost of raw materials is a factor, insiders say that high tax rates and shift from BS-IV to BS-VI in a quick time has lifted the acquisition cost. “In European markets, the transition from Euro 4 to Euro 6 took 9 years, but in India the shift happened in just a period of three years and since all the cost is passed on to the consumer, it takes up the acquisition cost significantly. Besides, high tax rates and rising service tax and insurance cost has also taken the acquisition cost higher for customers,” said Srivastava.

As sales suffer, the industry has now made a representation to the government to defer the implementation of Corporate Average Fuel efficiency (CAFE-2) regulations and BS-VI stage II norms to April 2024. As of now, the CAFE-2 norms that aim to make cars more fuel efficient are set to come into effect in 2022 and BS-VI stage II norms are set to come into force beginning April 2023.

“Because of pandemic-led disruption, we have requested the government to defer the implementation of both CAFE-2 norms and BS-VI stage II, to April 2024,

said Srivastava, pointing that adherence to new norms lifts the cost of acquisition.

While India has a huge potential for growth of PV sales, experts point to a slowdown in the pace of growth of first-time buyers. “If the pace of first-time buyers picks up, it will lead to higher replacement demand and additional purchase,” said an industry insider.

As of now, while first-time buyers account for almost 50 per cent of total sales, 24 per cent is replacement demand and the remaining 26 per cent is demand for additional car purchase.

“We are still in the initial phase of economic development and there is huge potential for growth but we need to convert potential into reality and the cost of acquisition has to be taken care of,” said Srivastava. He further said that companies are doing their bit to reduce the acquisition cost by increasing localisation and becoming more efficient and productive, however, “another factor that will lead to cost reduction is economies of scale and that will come in once we see volume growth.”

Many in the industry feel that besides lower cost of acquisition, a larger base of car buyers will depend upon sustained high growth of the economy as that will bring in more people into the job cycle who will generate demand.

AMID COVID

‘Cities hit worst, but key to post-pandemic growth’

Cities have borne the brunt of the virus outbreak, but will be key to post-pandemic growth as they account for nearly 70% of the GDP, a study by WEF with IDFC Institute said



25-30: Number of people who migrate to the cities from rural areas every minute

25 million: Number of households, i.e. 35% of all urban households, which cannot afford housing at market prices

Double blow for vulnerable populations: Vulnerable populations, including low-income migrant workers, have suffered the dual blows of lost income and weak social-protection coverage during the pandemic

Practices that need to be adopted to realise potential of cities:

- Using data to help manage cities and direct emergency operations
- Empowered and capable governance
- Investment in transport and infrastructure to fuel productive urban economies
- Rethink of outdated planning norms and regulations

Source: World Economic Forum/IDFC Institute/PTI

FY21: Currency in circulation up 13% in first nine months

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10

THE CURRENCY in Circulation (CIC) grew by around 13 per cent in the first nine months of the current fiscal as people preferred holding on to cash as a precautionary measure amid the uncertainty caused due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

CIC grew by Rs 3,23,003 crore, or 13.2 per cent, to Rs 27,70,315 crore as on January 1, 2021 from Rs 24,47,312 crore as on March 31, 2020, according to recent data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

In the April-December period of FY2020, it had grown by nearly 6 per cent.

According to Care Ratings Chief Economist Madan Sabnavis, the growth in currency in circulation so far in the current fiscal has been high as people were accumulating more cash to meet any exigency during the lockdown.

“Whenever there is a crisis-like situation, there is a tendency for households to latch on to cash. That is the reason there has been an increase in demand for cash. What you see is nothing else but a precautionary motive overwhelming everything,” Sabnavis said.

The RBI in its annual report for 2019-20, released in August 2020, had also mentioned that demand for currency started to increase in the wake of heightened uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The central bank also took a series of measures in order to meet the enhanced demand.

During the calendar year 2020, CIC grew 22.1 per cent, or Rs 5,01,405 crore, to Rs 27,70,315 crore as on January 1, 2021.

CIC includes banknotes and coins. At present, RBI issues notes in denominations of Rs 2, Rs 5, Rs 10, Rs 20, Rs 50, Rs 100, Rs 200, Rs 500 and Rs 2,000. **WITHPTI**

INTERVIEW WITH CFO, TCS

‘Growth momentum will sustain as deal pipeline is healthy’

TATA CONSULTANCY Services (TCS) has reported a stellar set of numbers for the December quarter, the strongest growth in last nine years. V RAMAKRISHNAN, CFO, TCS, tells SHUBHRA TANDON in an interview that there are indicators to suggest the growth is sustainable. Edited excerpts:

Despite salary hikes being rolled out, margins were strong...

The biggest factor driving margins is growth which was seen across verticals. But more importantly, the ability of people to work from anywhere also increased the fungibility. So, if you are driving efficiencies, they translate into gains. Also, we continued to be disciplined in other areas of discretionary spending. Currency also was benign in the quarter, which is important.

Will this margin growth sustain in the coming quarters as well?

We are seeing the growth momentum and believe this will sustain since the deal pipeline is healthy. The potential is visible as multiple industries are fortifying and reiterating the benefits of technology adoption. Adoption of cloud to reimagine processes within the company and drive efficiencies is also on the rise, so the margins should remain resilient.

Has the pandemic had an impact on the IT budgets of clients? Are there any cutbacks?

Technology is in such a place that it is no longer just an IT solution but about helping companies find uses. Firms like us provide those technology-led solutions for business problems, reimagining business models, the way they de-

MARKET WATCH

FPIs INVEST ₹5,156 CR IN EQUITIES

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have pumped Rs 5,156 crore into Indian capital markets in the first six trading sessions this year amid expectations of strong third-quarter earnings and a reformist budget. **PTI**

ED CHARGESHEET ON ₹7,000-CRORE FRAUD

‘Kapoor directed Yes Bank not to recover loans from Cox and Kings’

KHUSHBOONARAYAN
MUMBAI, JANUARY 10

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has alleged that Rana Kapoor, former chairman and co-founder of Yes Bank Ltd, instructed bank officials to not recover loans of Rs 3,642 crore from Cox and Kings Ltd, even though the defaulting travel firm had raised Rs 4,387 crore from selling its UK firm Holiday Break Education, in January 2019, according to the statements given by two senior Yes Bank officials to the agency.

These statements are a part of the prosecution complaint (chargesheet) filed by ED in the Rs 7,000-crore bank fraud pertaining to the now bankrupt Cox and Kings. The ED has alleged that Cox and Kings sold Holiday Break Education for ₹460 million after defaulting on loan repayments to Yes Bank and “siphoned” the sale proceeds.

Cox and Kings owes Rs 5,500 crore to banks and financial institutions and it is one of the top borrowers of Yes Bank. The listed travel firm was sent to bankruptcy court in October 2019, after it defaulted on payments.

The ED complaint against Cox and Kings and its arrested promoter Ajay Ajit Peter Kerkar has alleged that the top three customers of Cox and Kings — AK Travel, Holiday Break Travel and Worldwide Travels — operated from the residence of one of the directors of Liz Traders and Agents Pvt Ltd, a company owned by Kerkar.

The agency has alleged that Kerkar, along with the firm’s chief financial officer Anil Khandelwal, indulged in circular trading by “purchasing air tickets from other group companies of Cox and Kings and selling it to another group company Ezeego One Travels and Tours Ltd, to inflate the books of accounts”. The purchase of tickets from Cox and Kings by Ezeego was around Rs 2,000 crore and sale to Cox and Kings was around Rs 400-500 crore,” said the Directorate in its complaint.

The ED said its probe has

found that “the bonding and interdependence” between Kerkar and Khandelwal was “eye catching and inseparable in all respect”.

“Initially Peter Kerkar, Anil Khandelwal and Naresh Jain and other associates were working in tandem and used to divert the money from the company for their personal use. Around 2018, the group started facing financial difficulties and investigating agencies and regulatory bodies started intervening in the matter of financial irregularities. Once the investigating agencies started investigation, they started blaming each other to save themselves...,” said the ED complaint.

The ED has arrested Kerkar, Khandelwal and the company’s internal auditor Naresh Jain in connection with the money laundering case. It has also been arrested Kapoor for allegedly taking kickbacks in lieu of granting loans to several companies that have now defaulted on repayments. Kapoor, who is in judicial custody, has denied these allegations.

The ED probe also found that between 2004 and 2019, Kerkar allegedly diverted Rs 426 crore and Rs 71 crore from Cox and Kings to its group companies V-Hotel Ltd and Tulip Star Hotel Ltd, respectively.

As per the chargesheet, Kerkar has allegedly transferred at least \$15.34 million out of the sale proceeds of Holiday Break Education to Kuber Investment Mauritius Pvt Ltd, a Mauritius-based firm controlled by him. According to the agency, Khandelwal and Jain have directly siphoned Rs 275 crore from Cox and Kings to companies controlled by them.

In April 2019, *The Indian Express*, in a series of stories, reported that a forensic audit found Cox and Kings did related party transactions worth Rs 21,000 crore over four years (2015-2019) to siphon off funds. It also found that the travel firm had falsified records, booked sales worth Rs 9,000 crore to over 160 customers who are bogus or do not exist and inflated bank balances.

‘Apple, Hyundai set to agree EV tie-up’

REUTERS
SEOUL, JANUARY 10

HYUNDAI MOTOR and Apple Inc plan to sign a partnership deal on autonomous electric cars by March and start production around 2024 in the United States, local newspaper *Korea IT News* reported on Sunday. The report follows a statement on Friday from Hyundai that it was in early talks with Apple after another local media outlet said the companies aimed to launch a self-driving electric car in 2027, sending Hyundai shares up nearly 20 per cent.

Hyundai Motor declined to comment on the report on Sunday, and reiterated Friday’s comments that it has received requests for potential cooperation from various companies on developing autonomous EVs. Apple had no immediate comment.

An updated version of the IT news report removed details, including production location and capacity and the timeframe for signing the agreement and launching the pilot vehicles.

The previous version said the companies planned to build the cars at Kia Motors’ factory in Georgia, or invest jointly in a new factory in the United States to produce 100,000 vehicles around 2024. The full annual capacity of the proposed plant would be 400,000 vehicles. Kia Motors is an affiliate of Hyundai Motor.

The report also said Hyundai and Apple planned to release a “beta version” of the Apple cars next year. *Reuters* reported last month that Apple was moving forward with autonomous car technology and aimed to produce a passenger vehicle that could include its own breakthrough battery technology as early as 2024.

BRIEFLY ₹6,657-crore inflow in gold ETFs in 2020

New Delhi: Economic downturn due to coronavirus pandemic and weakness in the US dollar encouraged investors to infuse a whopping Rs 6,657 crore in gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) in 2020. In comparison, a net inflow of just Rs 16 crore was seen in the entire 2019. **PTI**

Nio launches first electric sedan model

Shanghai: Chinese electric vehicle (EV) maker Nio Inc is taking on conventional gasoline premium automakers from BMW to Audi further, launching on Saturday its first sedan model as it eyes a greater share of the world’s largest car market. **REUTERS**

Co-operative banks must fearlessly face competition from private ones: Gadkari

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 10

IN ORDER to bolster the co-operative sector, there will be no forced privatisation of co-operative banks, Union Road Transport & Highways and MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari said at the Loksatta Urban Co-operative Banking (UCB) e-conclave, on January 7.

Gadkari, who was the chief guest at the e-conclave, said that as a representative of the Centre and also as a representative of the people, he would act as a bridge between the co-operative banks in Maharashtra and the Finance Ministry, RBI, NABARD and the state government. He added that co-operative banks must compete with private banks to make an impression on lawmakers in Delhi.

The minister said that co-operative banks have enabled the common man to have the financial backing to be self-reliant. This, he said, has supported the econ-



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari at the Loksatta Urban Co-operative Banking e-conclave, Mumbai. Ganesh Shirsekar

omy of the country and the state.

Gadkari further said that while privatisation of co-operative banks has been discussed since 1996, neither the central government nor the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has ever forcefully imposed it on the banks. He added that co-operative banks must fearlessly face the increasing competition from private sector banks.

In a move aimed at protecting the interest of depositors, the Parliament passed amendments

to the Banking Regulation Act in September 2020, bringing co-operative banks under the supervision of the RBI.

After the amendment, in another circular to all banks, the banking regulators stated that it is imperative that banks continue to conserve capital to support the economy and absorb losses.

With the aim of providing a platform to discuss the issue, Loksatta organized the ‘Urban Co-Operative Banking e-Conclave’.

Presenting

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- Dombivli Nagri Sahakari Bank Ltd.

Heads, chairmen, CEO's of various UCBs from across Maharashtra were part of this e-Conclave.

Badminton fixing row: Players tanked at Hong Kong, Macau and Lucknow

SHIVANI NAIK
JANUARY 10

EIGHT INDONESIA were sanctioned this week for match fixing and betting, in what is known in badminton doubles circles as “nyabon”. In a panel Integrity Unit investigation report by the Badminton World Federation that concluded after events dating as far back as 2015, the kingpin of this series of fixed matches was named as Hendra Tandjaya (HT).

A 32-year-old doubles floater on the lower circuit, Hendra told investigators “nyabon” meant “playing a match to fix a particular result.”

‘Nyabon’ is inspired either from the horned tabby cat of the videogame Bloodstained, lurking in wait to settle a grudge, or simply means “sink (a game)” in Sundanese language from western Java.

But in the interviews conducted with Hendra by the investigators, “nyabon” worth 95 million rupiah (INR 4 lakh 96 thousand) were revealed across 10 fixed matches, and 4 player approaches were turned down, reported by whistleblowers. Hendra admitted to making “20 million rupiah in betting” convincing compatriots to lose.

Four players never responded to summoning by the investigation panel, including 41-year-old Irvandi Danang (ID), who Hendra called “boss” in the interviews after confessing to be roped into fixing by him.

Danang was active on the circuit in 2010, went AWOL in 2013, and resurfaced in 2016, at Hong Kong and Indonesia, where Hendra is supposed to have pulled off two of his earliest fixes.

Approaches to the whistleblower (WB) at Scottish Open in November 2015, at NZ in August 2017 and US in July 2017, were rebuffed and reported to the authorities. The investigation said, “They (whistleblower) have known HT since 2011 through junior badminton. In November 2015, during the early rounds of the Scottish Open, they received text messages from HT in which he offered 3000 (currency unknown) to lose their first match. The WB declined and asked HT to never contact them again.”

Invitation to manipulate

At the US Open in July 2017, Hendra offered AUD 3000 to lose their first mixed doubles match. Thereafter Hendra would inundate them with messages requesting the same manipulation. “In particular, HT invited the WB to secure a score “under 14 14” at a reduced offer of AUD 2500.” At the New Zealand Open, Hendra “invited the WB to manipulate a match by winning 21-16, 21-17.”

During the investigation, Hendra would fess up that while he set bets with companies, he would receive payments from Danang or recover his outlay by betting on-



In the interviews conducted with kingpin Hendra Tandjaya by investigators, ‘nyabon’ worth 95 million rupiah were revealed across 10 fixed matches.

Representational

A 32-year-old doubles floater on the lower circuit, Hendra told investigators “nyabon” meant “playing a match to fix a particular result.” ‘Nyabon’ is inspired either from the horned tabby cat of the videogame Bloodstained, lurking in wait to settle a grudge, or simply means “sink (a game)” in Sundanese language from western Java.

line with Mitra.dot and Temanjudi, where he held accounts. Hendra (HT) himself had slowly being lured. “At first ID had asked HT to fix his own matches, but HT had declined because he did not want to let down his sponsors. ID set up an online account to transfer money to HT. The account allowed HT to receive cash from an ATM. He also received cash from ID in person which was used to bet on badminton (and other sports), and he used to bet with ID. HT also received money into his own bank account,” the investigation reveals of their conversations on Line app. Hendra admitted he had bet approximately 20 million rupiah (1 lakh INR) in his first interview.

Hendra’s biggest snare would be the 2017 Hong Kong Super Series, where he induced partner Androw Yunanto to tank his opener for 10 million rupiah (around INR 50,000). A fix at Macau would fetch Yunanto close to INR 73,000. The duo would land up at Syed Modi tournament in Lucknow and make INR 36000 each for a three-set loss.

In what points to a deeper rot, the inves-

tigation states: “HT named and discussed 7 other players (not the subject of this hearing) with whom he had engaged in actual or attempted match fixing with him and others, or that he knew had betting accounts.”

Sometimes a fix would fall through - like with Aditiya Dwiantoro (AD). “HT had promised him money, but there was not a good market,” the report reads. At other times, losing needed no effort. In his doubles match at Vietnam, Dwiantoro was told “to play normally because Hendra knew AD would lose, and HT had bet on him to lose.” Prior to the tournament, Dwiantoro did not know Hendra. “AD needed the money because his father had died.”

Mixed doubles player Fadilla Affni’s (FA) grief was preyed upon. “She was his mixed doubles partner in the Chinese Taipei Open 2017 who was in financial difficulty because her parents had died. He had manipulated a match but had miscalculated the score. He had asked her to score 17 in the second set, but his bet was for 18 in the second set, and he had lost the bet. As a result, FA was only paid expenses, but wanted more money.”

Agrippina Prima Harmanto Putera, son of former Indonesia coach Sigit Pamungkas, received a six-year ban and a fine of USD 3000. Agrippina had betting accounts and had asked Hendra for information about bets. He also claimed to have refused to mess with a match result.

Agriprinna was at the Cipayung National Training Center and had won two titles with current World No.1 Marcus Gideon from 2011-3. However his career drifted. “My mistake is not reporting. How do I report? He asked for match fixing, I don’t want to. I think it’s just enough to leave it at that, it won’t be this big,” Agrippina told Bola Sports, adding he would appeal.

Fight for space at the heart of Cummins-Pujara contest

By exploring angles around off stump, pacer has tested the Indian’s technique

SRIRAM VEERA
JANUARY 10

THE ENTIRE battle between Pat Cummins and Cheteshwar Pujara has narrowed down to the smallest real estate of trouble around the off stump. Unlike most batsmen, Pujara has near-total control over his hands. He doesn’t chase balls (the shot in the Melbourne chase was an aberration), doesn’t stab at them, doesn’t let his hands wander ahead or away. The bat is tucked in, held softly to sponge out the venom in a misbehaving ball and is also the last line of defence in case it tilts in towards the off stump. The method has been his childhood friend, but Cummins is now forcing it to betray him.

Though he has pace, Cummins doesn’t blow away the batsman. He alters their reality. Ball by ball. He is not an overwhelming force but a counterintuitive explorer of angles, a bowler who has made Pujara feel not fear, but doubt. Cummins’ is a labour of cricketing intelligence, a matter of working out barely visible flaws in Pujara, causing internal injury rather than mere body blows.

It’s not a set-up. It isn’t about slipping in a surprise deviator from the norm; it’s not about slanting a few balls in and then taking one away. Pujara is made of sterner stuff than that. The king of patience doesn’t get distracted so easily. That was the attempt in the last series in Australia. Lessons have been learnt.

Pujara’s method has one ‘flaw’. The need to hold the bat inside the line, on the off-stump line. It’s the fulcrum, the soul of his technique. The bat is on that line; a ball outside it is allowed to fly past the edge due to his abnormal control over his hands. They don’t jerk. The deviating ball can’t land a kiss.

Pujara doesn’t leave as many balls as M Vijay did in his pomp. He likes to feel bat on ball, preferring to sponge out trouble rather than outright rejection. He has built a technique around that basic urge. His game is to play the line and his carefully-constructed technique allows him to do that. It lets him tap them away, and hold his bat in line when the ball swings or seams away. It lets him push short-of-length balls to gully or point. It lets him nourish his urge to play the line, without danger. Until now.

Some have magic in their fingers, some are intelligent; bowlers who combine cerebral and physical magic are rare. Cummins’ game is built around making the batsmen think the ball is going to come in with the line. Like Jasprit Bumrah, to an extent. His angled release point suggests a hint of inward



Pat Cummins has dismissed Pujara four times this series — caught behind thrice and at gully once.

AP file

tilt. He then layers it with counterintuitive deceptions.

Straight line, late curve

Conventionally, bowlers come close to the stumps when they want to take the ball away. It’s not only easier to bend them away from there, but it also makes it curve late from a straight line. But Pujara’s method is built to handle this. The bat will be held in line, and the ball can dink away, and late at that. No problem.

Cummins usually cuts the ball in when he goes close to the stumps. Most bowl it wider from the stumps and as batsmen it’s easier to play that angle, but when it happens from the stumps, the inward movement starts late and the angle is tough to play. Pujara’s game can still handle this, though he will keep short-leg and the leg-side fielders ever alert.

Cummins usually gets the ball to go away

Though he has pace, Cummins doesn’t blow away the batsman. He alters their reality. Ball by ball. He is not an overwhelming force but a counterintuitive explorer of angles, a bowler who has made Pujara feel not fear, but doubt.

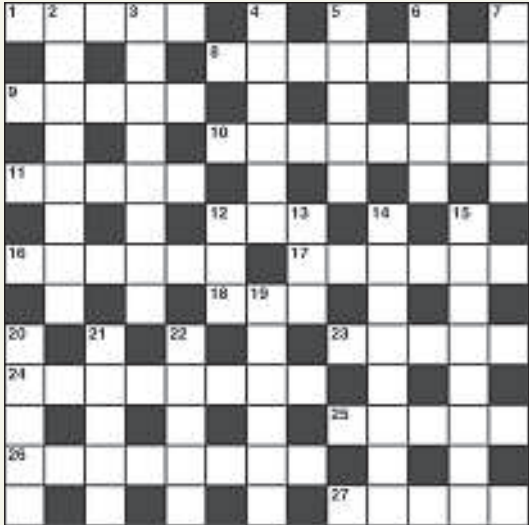
when he is slightly wider on the crease. He combines it with his release angle. He then sprinkles in some finger magic. Unlike some bowlers whose fingers slide down the seam more often than not, Cummins’ fingerprints lead one to the wondrous world of Mohammad Asif. They cut the ball in. They rip it out. Significantly, they can rip it out from a wider angle of release.

It’s not an illusion. The ball actually does come in the air from that angle. Pujara plays the line. The past predicts bad news about the future. But he can’t abandon his childhood method, now. So, he presses forward cautiously, peering across ever so carefully. He knows the ball will tail out but can’t be absolutely certain of it. That angle of release means the ball can just waft in along with the line and knock the pad or the off stump if he isn’t alert.

Cummins adds one final layer to this. He keeps it back of length to try and upset Pujara’s balance. Pujara has short forward press and just freezes there when the ball is short of length. It’s not freezing out of shock but an attempt at stillness to hold his balance. When the ball straightens or comes in, he can tap them away without much fuss. But Cummins’ wider angle means the straightening is actually a leg cutter in many ways.

The betrayal starts now. The hip can threaten to open up. The hands start to itch. Pujara presses hard to keep them in line. But the finger-magic from that angle takes the ball just about away for the fatal collision with the edge. If Cummins had bowled this from closer to the stumps, the ball would comfortably cut away. If he didn’t have those Asif-fingers, it would have been blunted by the bat on the off-stump line. Pujara would still have taken his bat away from danger if not for Cummins’ pace. There is no time to get out. There is nowhere to go. Pujara’s real estate of trouble might be really tiny but Cummins’ art has allowed him to take over the property.

CROSSWORD 4324



- ACROSS**
1 Had an aversion to death throes (5)
8 Preserved meat makes sailor grumble (4,4)
9 Might be cold yet good tempered (5)
10 Distraught wanderer approached (4,4)
11 It can turn into quite a lark (5)
12 Some religious biblical character (3)
16 There’s a change of name here (6)
17 A number finish with an alternative seller (6)
18 Girl may appear confused (3)
23 Possibly renew, making more modern (5)
24 Confiscates one thousand sterling (8)
25 Some lifelong criminal (5)
26 They’re worn with one’s arms inside (8)
27 Post the prize money (5)
- DOWN**
2 Surprise shots in a melee (8)
3 Sense there’s agreement among rowing men (8)
4 Hardy, no; evergreen, yes (6)
5 Stores to haul on board (5)
6 Show; not a celebration (5)
7 Blazing with a loud anger (5)
12 Time to bend an ear (3)
13 A clinging female? (3)
14 What the investment produces is of some concern (8)
15 Task for domestic science students (8)
19 Repair or mend to get up to date (6)
20 Very close to being drunk (5)
21 Some time taken to form words (5)
22 Very quiet perhaps (5)

Solutions Crossword 4323: Across: 1 Lion’s share, 6 Rand, 10 Sadly, 11 Nefarious, 12 Free will, 13 Nadir, 15 Rereds, 17 Sleeves, 19 Insists, 21 Attache, 22 Incur, 24 Abortive, 27 Establish, 28 Three, 29 Style, 30 Shore leave. Down: 1 Lass, 2 Order arms, 3 Style, 4 Hankies, 5 Raffles, 7 Aloud, 8 Distressed, 9 Transept, 14 Artificers, 16 Describe, 18 Vice versa, 20 Slavish, 21 Another, 23 Catty, 25 Total, 26 Here.

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.

Who begins too much ____ little - German Proverb (12)

RSAEO



CALTIC



HUISS



EGLHMP

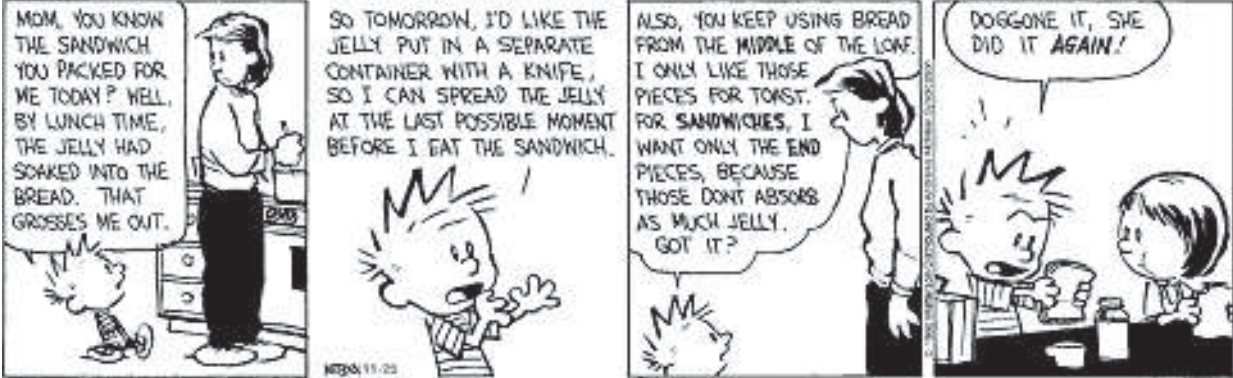


SOLUTION: -ARBSE, -SUSHSI, -LACTIC, -PHICAM
Answer: Who begins too much accomplishes little - German Proverb

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4349

Difficulty Level 5s

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 4348



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

May I advise you to keep a close watch on your financial dreams? Today's major planetary patterns will have an amazing range of consequences over the coming weeks, but the impact on your emotional and material security seems to be greatest. If competing for a prize, go for broke.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Today's planets push you forward with increasing speed. Your chances for personal success are now the best for a very long time indeed. Press on with established plans by all means, but avoid anything that may lead to confrontation or smacks of dishonesty.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You may imagine that you know what is going on, but you are probably mistaken. Never have you been so likely to pick up the wrong end of the stick. Please take proper advice in all legal, foreign and travel matters, and that does mean double and even treble checking.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Jupiter and Venus are as benevolent a pair of planets as you could wish to have watching over you. Generosity on your part will win friends and impress people, protecting you in the present and gaining you firm and loyal allies for the future. In other words, selflessness and self-interest are the same thing.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

With so much planetary activity taking place today, you'd do very well to take centre stage. Watch out for flying missiles, though, and duck if anything comes in your direction. Prepare for a shift in emotional gear and, while you're at it, get in touch with someone who is waiting to hear from you.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

I am sure that you have been put out, pushed around and generally had your interests ignored, but then that's all part of life's rich tapestry. This is no time to complain about the world being unfair. Instead, it's the moment to reach out and take control.

LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

In your personal life, you're on the scent of a new romantic adventure. Unexpected developments at work have not undermined your confidence or commitment. Far from it. If your professional or worldly ambitions have been dented, I suspect that the real cause lies elsewhere, perhaps in your own refusal to take the lead.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

Today's lunar alignments are about the most intriguing they've been for a very long time. The news will be exciting, even for those of you who are enjoying placid times. It's all doubly significant if you have big, ambitious plans on the go. You choose.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

All the quite extraordinary planetary activity now taking place must be harnessed and used to channel your noble, virtuous and selfless instincts. You have a clear choice whether to go all out for personal interest or to realise that material security is, in the grand scheme of things, purely temporary.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

It's a day of significant planetary configurations, but whether you are directly involved in dramatic events, or merely a passive observer, is up to you. I take the view that the latter is more likely. In other words, you'll be looking, listening and learning.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

The approaching lunar patterns are among the most striking to hit your sign for a good few months. If you're not knocked slightly off course there'll be something wrong, for it means that you're not directly in tune with your stars. You'll be back in the saddle by the end of the week.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

A helpful relationship between the Sun and Mercury is only one of a series of benevolent planetary alignments which is causing you to think again. There'll probably be a major mystery to solve. The answers will come next month, so bide your time and wait your turn.

BCA to write to BCCI about Hooda’s ‘misconduct’

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JANUARY 10

BARODA ALL-ROUNDER Deepak Hooda has been pulled up for ‘misconduct’ and ‘walking away from responsibility’ by the CEO of the state cricket association on Sunday. A day earlier, Hooda had written to the Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) to inform them about his unavailability because captain Krunal Pandya had repeatedly abused him in front of other players and stopped him from training. Hooda has stepped out of the bio-bubble since.

In an email to Hooda, BCA chief executive officer (CEO) Shishir Hattangadi said the issue of Hooda walking out of the team, though he was vice-captain, and going to the media would be taken up with the Board of Control for Cricket in India and the IPL governing council.

“There is no team that doesn’t have differences but to walk away and talk to the media giving only your side of the story is a case of seeking unwarranted publicity and putting self before the game,” Hattangadi wrote in the email to Hooda. The CEO also mentioned that he had had a word with the IPL team Hooda plays for (Kings XI Punjab).

“I have had a chat with your franchisee and I have enough reason to decipher that we will make sure we write to the BCCI of your misconduct... After the feedback from the team management (and others) I have reason to believe we will take up this matter as seriously within the association as we will with the BCCI and the IPL Governing Council.”

Hooda’s commitment to the team was also questioned in the email.

“By walking away from a responsibility of vice-captaincy and leaving the team because of a difference you have sent out a message that you hold yourself above the team and that embodies your attitude and commitment to your team,” the email stated.

“As an association and being custodians of this game, we will follow a zero-tolerance policy on issues,” Hattangadi, a former Mumbai batsman further, wrote.

On Saturday, in an email sent to BCA, Hooda made a series of allegations against Pandya.

“At this moment, I am demoralised, depressed and under pressure... at least from last couple of days, my team captain Mr Kurnal Pandiya has been abusing language to me in front of my teammates and also other states’ teams who have come for participation at Reliance stadium Vadodara,” Hooda wrote.

Adrenaline rush ends mini classic

Rohit looked in total control in second innings, before a moment of indiscretion brought about his downfall

SANDIP G
JANUARY 10

LESS THAN 15 minutes and three overs before stumps, Rohit Sharma let his instinct conquer his reasoning. He wheeled away a pull shot into the deep shadows on his leg-side, where pounced Mitchell Starc, seemingly out of nowhere, to complete a catch, sliding on his knees, to end the Indian opener’s most fluent outing outside Asia till date. The late wicket pushed India to 98/2 at stumps, after Australia had set them a daunting 407 for a victory.

It was a cruel end to a knock that promised so much more. Sharma was in utter control from the moment he strode out. His discretion and judgement stood out; there were no fringes of extravagance or indulgence, nothing outrageous or out of the world, nothing that troubled him even fleetingly. But in the middle of this dreamy knock, kicked in momentary misjudgement, or a split-second streak of carelessness. When instinct overpowered acquired wisdom without any apparent tussle.

The pull is to Rohit Sharma what a fore-hand chip is to Roger Federer. He could play the stroke with his eyes blindfolded or legs bound in chains. Pat Cummins’ short ball paused in the air after landing on middle and leg as if imploring Sharma to pull it into the shadows in the fine-leg region. Sharma swayed his body a trifle, got under the ball and swivelled. Everything about the stroke was precise, except for the placement.

Sharma gave a disbelieving stare. When he walked back to the pavilion, he would have replayed that shot several times in his head and cursed and cussed himself. At the untimeliness of the stroke, at the imprecision of the shot, at the sheer consequence of the stroke, or at the inconsequence of that delivery. He had time to duck, space to leave, or he could have glided it finer, as he often does, he could have rolled his wrists over it and kept it along the ground. He could have done anything but flay it straight into the hands of the fielder. An opportunity to ascertain his overseas credentials slipped through his hands.

It was not the first time though that his favourite stroke has forsaken him in a crucial hour of his career or a match. Memory rolls back to the morning of the Centurion Test three years ago, when he was batting fluidly on 47, chasing 287, and attempted to hook Kagiso Rabada and ended up lobbing a catch to AB de Villiers at fine-leg. At least, he could console himself thinking that Rabada had hurried him



Before getting out for 52, Rohit Sharma was untroubled in his 98-ball sojourn. AP

a bit and de Villiers took a sliding catch, running nearly 20 yards. But here he had only himself to blame. For the Cummins’ delivery had little zip or zing, and Starc had to make only a couple of steps. It was neither a loose ball, nor a loose shot. It was just the wrong shot at the wrong time. In that sense, Sharma’s departure seemed predestined.

Instances of indiscretion

Such fleeting moments of indiscretion define his overseas career. He could rattle out quite a few such instances. The return catch to Nathan Lyon in Adelaide 2014. The attempted slash off Shane Watson in Brisbane, the under-edged sweep in Sydney, or the most hideous of all, the heave off Lyon, intended to plunge into the Torrens river outside the Adelaide Oval but nestled in the hands of mid-wicket, in 2018.

Those were moments when Sharma could have stamped his undisputed quality on matches, stabilised his role in the side, and silenced the critics. Yet, those knocks ended up as case studies of self-inflicted doom. There is something inherently tragic about a batsman consistently defeating himself, when his own instincts conspire his downfall. There is no allure to failure.

Yet, Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground was another moment when it seemed that no one else but Sharma could defeat Sharma. For he was utterly untroubled in his 98-ball sojourn. He, or his opening partner Shubman Gill, was undaunted by the monstrous score Australia had set them to chase, striking a fine balance between attack and defence. Sharma had lot of time to hang back at the crease and defend. His footwork was precise, hands soft, and he did not reach out for the

SCORECARD	
AUSTRALIA vs INDIA	
SYDNEY CRICKET GROUND	
Toss: Australia, chose to bat	
AUS 1ST INNINGS	338
IND 1ST INNINGS	244
AUS 2ND INNS	312/6d (o/n 103/2)
M Labuschagne c sub (Saha) b Saini	73
(118b, 9x4)	
S Smith lbw b Ashwin	81 (167b, 8x4, 1x6)
M Wade c sub (Saha) b Saini	4 (11b, 1x4)
C Green c sub (Saha) b Bumrah	84
(132b, 8x4, 4x6)	
T Paine not out	39 (52b, 6x4)
■ Extras (b 1, lb 4, nb 3)	8
■ FoW: 1-16 (Pucovski, 5.5 ov), 2-35 (Warner, 9.2 ov), 3-138 (Labuschagne, 46.1 ov), 4-148 (Wade, 48.6 ov), 5-208 (Smith, 67.4 ov), 6-312 (Green, 86.6 ov)	
■ Bowling: J Bumrah 21-4-68-1, Mohd Siraj 25-5-90-1, N Saini 16-2-54-2, R Ashwin 25-1-95-2	
INDIA 2ND INNS	98/2 (Target 407)
R Sharma c Starc b Cummins	52
(98b, 5x4, 1x6)	
S Gill c Paine b Hazlewood	31 (64b, 4x4)
C Pujara not out	9 (29b, 1x4)
A Rahane not out	4 (14b)
■ Extras (lb 1, nb 1)	2
■ FoW: 1-71 (Shubman Gill, 22.1 ov), 2-92 (Rohit Sharma, 30.2 ov)	
■ Bowling: M Starc 6-0-27-0, J Hazlewood 8-3-11-1, P Cummins 9-1-25-1, N Lyon 9-3-22-0, C Green 2-0-12-0	
Day 5: Live on Sony Sports Network, 5am	

balls in the corridor. The bounce was variable, so he ditched his staple on-the-rise drives, and instead leant into fuller deliveries. Starc was treated to a brace of gorgeous cover drives in an over. The first was a half-volley outside off-stump, which he just coaxed through the covers. For the next, his front-foot glided out, before his hands just brushed it through extra cover. In the next over, Sharma emphatically pulled Cameron Green for a six. The brutal and the graceful, in the space of seven balls.

Gill’s departure saw Sharma embrace a more defensive approach. Apart from the flicked four off Lyon that ushered in his half-century, he kept risks aloof. He seemed inclined to bat out the day and had he managed it, India would have sparked faint hopes of a fourth-innings heist. But that was not to be, as his instinct conquered his reasoning.

BRIEFLY

Serena, Osaka to join top men in Adelaide

Sydney: Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka will join Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic in playing a pre-Australian Open warm-up exhibition in Adelaide after serving their quarantine in the South Australian city, Tennis Australia (TA) said on Saturday. The “A Day at the Drive” event will take place at the city’s Memorial Drive Tennis Centre on Jan. 29, a week before the delayed Grand Slam gets underway at Melbourne Park.

80% want Olympics cancelled or delayed: Japanese survey

Tokyo: About 80% of people in Japan say this year’s Tokyo Olympics should be cancelled or delayed as worries mount about a record surge in coronavirus cases across the country, a Kyodo News poll showed on Sunday. The survey found 35.3% want the Games to be cancelled and 44.8% favoured another delay. The world’s biggest multi-sports event, postponed last year, is scheduled to be held from July 23-Aug. 8 in the Japanese capital. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga declared a state of emergency for the greater Tokyo region on Thursday and could extend the measure to other areas as Japan struggles to contain a surge in infections. Suga’s support rate has tumbled since he took office in September. REUTERS

Messi, Griezmann net four for Barca

Barcelona: Lionel Messi and Antoine Griezmann each scored twice as Barcelona thrashed Granada 4-0 away on Saturday to win a third consecutive La Liga game for the first time this season. Griezmann opened the scoring in the 12th minute while Messi struck twice before the break to make it four goals in his last two matches and go top of the league’s scoring charts with 11 goals. French forward Griezmann scored a second goal after halftime. The win put Barcelona four points behind leaders Atletico Madrid. Second-placed Real Madrid were one point behind Atletico after being held at Osasuna to 0-0. AFP

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