



## FITNESS FREAK

Actor Shama Sikander has taken to pole dancing during her vacation in Dubai to stay fit

LEISURE P2



## APOLOGIES FROM WISTRON

Nearly a week after violence erupted at Wistron's Karnataka factory, the firm apologised and removed its top executive

TWO STATES P7



## MILLIONS ENTER LOCKDOWN

A surge in the infection rate caused by a new variant of nCoV has led to millions entering stringent lockdown in the UK

INTERNATIONAL P10

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I love our PM. He has got a wonderful wardrobe.

## SHORT TAKES

### Pari murder case: One arrested

**Bhubaneswar:** The Special Investigation Team (SIT) investigating the Pari murder case in Nayagarh arrested one person in connection with crime, Sunday. The accused will be produced before the POCOS Court tomorrow. According to official sources, the accused is a resident of Jadupur village under Nayagarh Sadar police limits. A case has been registered under Sections 364, 302, 376 (AB), 376 (A) and 201 of IPC read with Section 6 of POCOA Act. However, the investigation team did not provide the details of the person arrested in connection with the minor girl murder case. Official sources said lie detection test of the concerned person had been carried out.

### Cold wave to sweep several districts

**Bhubaneswar:** Severe cold wave condition is likely to prevail at one or two places over the districts of Mayurbhanj, Angul, Jharsuguda, Bargarh and Sundargarh during next 24 hours. Weather office sources said cold wave condition is also likely to prevail at one or two places over the districts of Koraput, Kandhamal, Balasore, Cuttack, Keonjhar, Boudh, Sonepur, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Dhenkanal, Deogarh during next 24 hours. Under its impact, an increased likelihood of various illnesses like running/stuffy nose or nosebleed, which usually set in or get aggravated due to prolonged exposure to cold. Livestock may be affected due to prolonged exposure to cold. Experts advised people to stay indoors during night and avoid movement in night.

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	27.8°C	27.5°C
TEMP. MIN	13.9°C	11.6°C
Humidity	58%	69%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast		
Dry weather likely		

# BJD-BJP 'understanding' ends

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS, BJP LEADERS RAISED THEIR VOICE AGAINST THE CENTRE'S NEGLECT TOWARDS THE STATE



(Left) CM Naveen Patnaik addresses the BJD executive body meeting through videoconferencing, Sunday. Leaders of the regional party at the meet in Bhubaneswar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** Nineteen months after the 2019 general elections, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and senior leaders Biju Janata Dal (BJD) seem to have decided raise their voice against the Modi government at the Centre for the first time.

This was apparent when all BJD leaders openly criticised the Centre at the party's executive body meeting here Sunday.

Earlier, the BJD had been cribbing about the financial neglect of the Centre towards the state, but since the last elections, the party had completely fallen silent against the Modi government. People perceived such cryptic silence of the BJD against the Centre was fallout of a secret understanding between the two parties.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik first broke his silence at the executive body meeting of the Biju Yuba Janata Dal recently.

Lanching a scathing attack on the BJP, Patnaik said that the leaders of the national party in the state

are dumb, as they have been sidelining the interests of the state. Their only aim is to keep the central leaders in good humour so as to grab ministries and positions, he said, adding, they have failed in raising their voice in the state's interests.

Such change in the Chief Minister's stand against the Centre signalled that the party will go to the people against the Centre.

Speaking at the executive committee meeting, senior BJD leader Prasanna Acharya said that some parties have pointed their fingers at the BJD's relevance at the present time. "Many have raised questions about the future of the BJD, but the party will gain confidence of the people in future too and will form the government," he asserted.

Puri MP Pinaki Mishra pointed out that a big survey agency has placed Odisha at the fifth slot for Covid-19 management, while Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh have failed to fare well in pandemic management.

"People know which party is ruling these states. The Centre is ne-

glecting the implementation of the Swaminathan Committee report, special category state status and special package," the Puri MP alleged.

BJD leader Pramila Mallick said that Odisha Chief Minister is number one in the Covid management. "When people of Odisha were left jobless in other states due to lockdown and were stranded, the Chief Minister made arrangements to bring them back," she added.

She said that the grassroots workers should work to apprise people about the Central neglect towards the state. Opposition parties will not be allowed to win a single seat in civic body polls, she added.

Senior BJD leader Kishore Mohanty said that the treasury of Odisha was empty when the regional party came to power for the first time in 2000. But, the state had a surplus Budget under the BJD rule in 2008, he added.

Speaking at the meet, Kalikesh Singh Deo said that a political party is collecting members through missed calls but BJD does not follow that method.

## MARITAL DISPUTE

### Police register case against Anubhav

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 20:** The Purighat police Sunday registered a case against Odia film actor and MP Anubhav Mohanty and two of his aides on a fresh complaint filed by Mohanty's actress wife Varsha Priyadarshini.

The police also quizzed Mohanty and his two aides in connection with the complaint filed by Varsha, sources said.

In her complaint, Varsha Saturday claimed that Mohanty and his two aides had locked her room. As a result, she had to wait outside for some time.

Varsha had also lodged a complaint with police Friday and claimed that a conspiracy is being made to tarnish her image. In a related development, Mohanty Sunday wrote to Director General of Police (DGP), Abhay, and sought protection for him and his family. In his letter to the DGP, Mohanty alleged that some people are conspiring against him and his family. He reportedly mentioned the names of the conspirators, sources said.

Mohanty also urged police to examine the authenticity of an audio clip of Varsha's conversation with her two sisters. The audio clip went viral on social media a few days ago.

It is worth mentioning here that Mohanty and Varsha have been engaged in a marital dispute for last several months. Varsha had filed a case in the Cuttack SDJM court seeking maintenance from Mohanty.



The couple in happier times.



## Nepal Parliament dissolved, general elections next year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kathmandu, Dec 20:** Nepal's embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli Sunday sprang a surprise on his rivals and got the President to dissolve Parliament, a controversial move amidst a prolonged tussle for power between him and former premier Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda".

President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved Parliament's House of Representatives at Oli's recommendation and announced mid-term general election in April-May, a decision criticised by the Opposition as unconstitutional.

Earlier, an emergency meeting of the Cabinet chaired by Oli decided to recommend the President for the dissolution of Parliament, a senior Standing Committee member of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) told PTI.

The first phase of the

mid-term election will be held April 30 and May 10 for the second phase, according to a notice issued by the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

The 275-member House of Representatives, which is the lower house of Parliament, was elected in 2017 for a five-year term. The upper house is the National Assembly.

The move comes as the intra-party feud reached climax in the ruling NCP which has been witnessing months long tussle between two factions, one led by 68-year-old Oli and Party's chairman and another led by 66-year-old "Prachanda", also the executive chair of the party and former premier.

Spokesperson of the ruling NCP Narayan Kaji Shrestha has termed Oli's move as "undemocratic, anti-constitutional and autocratic".

He said that the ruling party will hold its Standing Committee meeting to discuss the matter.

## 'Progeny, termination; fundamental rights'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 20:** While allowing a rape victim to terminate her pregnancy after 20 weeks of conception, the Orissa High Court recently ruled that right to progeny and termination are both fundamental rights enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The high Court cited the instance of Meera Santosh Pal v. Union of India, (2017) 3 SCC 462, wherein the Supreme Court had held that women's right to make reproductive choice is also an aspect of personal liberty as understood under Article 21 of the Constitution.

In this case, the victim was 21 weeks pregnant and according to the existing Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP Act), medical

termination of pregnancy more than 20 weeks old is not permitted.

However, a Division Bench of Justices SK Mishra and Savitri Ratho mentioned about the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020, currently pending before the Rajya Sabha, which permits termination of pregnancies up to 24 weeks.

While the Bench recognised that the Bill is yet to be passed and cannot be considered as a law, it proceeded to observe,

"It is reflected that due to passage of time and advancement of medical technology for safe abortion there is a scope for increasing the outer limit for terminating pregnancy especially for vulnerable women and pregnancy with substantial fetal abnormalities detected late in pregnancy."

Orissa HC recently ruled that right to progeny and termination are both fundamental rights enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution

## DESIRES



Two girls belonging to a nomad group admiring soft toys put on display by a vendor in Nayapalli, Sunday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

## Mahanadi port project gains steam

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** Ahead of signing of the MoU with the Centre for setting up of ₹4,000 crore riverine port project in Mahanadi, a high-level delegation Sunday visited the proposed site in Kendrapara district, officials said.

The delegation comprising Chief Secretary AK Tripathy, ST Secretary VK Pandian, Paradip Port Trust (PPT) chairman Rinkesh Roy and others travelled to the proposed site on a vessel.

Local MLA of Mahakalapada Atanu S Nayak was present at the proposed port site. He had a discussion with officials about the project while Kendrapara district collector Samarth Verma appraised the delegation about the importance of the identified site.

The Ministry of Port, Shipping and Waterways has already agreed to the Odisha government's proposal for the riverine port to be developed by Paradip Port Trust at an investment of ₹4,000 crore. The project is estimated to generate employment for 6,000 people. The proposed port will come up at Akhadasali village under Mahakalapada block in Kendrapara district, 13 km from the river mouth at Paradip.

This all-weather and multi-user port on river Mahanadi will be set up in public-private-partnership

(PPP) mode with a capacity of 54 MTPA at an investment of ₹4,000 crore. In the first phase, the port will have the capacity to handle 22 MTPA cargos at an investment of ₹2,562 crore, an official said.

While the Paradip Port Trust will develop supporting project infrastructures like rail and road connectivity and dredging requirements of the facility, the state government has already identified 300 hectares of land for the project.

The state government will also provide the necessary support to PPT in respect of any additional land required for the project, the official said, adding that Odisha in 2018 had decided to go ahead with Mahanadi Riverine Port.

However, the project couldn't progress due to lack of interest by potential bidders. Paradip Port Trust then evinced interest in the project and consequently, the MoU is proposed to be signed with the state government.

On commissioning of the project, the port will provide direct and indirect employment opportunities to more than 4,000 persons in the first phase and about another 1,700 in the 2nd phase.

The riverine port, along with the state-aided Haridaspur Paradip Railway line, will go a long way in boosting the economy of the Kendrapara district, he said.



Officials inspecting the proposed riverine port project site, Sunday

## NPA: NDA's score thrice worse than UPA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Dec 20:** In a dubious distinction of sorts, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA rule achieved the highest loans write-off between 2015 and 2019, which is more than three times compared to the figures of bad loans written off during the previous Congress-led UPA regime from 2004-2014, as per an RTI revelation.

During the UPA's 10-year rule, around ₹2,20,328 crore was written off by various banks, and this figure shot up to ₹7,94,354 crore during the NDA regime from 2015-2019, resulting in a corresponding reduction in the banks' NPAs.

The data was provided under an RTI query by Pune-based businessman Prafulla Sarda, giving some shocking insights into the state of



affairs of not only public sector banks, but also those in the private sector and foreign banks.

The RTI reply figures around two-dozen public sector banks, some three-dozen in private sector; nine Scheduled Commercial Banks, and a whopping four-dozen foreign banks, and includes several in each category which have not written off any loans.

Of the loan write-offs in the

Congress' decade (2004-2014), the PSBs accounted for approximately ₹1,58,994 crore, while the amounts written off by the private banks was ₹41,391 crore and for foreign banks it was ₹19,945 crore, with no write-offs by Scheduled Banks.

Later, in the NDA regime (2015-2019), the figures provided show a phenomenal increase with the PSBs accounting for a stupendous ₹6,24,370 crore loan write-off, with the private

banks writing off ₹1,51,989 crore and the foreign banks shared the remaining 17,995 crore, (Total - ₹7,94,354 crore), besides an additional write-off by Scheduled Banks totalling ₹1,295 crore (Total - ₹7,95,649 crore).

"The official data is not only revealing but very distressing. During the 10 years of UPA government (2004-2014), the total loans written off was ₹2,20,330 crore, but during less than five years of the NDA (2015-2019), the figures zoomed up by almost 350 per cent to ₹7,94,354 crore," Sarda told this news agency.

The surprising aspect is the huge increase in the write-offs by foreign banks - from 2004-2014, it was ₹19,945 crore in the UPA's 10-year tenure (₹1,995 crore each year on an average), but shot up to ₹17,995 in the NDA's four years between 2015-2019 (₹4,499 crore annual average).



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com™  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

Today, you will meet with success, and you do it on your own merit, without any divine intervention. You may be a student of science or arts, but you will excel due to your deep knowledge of the subject.

TAURUS

You are hard working by nature but get highly frustrated when things do not end the way you had imagined, feels Ganesha. This may lead to anger against the system or the order in which things work.

GEMINI

Though you are always open to advice, you need to take your own, independent decision today. You may spend the afternoon putting things in order. In the evening, you will possibly have a romantic dinner with your sweetheart and may even want to propose marriage.

CANCER

Both your physical and mental health will remain stable today, predicts Ganesha. In the afternoon, you may meet one of your clients for lunch. It is an auspicious day to propose and finalise wedding dates, hopes Ganesha.

LEO

Making new friends is like having cookies: one is never enough. Ganesha sees that you take this idea quite seriously, and will make all the efforts to swell your circle of friends today. It is a good thing, since your new friends may prove to be useful to you in times of need.

VIRGO

Today, you shall be in a receptive frame of mind, open to all ideas; yet the stubborn will rule when decision-making matters, predicts Ganesha. Organise and sort out things at work today. But in the evening, enjoy a fine meal and then, may be, summon the courage to pop the question, says Ganesha.

LIBRA

The mind is a pool of infinite thoughts; this is more true for you today than any other day. Ganesha says you will explore the depths of your thoughts. At work, you may share some precious moments with peers of the opposite sex.

SCORPIO

The flamboyance with which you do your work leaves people awestruck. At work, your dedication will win rich favour from your bosses. After dusk, let your hair down and have a great time, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

In your case, the progress will grow two folds today. You will accomplish all the tasks that you take up. Also, you will acknowledge all the people you have contributed in your success story. Keep a watch when splurging on your near and dear ones, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

You will do a commendable job solving complicated problems at work, says Ganesha. In keeping with the circumstances, you will be spontaneous in coming up with solutions to pressing issues; and so accurate you may be in your assumptions about a likely situation that in future, your peers and subordinates will blindly accept whatever proposal you table.

AQUARIUS

It's time to have a riot with friends! You don't always have to be goody two-shoes. Do something you've never done before and break a few of those self-made rules.

PISCES

Today, you are likely to sign new agreements and ink new contracts, which will later prove to be milestones in your path to progress. Your financial position is also likely to grow stronger, and your savings ought to become more robust, planning as you are for future exigencies, says Ganesha.



AS IF SURVIVING COVID WASN'T ENOUGH: PINK

Singer Pink survived Covid earlier this year, and now she has injured her ankle. "As if surviving Covid wasn't enough for this poop sandwich of a year!" she wrote on Instagram alongside a photo that showed her while getting a medical treatment.

WHY WINKLER STARTED WRITING BOOKS FOR KIDS

Actor Henry Winkler says he started writing children's books about learning challenges because he also has the same problem. "Once I started writing, it was easy for me to remember what it felt like to be eight and fail all the time," he explained.



Shama learns pole dance to stay fit

Dubai: Actress Shama Sikander has opted for a fun way to remain in shape.

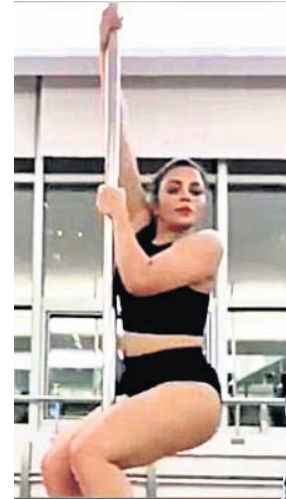
She has taken to pole dancing during her vacation here. She gave a glimpse of it on Instagram where she posted a video of herself doing pole dance.

While some fans found it 'hot', others called it awesome.

"I am a big fan of dancing and fitness. Anything that combines these two, has to be a tick on my list. Pole dancing was on my mind for some time and I needed a good coach and team to learn it from," she said.

"Dubai has got some amazing coaches and I couldn't let go of that opportunity. I am a beginner, but I am willing to do it like a pro. It's beautiful," she added.

She feels the mind needs to be one with the body to make it happen and when one is per-

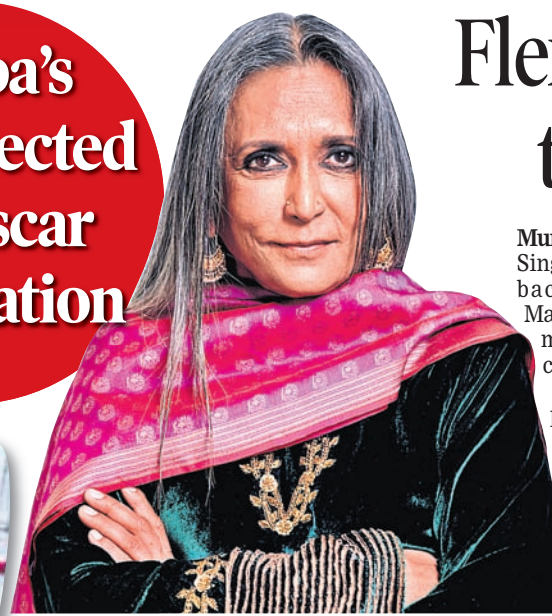


forming on the pole, it's like uniting with the inner self.

"It's a lot like meditation," she said.

IAN S

Deepa's film rejected for Oscar nomination



Toronto: Indo-Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta's *Funny Boy* has been rejected for Oscar nomination in the best International Feature Film category at the 93rd Academy Awards.

The filmmaker has co-written and co-directed the film that tells the story of a gay Tamil boy growing up in Sri Lanka during the ethnic conflict of the 1970s and 1980s.

To be a contender for Oscar in the International Feature Film category, the film must be produced outside the US, with more than 50 per cent dialogue in a foreign language. But according to the

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Mehta's one hour and 49 minutes long film has only 12 minutes and 27 seconds of Tamil or Sinhala dialogue.

In reaction, Mehta said: "Every step of the way of the *Funny Boy* journey, has been an important one for myself and the *Funny Boy* team. The message of the book has always been one of resilience and courage. It seems as if the afterlife of the film follows a similar arc. Each time we reached an impasse, we pushed on leading us to something even better than we could have imagined." IAN S

Flexibility is the key to stability: Rakul

Mumbai: Actress Rakul Preet Singh has shared a throwback picture from her Maldivian holiday, with her mantra for stability on social media.

Rakul Preet posted the picture of her

doing yoga on Instagram. In the image, she is seen balancing on one leg and tilting while she has her hands above her head in a namaste posture.

"Flexibility is the key to stability. A #yogaeverywhere #balance," she captioned it.

About her work, the actress has started working on *Mayday*. She is all set to star alongside Amitabh Bachchan and Ajay Devgn in the thriller drama, directed and produced by Ajay.

The actress will be seen in the role of a pilot. This is her second film with Ajay after *De De Pyaar De*.

Rakul will next be seen in a romantic comedy directed by Kaashvie Nair. The film also stars John Abraham, Arjun Kapoor, and Aditi Rao Hydari.

IAN S



Unpaused: Hampered by uneven storytelling

The film starts off on a high note, hits a slump immediately after that, and somehow manages to recover in the stories that follow



way to carry the story forward - in the time of the Wuhan-origin virus, it is ironic that the banned Chinese app should play havoc in

CAST: Gulshan Devaiah, Sayami Kher, Sumeet Vyas, Richa Chadha, Lillete Dubey, Ratna Pathak Shah

DIRECTION: Raj and DK, Nikkhil Advani, Tannishtha Chatterjee, Avinash Arun and Nitya Mehra

When you have multiple directors calling the shots on multiple sets of actors in standalone stories, it is hard to find cohesion of quality.

*Unpaused*, with five stories that attempt to define the mood of urban India during lockdown, suffers from that problem. The film starts off on a high note, hits a slump, and somehow manages to recover.

Raj and DK's *Glitch* is quietly scary in the way it imagines an India in the future that has lost its battle to coronavirus. Covid-19 is a first generation menace that is

in the past now, and science is struggling to fathom Covid-30 in the narrative, as a lonely and nervous 'hyppo' (Gulshan Devaiah) goes on a virtual date with a spirited Covid warrior (Sayami Kher). The urge of companion-

ship draws him to the girl, and he would personally love to meet her. But there is always the fear of infection.

The second story, Nikkhil Advani's *The Apartment*, is about a couple (Richa Chadha and Sumeet Vyas), whose lives are irreparably damaged when he is charged with multiple MeToo allegations. There is no specific

reason why this story should have been set during lockdown.

Tannishtha Chatterjee directs *Rat-a-Tat*, about a young girl (Rinku Rajguru) and her grumpy elderly neighbour (Lillete Dubey). Unfolding at a languid pace, the film captures the essence of human relationship making interesting use of music.

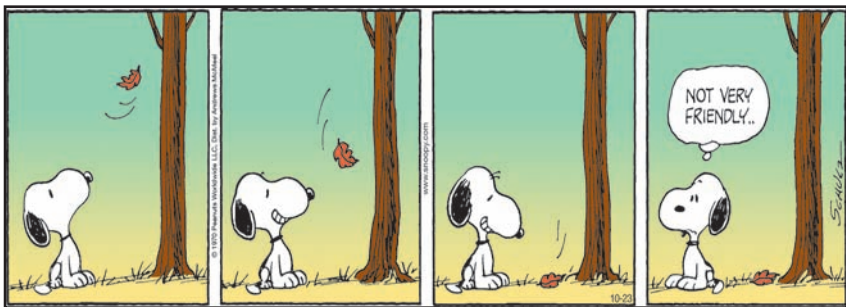
Avinash Arun Dhaware's *Vishaanu* casts Abhishek Banerjee and Geetika Vidya Ohlyan as a migrant couple in Mumbai who, along with their boy, find luxurious haven in a sample flat of half-constructed high-rise amid lockdown. The film uses TikTok in a quirky

the lives of the protagonists.

Nitya Mehra directs the final story, *Chand Mubarak*, which traces an unlikely bond between a posh aging loner named Uma (Ratna Pathak Shah) and an autorickshaw driver Rafique (Shardul Bharadwaj), in whom she sees her late brother. The idea lacks originality but Mehra makes up for that drawback by getting the emotional core of the tale right. *Unpaused* thrives on some fine acting - Ratna Pathak Shah, Shardul Bharadwaj, Abhishek Banerjee, Lillete Dubey and Gulshan Devaiah are particularly outstanding. AGENCIES

FUN post

PEANUTS



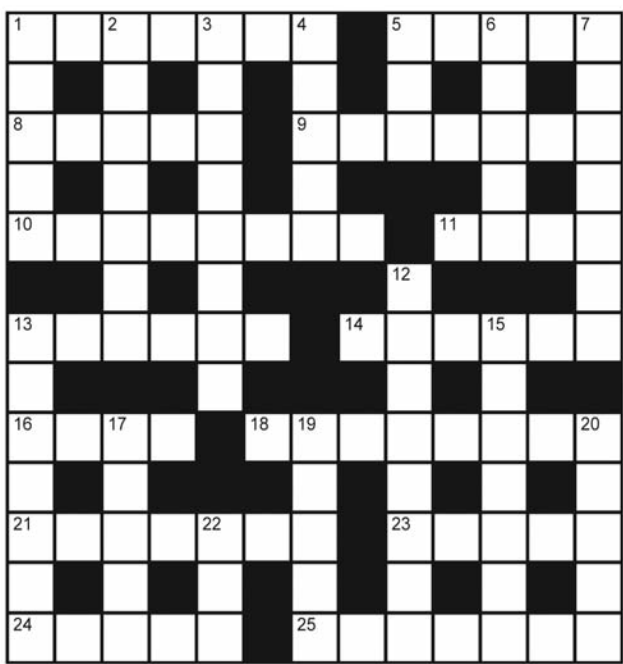
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



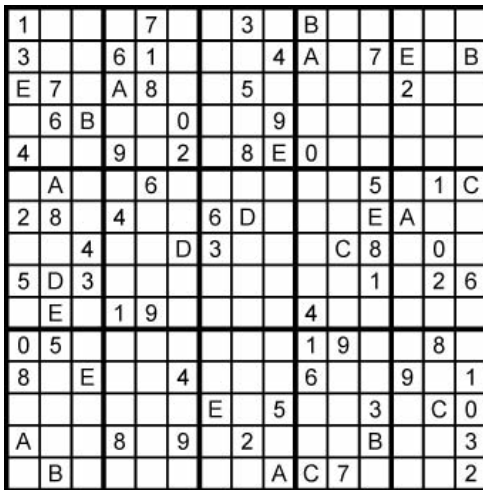
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Herring snacks
  - 5 Furious
  - 8 Humpback, e.g.
  - 9 Forceful
  - 10 Gulfweed, or the sea it inhabits
  - 11 Widespread
  - 13 Washday item
  - 14 Guiding light
  - 16 Verdant
  - 18 Fender bender
  - 21 Hotel sign
  - 23 Pocket change
  - 24 Out of practice
  - 25 Cinema
  - 6 Kind of ray
  - 7 Mexican peninsula
  - 12 Average
  - 13 Venezuelan statesman
  - 15 Pharmacy
  - 17 Factions
  - 19 Underground chamber
  - 20 Small sample
  - 22 Opponent's vote
- Down
- 1 Fuzzy fruits
  - 2 Grassland
  - 3 Poshness
  - 4 Bubbly drinks
  - 5 Barley bristle

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW







# Another 4 succumb to Covid

# BJP's padayatra for Pari

Three districts—Bhadrak, Kandhamal and Subarnapur—had not reported any new case since Saturday

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** State's Covid-19 caseload Sunday mounted to 3,26,233 after 372 more people tested positive for the infection, while four fresh deaths raised the toll to 1,836, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the 372 cases, 214 were reported from various quarantine centres, and the rest detected during contact tracing, the official said. Angul district recorded the highest number of new cases at 50, followed by Sundargarh at 47 and Khurda at 38. Three districts—Bhadrak, Kandhamal and Subarnapur—did not report any new case since Saturday.

Four fresh fatalities were recorded in Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts.

As many as 53 Covid-19 patients have died due to comorbidities. The positivity rate in the coastal state stands at 4.94 per cent. Over 66 lakh samples have been examined so far including 34,334 Saturday.

Meanwhile, another 338 Covid patients recovered in Odisha, taking the total recoveries in the coastal state to 3,21,647, the H&FW department tweeted. The recovered cases include 49 from Khurda, 36 from Sundargarh, 21 from Bhadrak,

Odisha	CONFIRMED	ACTIVE	RECOVERED	DECEASED
	3,26,233 [+372]	2,697 [+21]	3,21,647 [+338]	1,836 [+4]
	3.26 % of India case	0.88 % of India case	3.37 % of India case	1.26 % of India case
India	1,00,04,825 [+26,991]	3,07,097 [+3,235]	95,49,923 [+29,879]	1,45,171 [+342]

Numbers vis-à-vis national data



FILE PHOTO

## IN NUMBERS

Angul dist recorded the highest number of new cases at 50, followed by Sundargarh at 47 and Khurda at 38

Four fresh fatalities were recorded in Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Sambalpur and Sundargarh

The positivity rate in Odisha stands at 4.94 per cent

Over 66 lakh samples have been examined so far including 34,334 Saturday

21 from Cuttack, 20 from Balasore and 18 each from Angul and Mayurbhanj, the department pointed out. The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Sunday said that 30 more people from the Capital city have been infected with the coronavirus, while 31 others have been cured from viral infection in the last 24 hours.

The people who have tested positive for the deadly virus include seven from different quarantine

centres and the rest 23 cases are local contacts.

Meanwhile, India added 26,624 coronavirus infections in 24 hours, taking its tally to 1,00,31,223, according to the Health Ministry data. The number of fresh infections is 5.8 per cent higher than Saturday, when the country registered 25,152 cases to take the total infections to over one crore mark.

In the 24-hour period, India, reported 341 deaths linked to the

virus, taking the total number of fatalities to 1,45,447. Thirty-three states and union territories have less than 20,000 active cases, according to the government. Kerala and Maharashtra together account for 40 per cent of total COVID-19 active cases," the Health Ministry tweeted.

India is in the number one position in terms of the number of recovered coronavirus cases, followed by Brazil, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

THE MARCH BEGAN FROM LINGARAJ TEMPLE IN BHUBANESWAR AND WILL CULMINATE AT JADUPUR, THE NATIVE VILLAGE OF THE GIRL, DECEMBER 24



AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** The state unit of BJP Sunday launched a five-day-long 'padayatra' or foot march to demand justice for a five-year-old girl found murdered in Nayagarh district in July this year. The march began from Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar and will culminate at Jadupur, the native village of the girl, December 24.

The BJP is demanding a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the case and the resignation of Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo on charge of shielding the accused.

"The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has already indicated that the state's investigation into the case was not proper. We are sticking to our demand for a CBI inquiry. We will continue our agitation till our demands are not met," said Vanathi Srinivasan, national President of the

It was an unfortunate incident. But, the Opposition shouldn't politicise it. Everyone knows how their party-led government in Uttar Pradesh handled the Hathras crime. They should introspect

PINAKI MISHRA | PURI MP

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has already indicated that the state's investigation into the case wasn't proper. We are sticking to our demand for a CBI inquiry. We will continue our agitation till our demands aren't met

YANATHI SRINIVASAN | NATIONAL PRESIDENT, BJP MAHILA MORCHA

BJP Mahila Morcha.

Party's national spokesperson Sambit Patra said that the NCPCR had recommended a central agency probe into the murder as it allegedly found that the police probe was severely flawed.

Reacting to the march, the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) said that the opposition party was unnecessarily politicising the issue.

"It was an unfortunate incident. But, the opposition should not politi-

cise it. Everyone knows how their party-led government in Uttar Pradesh handled the Hathras crime. They should introspect," said BJD MP Pinaki Mishra.

The minor girl's death snowballed into a major political controversy after her parents attempted self-immolation in front of the Assembly during its Winter Session. They alleged that Sahoo was shielding those responsible for their daughter's death.

## Digital Mega Science Festival from Dec 23

Online sessions will be conducted on Astronomy, Mathematics, Space Science, Chemistry, Computational Thinking, Sci-Art, Origami and Vedas

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** Due to spread of novel coronavirus, learning in formal or non-formal format has shifted to digital platform. Even with all odds due to outbreak of pandemic, an opportunity appears to bring world community in a single platform.

For bringing students closer to science, Regional Science Centre (RSC) and Odisha Bigyan Academy is bringing scientists and science communicators together on an eight-day Digital Mega Science festival from December 23.

Soumen Ghosh, project coordinator of RSC, said that the year 2020 has been unprecedented to all due to spread of novel coronavirus. "Learning in formal or non-formal already shifted to digital platform. Even with all odds due to outbreak of pandemic, an opportunity appears to bring world community in a single plat-

form. With digital system we are connected to student's community of pan India and same time science popularisation organizations like Regional Science Centre and Odisha Bigyan Academy are joining hands together to bring world class scientific fraternity to students, teachers, hobbyists of Odisha to disseminate hands on knowledge of science, technology, innovation and creativity."

During the festival, online sessions will be conducted on Astronomy, Mathematics, Space Science, Chemistry, Computational Thinking, Sci-art, Origami and Vedas, this apart Practical Electronics session will be organised by the scientists from abroad and India.

Earlier, Institute of Life Science organised a two-day Virtual Open Day and Science Festival December 4-5.



Representative pic



People under the banner of 'All India Kisan Sangharsha Coordination Committee' observe 'Homage Day' at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, in response to a call from Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a joint front of farmer unions, to pay tributes to the farmers who had died during the agitation since November 26 this year

OP PHOTO

## Affordable stay for devotees visiting Srimandir planned

AGENCIES

**Puri, Dec 20:** The state government was in the process of establishing a huge facility for providing affordable accommodation to pilgrims visiting Shree Jagannath Temple here, a senior official said.

This was stated by Works secretary-cum- chief administrator of

A FACILITY WILL COME UP OVER NINE TO 10 ACRES OF LAND NEAR BASELI SAHI POLICE STATION

A BED WOULD COST ABOUT ₹100 TO 150

Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Krishan

Kumar Saturday after a high level official delegation visited the holy town to review the ambitious Augmentation of Basic Amenities and Development of Heritage and Architecture (ABADHA) programme.

A huge facility will come up over nine to 10 acres of land near Baseli Sahi police station for providing

cheap accommodation to the visitors, Kumar said, adding that a bed would cost about Rs 100 to 150.

Development Commissioner SC Mohapatra, 5T Secretary VK Pandian and other senior officials visited Puri Saturday to review various developmental projects ahead of reopening of Srimandir for general public January 3.

## Plan to accommodate seasonal biz units

Interested vendors can apply to book the stalls online from December 20 to January 5, 2021

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has started facilitating online booking of space for seasonal businesses in the state capital through its web portal Bhubaneswar.me.

The smart solution which is aimed for interested vendors, will help them book business space without visiting the civic authority's office or any official rigmarole. Keeping eyes on the upcoming Christmas and New Year celebrations, the city administration has enabled the sites where interested vendors can apply to book the stalls online from December 20 to January 5, 2021.

Speaking on the services offered, BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary said, "Reducing resource and timing is an important aspect in smart solutions. The BMC is promoting transparency where vendors will not be worried and there will be no ambiguity. In the present, facility of providing link for booking of seasonal stalls, the



list of stalls available and prices for different components are well defined."

As per the sources, under the online facility, the BMC has chalked out 778 stalls of 10x10 feet each coming under its three zones. The places where seasonal business spaces are available are behind Nandan Kanan office, Shaheed Nagar and in front of Laxmi Sagar police station under South East Zone. Gym Centre, Pokhariput, near ICAAR gate, Aiginia and Jatra Padia - Jagamara under South West

Zone. And back side of RTO II office- Patia, in front of Damana Club Field- Damana, Mini stadium hata in front of Jaydev college Naharakanta, in front of Pahal old Phandi- Pahal, side of Club Town Field, Padmabati vihar Yagnya Field, stadium near urban Primary Health Centre- Chandrasekharpur, near Dhirikuti slum Gadakana and near Jagannath temple Pandara under North Zone.

"The tariff for the seasonal stall space has been fixed under three different components. While license is

Reducing resource and time is an important aspect in smart solutions. The BMC is promoting transparency where vendors will not be worried and there will be no ambiguity

PREM CHANDRA CHAUDHARY | COMMISSIONER, BMC

Vendors can apply online and avail the service on first come and first serve basis

SRIMANTA MISHRA | DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, REVENUE

mandatory for the businesses, the rate per sq. feet per day is Rs. 0.60. Meanwhile ground rent per sq. feet per day is Rs1.60 and sanitation charge is Rs 50 per day per stall. Vendors can apply online and avail the service on first come and first serve basis," informed Srimanta Mishra, Deputy Commissioner, Revenue.

The BMC has also pondered to provide such facility for vendors for different seasonal business in future.



Congress activists take out a rally at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, condemning the state government's failure in curbing the rising incidents of violence against women

OP PHOTO

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-DayalAgency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemana-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.



# Andhra lays blacktop road in disputed area



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jeypore, Dec 20:** Even though the border dispute between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh continues at several places in Koraput, the neighbouring state Saturday afternoon laid a blacktop road at Sunabeda village under Sambai panchayat under Pottangi block in the district. This has triggered a fresh controversy in the bordering villages. On being informed by local villagers about the fresh development, Pottangi additional tehsildar took stock of the road laying work. Notably, in a welcome development last December 3, authorities from bordering districts of the two

states held talks at a border post to resolve the prolonged issue. A team of Koraput district administration represented Odisha, while another team of Visakhapatnam district administration represented Andhra Pradesh in the meeting. GPS mapping of the border is being carried out in lines with the Madras Presidency map and a joint survey for this has also started. The officials of the two states had then agreed not to undertake any developmental activity until the boundaries are demarcated. The Andhra Pradesh government, however, has violated the agreement by laying the road.

# Irrigation project lying unused

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kesinga, Dec 20:** Like most other parts of Odisha, agriculture is the primary occupation of residents of Laitara Gram panchayat in Kesinga block of Kalahandi district. But this sector has been hit hard as the already constructed irrigation project near Ret River is unable to irrigate the farmlands of the panchayat. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had inaugurated the project December 15, 2015. The water resources department had spent Rs 8.98 crore to construct it. The project aimed at irrigating 500 hectares of farmland in Laitara, Jaloka and Karalabhadri villages

though 29 outlets. The department had set up three pump sets to provide water through an 8.464 km long pipeline as well. But the farmers alleged that given the low-level positioning of water outlets, the project barely manages to irrigate their farmlands. While during rainy season very less amount of water passes through the outlets, it all becomes dry during the Rabi season. When contacted, departmental SDO Manas Kumar Pradhan said that they have requested the state government to reconstruct the check dams, pipelines and outlets in proper position so that the farmers can draw benefits from the project.

# Notice served on 3 firms for mineral stock irregularities

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Joda, Dec 20:** Some mining firms have allegedly committed irregularities in mineral stocks and tampered with grades of iron ore in Joda mining circle in Keonjhar district. The office of the Joda joint director of mining has issued notices to three firms, a report said. According to the report, Kashvi International Private Limited at Jaribhal, Tarini Minerals at Deojhar and Murgabada iron ore and mines were issued notices Friday. These three mining companies had tampered with the grades of iron ore in official records. The mines department came to know their irregularities and suspended their mining activities for the time being. Some leaseholders at times transport high grade minerals instead of the minerals in their stocks. They usually show low quality minerals in records, but sell high grade minerals.



FILE PHOTO

Due to such illegalities, the state government has to lose crores of rupees as revenue. It may be noted here that the mines department had examined the stock of minerals on the premises of a major mining company in October in Joda. Then, the department came to know about the irregularities. That mine was served closure notice while two mining officers of Joda mining circle had been suspended for dereliction of duty.

Joint director of mines at the Bhubaneswar office Umesh Chandra Jena said that notices were issued to three mines as there were irregularities in their stocks. He added that the stand of the government is very clear so far as tax evasion and illegal mining are concerned. Such cases will be dealt with sternly and stringent action will be taken against the erring mines if necessary, he added.

# Dining at a palace to be a reality soon in Sambalpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Dec 20:** Other things being equal, your dream to dine with your loved ones at a palace will soon come true. Jemadei Mahal, popularly known as Rani Bakhri (Queen's Palace) is being converted into a restaurant and soon it will be readied to welcome guests. This three-storied palace gloriously displaying marvels of Rajasthani architecture is located close to Pataneswari Temple in Sambalpur. In order to give a royal feel, special care is being employed. The restaurant will have all the signs of a palace, be it in furniture or decoration. The Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) has already started working on it. Once completed, it will offer a wide array of cuisines to its guests. And to give a feel of being in Western Odisha, the menu will have Western Odisha's signature mouthwatering delicacies in a royal ambience. Notably, renovation and restoration of the palace started two years ago. This historic three-storied building has 15 well-maintained and well-furnished rooms in total- seven on the ground floor, six on the first floor and two on the second floor. There is also a balcony. In the space in front of the palace, there is a mini open-air auditorium with a gallery for visitors to enjoy cultural programmes. While the entire palace has been given a



## ROYAL TOUCH

The palace known as Rani Bakhri was built by fifth Chouhan king of Sambalpur Baliyar Singh and had been lying in a neglected state for a long period

This three-storied palace gloriously displaying marvels of Rajasthani architecture is located close to Pataneswari Temple in Sambalpur

The menu will have Western Odisha's signature mouthwatering delicacies in a royal ambience, to give a feel of being in Western Odisha

white coat, the architectural features and designs have got a contrasting colour. Once in ruins, the palace has been restored and renovated by the OTDC at a cost of Rs 1 crore. Built by fifth Chouhan king of Sambalpur Baliyar Singh, the palace had been lying in a neglected state for a long period. There were cracks on the walls and the surrounding was full of wanton growth of bushes. And

there was hardly any sign of paints on walls as they had long faded away. When it was decided to restore the palace to its original condition, experts of INTACH were consulted. Under their supervision, a diagram was drawn out and accordingly the restoration work started. Instead of using cement, the palace was given a coat of a mixture prepared by mixing lime, gum of bel fruit, fenugreek, molasses and black

# Maoists, security forces exchange fire; arms seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani, Dec 20:** A militiaman was detained while firearms and other articles were seized during an exchange of fire between the Maoists and security forces December 17 evening near Bireni village under Gochhapada police limits in Kandhamal district, police said Sunday. The militiaman was detained during the exchange of fire while the ultras taking advantage of the dense forest managed to escape. He has been taken for interrogation to examine his involvement in violence and insurgency activities in the region. Two country-made guns, a radio set, medicines, clothes, ration and other articles were seized from the place after the ultras escaped. Preliminary inquiries revealed



## ANTI-INSURGENCY OPERATION

The arrested militia has been taken for interrogation to examine his involvement in violence and insurgency activities in the region

The security forces took cover and fired in a controlled manner in self-defence and asked the ultras to surrender. However, the ultras refused to listen and went on firing

that over 10-12 Maoists were present at the spot when the encounter took place, said Kandhamal SP Vinit Agarwal at a press conference held at the district police headquarters here, Sunday. The SP said that a joint combing operation comprising the jawans of

Special Operation Group (SOG) and District Voluntary Force (DVF) was launched in the area following a tip-off, December 15. The jawans were scanning the area when the ultras started firing at them near the Bireni village, December 17.



## AWARENESS DRIVE

A van meant to create awareness about paddy procurement being flagged off in Paralakhemundi

OP PHOTO

## Picnic turns tragic: 1 dead, 2 missing in river

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Dec 20:** A youth died and two others went missing in Koel river in Jhirpani here in Sundargarh Sunday. They were washed away by strong currents when they were enjoying their bath.

### Some youths had gone to Jhirpani on a picnic when the mishap occurred

The identities of the deceased and the missing duo are yet to be ascertained. Sources said some youths had gone to Jhirpani on a picnic. Three of them had gone to the river, which is near the picnic spot, for bathing at about 3pm. They were enjoying their bath when one of them accidentally went into the middle of the river. Seeing him being washed away, the other two friends tried to rescue him. In the process, they also got washed away. Fire personnel with the help of local people carried out a rescue operation. They could fish out one body. The other two are still missing.

## Elephant kills one

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jhumpura/Joda, Dec 20:** After a brief hiatus, an elephant separated from its herd has been causing mayhem in Bamebari section under Champua range in Keonjhar district. The animal claimed the life of a person Saturday evening. The deceased was identified as Srikant Nayak (40) of Kajjoda village. Srikant was out to answer the call of nature near a forest when the elephant trampled him to death. On being informed, Bamebari forester Jatindra Sahu visited the spot while the body was sent to Keonjhar for post-mortem. The forest department says that the



next of kin of the deceased will be provided Rs 4 lakh as government assistance. Three elephants have been unleashing a reign of terror in Champua, Keonjhar and Bhuyan Juanga Pidhi ranges. A forest official said that as these elephants have been moving separately, it is difficult to keep track of them. In the last few days, elephants have killed three people in the area. They have damaged several houses and crops in acres of land. The animals have taken away the sleep of the farmers with crops in large tracts of farmland being eaten and destroyed everyday. Locals alleged that the forest officials have failed to drive away the animals.

## BSF RECOVERS LANDMINE

**Malkangiri:** In a major success against Maoists in Swabhimana area of Malkangiri district, the Border Security Force (BSF) jawans Saturday night recovered a powerful landmine hidden near Pipalpadar area in the district. Acting on tip-off, the BSF jawans launched a combing operation from Pipalpadar to Nakamamudi in Swabhimana area and unearthed the powerful landmine. Later, a bomb disposal squad reached the spot and defused the landmine averting a possible mishap. The jawans suspected that the Maoists were targeting the security forces for which they had planted the powerful landmine. October 20, BSF jawans and the police had seized materials include 18 pieces of slurry and emulsion explosives, 500 pieces of gelatin, three camera flashes and other materials from this area. They had also seized explosives including tiffin bombs.



The security forces took cover and fired in a controlled manner in self-defence and asked the ultras to surrender. However, the ultras refused to listen and went on firing.

The jawans retaliated in equal measures. As a result, the ultras could not withstand the onslaught for long and fled the scene leaving behind their firearms and other articles.

# Minor girl stripped, beaten up over affair

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khallikote, Dec 20:** A minor girl from Khallikote area in Ganjam district was stripped, beaten up and tied to a tree by several women of the village over an alleged love affair with a youth from the area. While the incident took place late Friday night, the minor girl with her grandmother managed to reach the nearest police station only the next morning to register a complaint. The police have so far arrested 16 women and sent them to jail Saturday. Fearing arrest, 10 male members of the village have fled. The accused women were produced in a POCOS court and later, remanded to judicial custody after their bail pleas got rejected, Chhatrapur SDPO Goutam Kishan said. Further investigations are

Police have so far arrested 16 women and sent them to jail Saturday. Fearing arrest, 10 male members of the village have fled

on to arrest more persons. Sources said the 16-year-old girl has been staying with her grandmother at a village under Khallikote police limits after her father's death. The villagers suspected her to be in a relationship with a youth from the same village and objected to the affair. Following a heated argument Friday, some of the women from the village stripped her, tied her to a tree and beat her up over the alleged affair.

## Fake engine oil factory busted

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Dec 20:** Acting on tip-off, Town police busted a fake engine oil factory at Niladri Vihar here and arrested its proprietor, Sunday. The accused was identified as Md. Izaz, 31. Around 20 cartons of engine oil, raw materials, a machine worth Rs 3 lakh and a car were seized during the raid. The disclosure is indicative of the extent of spread of fake industrial units in the state manufacturing spurious and adulterated products. It comes close on the heels of similar raids carried out on adulterated soya chunk, ghee, sauce manufacturing units in Cuttack. A case was registered in this connection and further investigations are on. Police said Izaz used to procure plain oil and labels of various prominent brands like Castrol and Servo from Kolkata to manufacture spurious engine oils in the factory. The manufactured oil was later sold in markets of Gajapati and Rayagada.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,**  
**RURAL WORKS DIVISION, DEOGARH**  
**E-mail Id – eerw\_deogarh@yahoo.co.in**  
**E-Procurement Notice**  
**BID IDENTIFICATION NO. EEDGH-online- 01/2020-21**

No.O-737

1. Name of work: Road works :-( 5 Nos )  
2. Estimated cost:-Rs. 13.27 lakhs to 44.21 lakhs  
3. Mode of submission of tender:-Tender shall be submitted online in www.tenders.ori.nic.in  
4. Availability of tender for online bidding: – 22.12.2020, 11.00 AM to 31.12.2020 up to 5.00 PM  
5. Date and time of opening of tender: – 01.01.2021, 11.00 AM  
6. Other details can be seen from the website www.tenders.ori.nic.in.  
7. Corrigendum / Addendum if any shall only be published in the above website.

**Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Deogarh**  
OIPR-25087/11/0001/2021

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BALASORE**  
**Identification No.ADB(RRNMU)-online-NCB-274/2020-21, Dt.17.12.2020**

No.O-759:-

1. Name of the work	: Procurement of Supply, Delivery and Installation of Equipment for RRNMU at Balasore in the State of Odisha.
2. Total no. of lots	: 6 lots.
3. Class of Bidder	: "D" Class and above for each lot.
4. Period of Completion	: 03 calendar months.
5. Other details	

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	No of lots	Availability of tender online for bidding
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Balasore	ADB-online-NCB-274/2020-21, Dt.17.12.2020	6 lots	From 22.12.2020 11.00 hrs. To 07.01.2021 15.00 hrs.

Other details can be seen in the bidding documents which is available in website [www.pmgstenders.gov.in](http://www.pmgstenders.gov.in)  
Any other changes/Corrigendums may be seen only in website [www.pmgstenders.gov.in](http://www.pmgstenders.gov.in)  
**Sd./- Er. P.K.Sahoo, Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Balasore**  
OIPR-25105/11/0009/2021





# Turban Naxals

To roll back or not to roll back! This is the question that could be occupying uppermost mind space of the Union government now. It concerns the three new controversial farming related laws. The Modi government needs to address this imbroglio without any further delay. Time is running out. Unlike the Supreme Court which can afford to bide time to take a decision, a democratically elected government does not enjoy that luxury. The farmers' agitation against the legislations has engulfed the executive, the judiciary, the Opposition and the corporate world while getting international traction. The big private houses that incurred the wrath of the farmers having been perceived to be the main beneficiaries of the new laws, have become unnerved. One of them has launched a media propaganda blitzkrieg through advertisements to counter the farmers' charge against it. Another has begun an almost internecine war in the corporate world accusing its rivals of colluding with the agitating farmers who have given a call to boycott its telecom services, as it is also an agriculture market leader. This has started to hit the company's telephony business with over 400 million subscribers. The rivals, of course, denied the charge and claimed they have been in the telecom business for the past 25 years and captured the market through hard work.

Nobel Laureate Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee has recently said that the farmers' agitation has been spurred on not so much for the content of the new laws but because of massive lack of trust in the government. He further says this time of the pandemic is not good to have a conversation about the farm laws and that the government should immediately announce a temporary rollback and discuss the legislations at length in the Parliament later on. Although Banerjee's opinion may be valid, no one will be deceived that Parliamentary debates in India must not have the last say to pave the way for resolution of such conflicts. Banerjee's suggestion could sound like a sweet melody to this government which has become extremely deft at misusing the discuss-debate-decide mode of Parliament. It is we, the people, the lowest in the economic rung, who have given an overwhelming majority to the BJP in the last general election. With such a huge number of MPs on its side, any discussion on the floor of the House becomes redundant once the matter, at the finale, goes for voting. If the Bills come up for voting once again, the Ayes Have It, Ayes Have It' will ring loud and clear from the Speaker's Chair. Once that is done, the farmers would never understand what hit them. Most uneducated democrats would then stand aside and feel proud that the test of fire was duly undertaken and the law was passed properly. That lie would be a true deception. Apart from the farce being played out on India's democracy currently, Banerjee does not seem to realize that it is not just 'massive mistrust in the government' that is encouraging the farmers to protest but also that the three laws are going to be very harmful for India's agriculture sector in the days to come. Banerjee, in an unspoken fashion, has not opposed the laws per se but finds superficial fault because of the timing of implementation.

Till now the government is in no mood to budge from its stand that the laws will be a "game-changer." After maintaining silence for some time and letting his Cabinet colleagues defend the legislations, Prime Minister Modi has now begun to bat for the farm laws with an appeal to the Opposition to support the measures and not to "mislead" the farmers. This is usual political rhetoric and slugfest between the ruling party and the Opposition to upstage one another to consolidate respective vote-banks. Now, it is for the Opposition to withdraw and not try to usurp this people's movement for its own benefit. Trying to do so would only help the government.

Not long ago, the country was witness to a similar turmoil when farmers closed ranks and took on state power which, like the Modi government, tried its best to sell the idea to the farmers that its initiative was in their interests only. Nearly a decade ago, the CPM government in Bengal began a major industrialisation overdrive by forcibly taking away farmland. Like the BJP, it was also a regimented party enjoying overwhelming majority in the state Assembly and it tried to steamroll farmers' agitation spearheaded by the Trinamool Congress. The then Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee had boasted with the infamous remark, "we are 235, they are 35," referring to the respective tallies of the Left Front and the Trinamool in the Assembly. A minister of the Modi government parroted a similar argument in a slightly different language bragging that the government has comfortable majority in the Parliament and a "ragtag" farmers' group doesn't have the power to stop the government from having its way.

It was the arrogance and desperation to placate the corporate lobby that propelled the Marxist government to try and bulldoze farmers' protest with the power of brute legislative majority and well-oiled party machinery. What happened thereafter is history. The Marxists got voted out by the people in 2011. Since then they have been suffering the ignominy of being an also-ran outfit in successive elections that they have contested.

What the BJP government at the Centre has now embarked upon is being viewed as far more alarming for the farmers and the country's food security. The ruling party first tried to denigrate the agitation by portraying it as a Khalistani-inspired movement, the work of anti-nationals, turban naxals and vested interests. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court too has spoken, defending the farmers' right to protest peacefully while it has also sought the government's opinion on how, in future, such protests should be held against the government. The government is still adamant and unwilling to concede to the farmers' demand to withdraw the legislations completely. That, the BJP leadership feels, could mean a major blow to its standing in the people's eye and the interests of its friends in the corporate world. It's time it learns a lesson from the fate of the Marxist government in Bengal rubbing the farmers the wrong way.

## WISDOM CORNER

- He who reigns within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears is more than a king. **JOHN MILTON**
- The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future. **OSCAR WILDE**
- Vanity working on a weak head, produces every sort of mischief. **JANE AUSTEN**

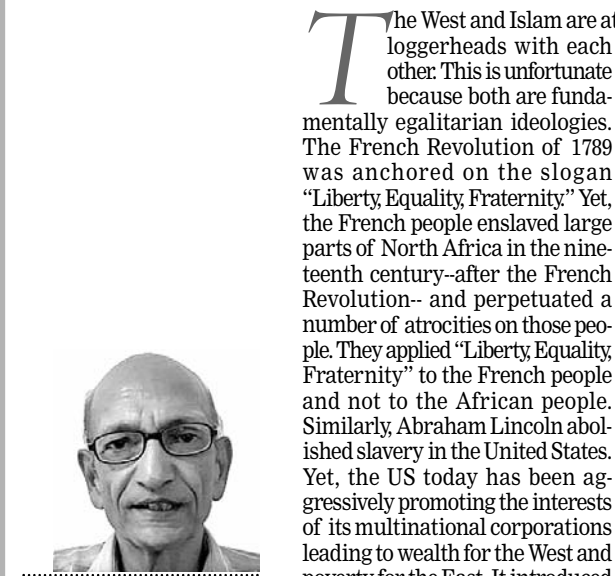
## WORDSWORTH

### Waygoose

The end of summer came early in old-time printing shops. By the third week in August candles were needed to light the final hours of the long working day. To mark this shift to winter working, it was usual for the master printer to give his journeymen a feast around St Bartholomew's Day (24 August). This was the waygoose or way-goose. Its earliest recorded use is this: The Master Printer gives them a Way-goose; that is, he makes them a good Feast, and not only entertains them at his own House, but besides, gives them Money to spend at the Ale-house or Tavern at Night. ... These Way-goose, are always kept about Bartholomew-tide. And till the Master-Printer have given this Way-goose, the Journey-men do not use to Work by Candle Light (Mechanick Exercises, by Joseph Moxon, 1683). A rather splendid ditty the following century retold the story behind the practice in rhyming couplets: The season comes to light the tapers up, To gild the night, and drink the festive cup; Now darkness treads upon the heels of day, And earlier now dispatches him away. ... We sacrific'd the goose, and mirth pursu'd; As that delicious bird about this time, Call'd for the knife, and was in season prime. ... The masters hence their journeymen invite, To dine abroad, or spend the merry night (Lloyd's Evening Post, 1750, quoted in Notes and Queries, 4 August 1866). The name is baffling. In 1731, lexicographer Nathaniel Bailey argued, in the fifth edition of his Universal Etymological English Dictionary, that it came from wayz, meaning stubble, respelling the word waygoose to make the derivation clearer. Though it continued to be spelled as way-goose by almost everybody except Bailey, nineteenth-century etymologists stuck the "z" in to make it fit Bailey's story.

## FOCUS HUMANITY

# INEQUALITIES IN EQUALITY



Bharat Jhunjunwala

THE WEST HAS ESTABLISHED DEMOCRACY AND EQUALITY WITHIN ITS OWN COUNTRIES BUT ESPOUSED INEQUALITY AND EXPLOITATION VIS-À-VIS DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The West and Islam are at loggerheads with each other. This is unfortunate because both are fundamentally egalitarian ideologies. The French Revolution of 1789 was anchored on the slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Yet, the French people enslaved large parts of North Africa in the nineteenth century-after the French Revolution-- and perpetuated a number of atrocities on those people. They applied "Liberty Equality Fraternity" to the French people and not to the African people. Similarly, Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery in the United States. Yet, the US today has been aggressively promoting the interests of its multinational corporations leading to wealth for the West and poverty for the East. It introduced the Patents Acts in the World Trade Organization. Previously India was free to copy and make a product invented by an American MNC as long as the Indian copier did not use the same process to make the product as used by the American inventor. Before the introduction of the Patents Act in the WTO, an Indian pharma could make the Pfizer vaccine for Covid-19 as long as it used a different process than used by Pfizer to make the vaccine. To give another example, it is reported that the cost of production of Windows software by Microsoft is only one US dollar whereas Microsoft is selling it at about ten dollars per piece. Indian software companies cannot copy the Windows software due the Patents Act. This kind of profiteering is leading to poverty in developing countries and richness in Western countries.

We find the same anomaly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 at the behest of the developed countries. Article 31 says "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state." Question is this: Why should the freedom of movement be restricted within "each state" when the rights enshrined in the Declaration are "universal?" Why the Declaration does not implement "Equality" and "Fraternity" between all hu-

manity? Similarly, Article 21 (2) says "Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country." Question is this: Why access to services only in "his country" if we are a common humanity? Why should public services of humanity not be shared across all peoples? In this way, the West has established democracy and equality within its own countries but espoused inequality and exploitation vis-à-vis the developing countries.

Indeed, there are exceptions to this rule. Winston Churchill had gone to the US to meet President Roosevelt during the Second World War seeking American assistance. Roosevelt had put the condition that England would have to give freedom to her colonies as a quid pro quo for American support. That was a great contribution of the US to the welfare of the people of world. The US had also granted food aid under PL-480 law when India was facing a severe drought in the sixties. However, these exceptions do not obviate the larger exploitative tendency of the West.

The situation gets flipped in Islam. Equality between countries is accepted. Ayat 1760 of the Quran says, "And [remember, O Muhammad], when we told you, Indeed, your Lord has encompassed the people." This Ayat applies to whole humanity. There is no division between the people that have been "encompassed."

The Lord encompasses the Arabic, American, European, Pagan, Atheists, and all other peoples. The basic tenor of the Quran is global. The Quran brings Allah's message to the whole humanity; not to a section of it. In my reading, Allah does not even tolerate any distinction even between believers and non-believers in the Prophet. A person may believe in Allah and in another Prophet, not Prophet Muhammad. The Quran accepts the Jews and Christians as people of the book even though they do not honour Prophet Muhammad. Unfortunately, Islam has transformed itself into an exploitative society despite this universalism.

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad lived a very simple life. The first two Imams-Abu Bakr and Oman--also lived simple lives. However, the third Imam Othman transformed the situation entirely. Leslie Hazleton, author of "After the Prophet", says that Othman "built palaces in Medina with enclosed gardens, marble columns, and imported food and chefs. He began to give away vast private state to his relatives some with thousands of horses and as many slaves." In this way, the egalitarian ideology of the Quran was transformed into a deep social inequality within the Islamic countries and this continues to this day. The palaces of Saudi Arabia smack of unparalleled luxury while even

Muslim people of Nigeria are starving. In Pakistan two million people are living today as bonded labour--this within an Islamic country. A number of reports tell of "slave wives" being "wed" by Saudi Royals. So, Islam with an egalitarian ideology has been transformed into an internally unequal and exploitative society. It must be noted and honoured though that Islam has not made military war against other countries like France or economic wars against other countries like the US.

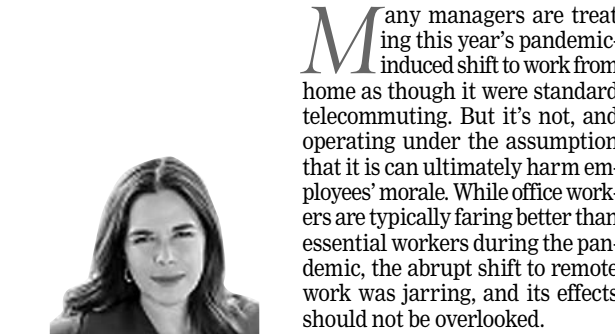
Here again we have exceptions to the rule. Iraq made war against Kuwait. The Rohingyas are considered to have made war against the State of Myanmar. A number of Islamic organizations are openly advocating Jihad against other countries. A difference from France and US, however, is that these wars are being made for religious objectives, not for economic exploitation. We have in front of us a strange spectacle. Two ideologies that are both egalitarian as well as universal, have both espoused inequality in different ways. The West has tried to secure equality within the countries but exploited other people. Islam, on the other hand, has tried to secure equality between countries but exploited its own peoples. The way forward is for both the West and Islam to reform themselves. Only then we will have peace and welfare as declared by the French Revolution and the Quran.

As an endnote, we in India must remind ourselves that we basically suffer from the same ills as Islam. The caste system still prevails in large parts of the country although we have expunged it from our Constitution. Economic inequality between the rich and the poor has been increasing at a regular pace since the Independence. It has increased exponentially under the present NDA government that is ideologically driven by Hindu texts. Thus, like Muslims, Hindus must also reform themselves to espouse internal equality

The writer is a former Professor of Economics at IIM Bangalore. Views are personal.

## SPECTRUM PANDEMIC

# Managing well in the WFH era



Sian Beilock

THE OFFICE WASN'T INVITED INTO THE HOME. IT TURNED UP LIKE AN UNEXPECTED GUEST - AND IT SHOWS FEW SIGNS OF LEAVING SOON

Many managers are treating this year's pandemic-induced shift to work from home as though it were standard telecommuting. But it's not, and operating under the assumption that it is can ultimately harm employees' morale. While office workers are typically faring better than essential workers during the pandemic, the abrupt shift to remote work was jarring, and its effects should not be overlooked.

Leadership experts and cognitive scientists can attest that resistance to change is less about the change itself and more about losing control and fear of uncertainty. Humans -- and other animals, for that matter -- respond defensively when the power to make decisions about their own lives is removed. And in a recent study on COVID-19 and mental health, researchers found that adults surveyed in the US and five European countries who believe that other people or random chance mostly dictates what happens to them also report greater symptoms of depression.

There's a big difference between choosing to telecommute and suddenly being forced to work from home. While eliminating the daily commute has been nice, the average

office worker simply wasn't mentally or financially prepared to turn their home into a makeshift WeWork location while also taking on previously outsourced teaching, childcare, and eldercare duties. Many families do not live in homes that can easily accommodate telecommuting, and some employees' domestic arrangements are not conducive to success. Managers can take several steps to ease these burdens for their employees.

*Set reasonable expectations:* Many employees are bearing new burdens and facing pressure from multiple sources. Managers can avoid overwhelming them by eliminating unnecessary reports and redundant procedures, and by being as transparent as possible about deadlines. For example, if an important client meeting is postponed, managers should inform everyone who is preparing materials for it immediately, so they can reprioritize the day's tasks. Likewise, managers shouldn't expect immediate replies to emails -- a constant sense of urgency contributes to employee burnout. Sending emails outside of working hours should be avoided, or staff shouldn't be expected to answer after-hours messages immediately. *Don't force employees to be 'on'*

*all the time:* Zoom fatigue is sky high, and employees may have to manage quiet space so that all household members can participate in their respective work calls and video meetings. Women usually get the short end of the stick, with one author dubbing them "reluctant nomads" in the "battle for space." For example, an employee might find herself perched on the edge of the bathtub, precariously balancing a computer on her knees, so that her partner and children can conduct their business or school work from the living room, bedroom, and kitchen. And women tend to face unfair criticism and praise over their appearance on Zoom. Managers should ask whether any meetings could be eliminated, shortened, or conducted without video.

*Find more opportunities to celebrate accomplishments:* While it's always a good idea to strike a balance between criticism and praise, employees now face a constant flood of terrible news related to the pandemic, and are likely starved for wins. Managers should look for small successes that can be publicly recognized to boost morale, and thank employees for their hard work when they see a job well done. It costs nothing to show appreciation,

and a little positive feedback could be exactly what someone needed to hear on a particularly rough day.

*Capitalize on accessible resources:* Managers should look for ways to create more win-win scenarios while leveraging the assets they already have. At Barnard College we are paying our students to tutor the children of our faculty and staff. Our undergraduates gain part-time work at a time when internships and entry-level jobs are scarce, and our full-time employees can outsource one task among their many responsibilities. Managers who are unclear about where employees need some help could ask them in an anonymous survey about the biggest challenges they face and allocate resources accordingly.

Adjusting to sudden change requires effort on everyone's part. Managers owe it to their employees to stop treating work from home like a luxury. The office wasn't invited into the home. It turned up like an unexpected guest -- and it shows few signs of leaving soon.

The writer, a cognitive scientist, is President of Barnard College at Columbia University. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

OrissaPOST  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

## State of pandemic

Sir, Active cases of Covid-19 are total cases excluding recovered and deceased cases and are a major parameter to gauge the current state of the pandemic. After the peak cases in mid September, there is great fall in the last three months. For the whole country the present cases are less than 30 per cent of the peak cases and for Odisha they are less than 10 per cent. The per day death cases also have come down to less than one-third of the peak period. In per million cases, Odisha is among the bottom five of 36 states/UTs. Efforts of the healthcare personnel and the state government have paid off.

Gopal Prasad Mittal, BHUBANESWAR

## Sinking ship

Sir, This is in reference to the report, 'Didi will be all alone: Shah', Orissa Post, December 20. In its quest to wrest power in West Bengal, the BJP is going all out to weaken the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC. TMC's strong man Suwendu Adhikari, an instrumental figure in the Nandigram movement, and a key personality in bringing the TMC to the power corridors in the state, along with many other legislators has joined the saffron party. The party's astronomical rise on the ruins of the Communist parties and the Congress which ruled the state for more than five decades has posed a major challenge to the ruling TMC, which is in power for two terms. The BJP has deployed its potent electoral machinery with rich resources to catapult the party to power in the state that would be very crucial to enhance its heft in eastern India. On the other hand, internal rumblings in the TMC caused by a host of reasons ranging from the party's structure to the party's functioning, each one of them have a common complaint -- the increasing influence of political strategist Prashant Kishor: Kishor was roped in by Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee in an attempt to help the TMC win for the third time whilst decimating the saffron party which has been making significant inroads in the state over last few years. The gradual elevation of Abhishek Banerjee to the second position in the party has sent a message to the cadre that he is an obvious successor to Mamata Banerjee. This has led to dissatisfaction among second line leaders with political ambitions. It's going to be a herculean task for the TMC to safeguard itself from the onslaught of a strengthening BJP in the Assembly elections due next mid-summer.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE



‘Metro car land not ego issue’

GOVT-PVT SCHOOLS NEXUS EXISTS: EX-CM

THE CENTRE AND THE SHIV SENA-LED MAHA GOVERNMENT ARE LOCKED IN A TUSSELEVER OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND EARMARKED BY THE STATE FOR CONSTRUCTING THE CAR SHED DEPOT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 20:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Sunday said he is open for a resolution of the Kanjurmarg Metro car shed land row in Mumbai through dialogue with the Centre and asserted it is not an “ego issue” for him.

Addressing people of Maharashtra through a live web cast, Thackeray also said that wearing masks will be mandatory for the next six months in the state in view of COVID-19, and asked people to be careful during the New Year celebrations.

Speaking on the Kanjurmarg car shed land dispute, he lamented that the central government moved court against the state over the issue. He also invited the opposition BJP in the state to sit across the table and resolve issues in public interest.

“Derailing each other’s projects would serve no purpose...The Kanjurmarg car shed land dispute is not in the interest of citizens. I am ready to give credit to the opposition for the project...This is not an ego issue for me, as being described,” he said.

“We have all documents to prove that the land belongs to the state government. If there is a controversy over the ownership of land, the



issue can be resolved through dialogue,” Thackeray said.

Should the land be allowed to go because of ownership issues and should it be given to builders? he asked.

Referring to the criticism from BJP leaders, he said, “The issue on Kanjurmarg land is not about my ego and it shouldn’t be about yours too.”

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday stayed the order passed by Mumbai suburban district collector allotting 102 acres of salt pan land in Kanjurmarg area here for the construction of an integrated metro car shed.

It also restrained the authorities from carrying out any construction work at the said land.

The previous BJP-led state government had decided to construct the car shed for Metro line 3 (Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ) at Aarey Colony, despite opposition from environmentalists and activists to the vast tree-cutting for the project.

The present MVA government - comprising the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress -- recently took a decision to shift the car shed from the Aarey Colony to Kanjurmarg.

Thackeray said Aarey car shed spread over 30 hectares was just for Metro line 3, while the 40-hectare

TUSSELEVER OWNERSHIP

THE PREVIOUS BJP-LED STATE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO CONSTRUCT THE CAR SHED FOR METRO LINE 3 (COLABA-BANDRA-SEEPZ) AT AAREY COLONY

THE PRESENT MVA GOVERNMENT -- COMPRISING THE SHIV SENA, NCP AND CONGRESS -- RECENTLY TOOK A DECISION TO SHIFT THE CAR SHED TO KANJURMARG

Kanjurmarg land would be used for the car shed for Metro lines 3, 4 ((WadalaGhatkopar-MulundTeen Hath NakaKasarvadavali) and 6 (Lokhandwala-Jogeshwari-Kanjurmarg).

It will also be a junction for Metro line 14, which will go up to Ambernath and Badlapur (in neighbouring Thane), Thackeray said justifying the choice of land at Kanjurmarg for the Metro car shed.

“The Aarey site for Metro Line 3 car shed was scrapped as more land would have been required in future at the cost of forest,” he said, adding the Kanjurmarg site will serve for 50 to 100 years.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bengaluru, Dec 20:** Former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday accused the BJP government in Karnataka of being ‘hand-in-glove’ with private educational institutions which were allegedly overcharging students.

In a series of tweets, the Congress leader slammed Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar for allegedly not having control over private educational institutions.

He alleged that schools were forcing parents to pay full school fees and threatening to stop online classes if they did not comply with it and said the government was silent on the issue.

“Schools are charging even extra curricular fees on top of teaching fees. This is an additional burden on parents. The @BJP4Karnataka is hand in gloves with the institutions,” Siddaramaiah, who is Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly tweeted.

He sought the intervention of the Chief Minister and the Primary and Secondary Education Minister to resolve the issue at the earliest.

Meanwhile, a group of parents staged a demonstration here, holding placards and banners and raised slogans against private educational



Schools were forcing parents to pay full school fees and threatening to stop online classes and the government is silent on the issue

SIDDARAMAIAH | FORMER CM, KARNATAKA

ber, had lost his job as a fallout of COVID-19 lockdown and alleged the management did not allow her son to appear for the half-yearly exams.

Karnataka government on Saturday decided to reopen schools and Pre-University Colleges in the state for class 10 and second year PUC (class 12) students from January 1.

It also decided to start the Vidyagama programme, which enables continued schooling for students from classes six to nine, from that date.

The decisions were taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on reopening schools and PU colleges in the state.

Wistron apologises to workers in Karna

AGENCIES

**Bengaluru, Dec 20:** Nearly a week after violence erupted at a Karnataka factory owned by Taiwan-based Wistron Pvt Ltd that manufactures Apple iPhones, the firm today removed its top executive who oversaw India operations.

“Safety and wellbeing of our team members is always our top priority,” Wistron said, admitting that “some workers were not paid correctly, or on time”. In a statement, Apple said the supplier has been put on probation and it “will not receive any new business before completing corrective actions”.

Last Saturday, several thousand contract workers at the factory near Bengaluru - angered over alleged non-payment of wages - destroyed property and factory gear; the Apple supplier had put the damages at \$7.12 million. Earlier this week, the centre asked the state to look into wage and labour-related disputes, and ensure that investor sentiment is not affected as a result of the violence.

Today, the Taiwan firm said in a statement, “We are removing the Vice President who oversees our business in India. We are also en-

hancing our processes and restructuring our teams to ensure these issues cannot happen again.”

“Safety and wellbeing of our team members is always our top priority and core value at Wistron. Since unfortunate events at our Narasapura facility we’ve found that some workers were not paid correctly, or on time. We deeply regret and apologize to all of our workers,” news agency ANI quoted the firm as saying.

“Our top priority is to ensure all workers are fully compensated immediately and we’re working hard to achieve that. We’ve established an employee assistance program for workers at the facility. We’re working diligently on corrective actions to ensure it doesn’t happen again,” it further said. Wistron is one of Apple’s top global suppliers.

In a statement, the tech giant today said it is placing the firm on probation. “Our preliminary findings indicate violations of our Supplier Code of Conduct by failing to implement proper working hour management processes.

This led to payment delays for some workers in October and November,” the statement read.



A young man sits at Dadar beach in the backdrop of city skyline engulfed in smog, in Mumbai, Sunday

PTI

MASKS MANDATORY FOR NEXT 6 MONTHS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 20:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Sunday said wearing masks will be mandatory for the next six months in the state.

Addressing people of the state on social media, Thackeray said experts are in favour of imposing night curfew or another lockdown, but he is not in favour of these steps.

The CM appealed to people to be careful during the New Year celebrations.

The coronavirus situation in the state is under control, though not completely, he said.

“Prevention is better than cure. Wearing of mask at public places

Hitting out at the BJP for calling him egoistic, Thackeray said he “had ego for the welfare of Mumbai and Maharashtra”

should be made a habit for another six months at least,” Thackeray said.

Those who don’t follow the safety protocol should know they are putting lives of others, who are abiding by rules, at risk, he said.

Asking people to be careful while welcoming the New Year, he said the discovery of a new strain of the



virus in Europe has resulted in lockdown in several countries as

there was no other option.

The chief minister said even

though life is slowly limping back to normalcy in the state, reopening of schools has been a problem.

Hitting out at the BJP for calling him egoistic, Thackeray said he “had ego for the welfare of Mumbai and Maharashtra”.

“Governments come and go, but development is for people and their future generations,” he said.

Thackeray also said his government has been utmost transparent in releasing statistics regarding COVID-19 positive cases and deaths due to the disease.

Maharashtra reported 3,940 new COVID-19 cases on Saturday, taking the state tally to 18,92,707. It also reported 74 deaths due to the pandemic, taking the death toll to 48,648.

Anti-cattle slaughter Bill will hit farmers, tanners

THE BILL WILL HAVE ADVERSE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS ON DAIRY FARMERS WHO ARE ALREADY FACING AGRARIAN DISTRESS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore. Dec 20:** Earlier this month, the BJP government in Karnataka passed the controversial Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill, 2020.

The bill, which replaces the less-stringent 1964 cow protection legislation that prohibited slaughter of cows in the state, bans the slaughter of cattle, whose definition it has expanded to include “cow, calf of a cow and bull, bullock and he or she buffalo”.

The bill, when implemented, will mean a blanket ban on beef in the southern state. The anti-cow slaughter legislation, which was passed amid loud protests by the Opposition, does not only have harsh provisions — 3-7 years of jail or/and steep fines up to ₹5 lakh, and sweeping powers to the police — it is also



set to have far-reaching adverse economic implications on dairy farmers who are already facing agrarian distress. Industries like leather and hotels are also going to take a huge hit.

Butchers in Shivajinagar beef market in central Bengaluru, which is one of the largest beef markets

in the city, are worried. The market supplies meat across the city, from smaller hotels to star hotels, besides getting hundreds of customers who buy fresh meat every day.

Behind the beef market is a small lane that leads to the office of Beef Merchants’ Association of Karnataka, where Khasim Aijaz

Quraishi, the president of the association, is in a meeting with the members. The bill, if implemented, Quraishi said, will impact the livelihood of more than 40 lakh people in the state who are dependent on beef and related trade.

Quraishi believes this is a politically motivated bill. “The government says they will protect cows, but see the condition of cow shelters. Cows are suffering and dying there.” The 2020 Bill is a harsher version of a law passed by the BJP in 2010 with BS Yediyurappa as chief minister. It aimed at banning all forms of cattle slaughter by recommending stringent penalties for violators.

The bill was shelved in 2013 by the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government after it failed to get the Governor’s assent. The Congress had then reverted to the Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Preservation of Animals Act, 1964,

which banned killing of any cow or calf of she-buffalo. It, however, had certain relaxations — like it allowed slaughter of bullock, buffalo-male or female if it was certified by a competent authority to be above the age of 12 years, incapacitated for breeding or deemed sick.

Rushtum Shafiyya, secretary, Beef Merchants’ Association of Karnataka, said, “We follow the 1964 Act and have never indulged in slaughtering cows. Bullocks and buffalos aged above 12 years are slaughtered in the presence of veterinarians deputed by the Animal Husband Department or BBMP local civic body.”

Quraishi also highlighted that beef is consumed by a large number of people from low-income groups for its nutritional value, especially protein. “Beef is poor people’s meat since they cannot afford mutton and chicken,” he said.

Minister hints at free vaccine

AGENCIES

**Bangalore, Dec 20:** Karnataka is likely to join the list of a few Indian states that have announced that the coronavirus vaccine will be distributed free of cost in the state.

Hinting at the same, Health and Medical Education Minister K Sudhakar said, “Either the Government of India or the Government of Karnataka or both together will ensure that the (costs of the Covid-19) vaccine to be rolled out will be taken care of in the interest of the people. Money is not an issue.”

He was responding to queries raised by reporters in Bengaluru citing neighbouring state Kerala’s recent promise of free Covid-19 vaccination for all in the state. Sudhakar also claimed that the state government has been taking proactive measures to ensure the pandemic is handled well.

“Right from Day 1, we have been offering free tests and treatment to



many. We have tested over 1.2 crore people in the state for coronavirus free of cost. The government is proactive and committed to handling this pandemic,” he said.

Meanwhile, the minister also reiterated that people should avoid New Year celebrations where they gather in huge numbers to avoid a further uptick in the rate of new Covid-19 cases in the state.

“Thousands congregate in congested places usually for New Year celebrations, especially in areas of Bengaluru and other urban areas, in a claustrophobic atmosphere. This should be avoided and the government has taken all measures to discourage such events this time,” he said.



## of the day quote

The opposition parties and some other organisations have been misleading the farmers. Some farmer groups, instigated by these opposition parties, have been protesting against the new farm laws

**SURESH BHARDWAJ** | HIMACHAL PRADESH URBAN DEVELOPMENT & COOPERATION MINISTER

The festival of democracy ended yesterday (Saturday) and I am hopeful that this will prove a milestone in the development of J&K. The turnout of electorates (in all eight phases of the DDC polls) makes one thing clear that everyone participated enthusiastically to strengthen the democracy at the grassroots level for the development and taking the Union Territory to new heights

**MANOJ SINHA** | JAMMU AND KASHMIR LT GOVERNOR

The saga of India's freedom struggle is replete with the heroic tales of many great and ordinary men and women and the selfless sacrifices made by them to liberate the country from an oppressive colonial rule

**M VENKAIAH NAIDU** | VICE PRESIDENT

## SHORT TAKES

### CRPF jawan injured

**Srinagar:** Militants hurled a grenade on a security forces' party in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir Sunday, injuring a jawan, police said. The militants hurled the grenade on a team of CRPF personnel at Achabal area in the district around 6.50 pm, a police official said. A CRPF jawan was injured in the blast, the official said, adding that further details were awaited.

### Sex racket busted

**Thane:** Four women were rescued and one person arrested after a sex racket was busted in Kalyan area of Thane district, police said Sunday. A raid was conducted in Kolshewadi on Saturday evening after a tip off and one Mohan Barman (33) was arrested for forcing the four women, all in their 20s, into the racket, said police PRO Suvarna Adsule. A case has been registered under IPC and Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, the official added.

### Man kills father

**Nagpur:** A 22-year-old man allegedly killed his father with an axe in Nagpur's Ramtek area as the latter was an alcoholic who routinely fought with kin, police said Sunday. Rohit Chinchulkar killed his father Ganpat after the latter came home drunk on Saturday night, a Ramtek police station official said.

### 5-yr-old girl raped

**Hamirpur (UP):** A 16-year-old boy has been detained by police for allegedly raping his five-year-old niece in the Kotwali police station area of Hamirpur district. Superintendent of Police, Narendra Kumar Singh, said, "On Saturday afternoon, the five-year-old girl was playing at the door of her house, when her 16-year-old uncle, on the pretext of giving her a biscuit, took her to his house and allegedly raped her."

### Air quality very poor

**Noida (UP):** The average air quality deteriorated and was recorded "very poor" in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad, while it was "poor" in Gurgaon and Faridabad, according to a 24-hour data issued by a government agency Sunday.



There is more Muslim population in India than Pakistan, therefore the minority status of the Muslims should be abolished with immediate effect. Muslims should now consider themselves to be the younger siblings of the Hindus and live with them in the country

**SAKSHI MAHARAJ** | BJP MP FROM UNNAO

## UNCERTAINTY OVER BOARD EXAMS

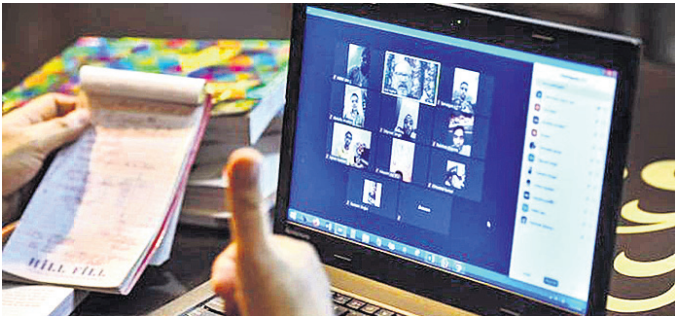
# SCHOOLS CONDUCT PRE-BOARDS ONLINE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** With no clarity yet on dates of board examinations next year, several schools are already conducting pre-board exams in online mode to ensure that students are fully prepared in time.

While the Ministry of Education (MoE) is yet to take a call on the dates of board exams for class 10 and 12, it has already clarified that the exams will be in pen and paper mode only.

Schools in Delhi are restricting to online exams while those in Gurgaon, Ghaziabad and Noida are also planning exams in blended mode as per easing of restrictions by respective state governments. "The CBSE conducted the NEET and JEE exams in 2020 during the pandemic in offline mode. This strongly indicates that students of grade 10 and 12 should prepare themselves for an offline examination. We managed to conduct pre-board exams in online mode, keeping in consideration safety



and security of staff and students.

"However, that amount of practice is not enough for pupils, we are exploring adopting offline mode of conducting exams as per the CBSE guidelines," said Priyanka Barara, Principal, MRG School, Rohini. According to Pallavi Upadhyaya, Principal, DPS-RNE Ghaziabad, the school has conducted online exams for pre-boards but is also planning to hold physical exams in January.

"Amidst the pandemic, we have been able to complete the academic syllabi for board classes and have con-

ducted the first pre-board examination virtually as per the CBSE guidelines issued according to the paper pattern. "We have conducted virtual sessions with students and parents and have ensured a fair exam. Our system has been designed to keep the exam fair for the invigilator and students," she said.

Upadhyaya said the question papers in PDF format are shared on MS platform and the students are given 3.5 hours to attempt the paper. "After attempting the paper, the students are directed to scan and email the answer sheets to the re-

spective teachers. However, the school certainly is planning to conduct the second pre-boards physically at school in January," she said.

Rashmi Biswal, principal, DAV Public School, Pushpanjali Vihar, said, "Most board exams are of 80 marks so we want to give students the practice of writing the whole exam and to make the experience simpler for them we have decided to divide each paper into two parts, so students can write and submit both parts in one day with an interval in between, or on two separate days."

"We were able to successfully conduct our first set of pre-board exams in online mode around the beginning of December. The upcoming pre-board exams are planned in offline mode along with practical tests. We will be ensuring full safety guidelines related to distancing and hygiene, and would expect the same cooperation from students and teachers as well," said Sangeeta Hajela, Principal, Delhi Public School Indrapuram.



## PM OFFERS PRAYERS AT GURUDWARA RAKAB GANJ

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise visit to Gurudwara Rakab Ganj Sunday and paid tributes to Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh guru, for his supreme sacrifice

# Bengal wants to get rid of infiltration: Shah



Amit Shah during a roadshow ahead of West Bengal Assembly polls 2021, at Bolpur in Birbhum district  
PTI PHOTO

AGENCIES

**Bolpur (WB), Dec 20:** People of West Bengal are yearning for change as they want to get rid of political violence, corruption, extortion and Bangladeshi infiltration. Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Sunday, attacking the Mamata Banerjee government. Addressing people during a roadshow in this town associated with Bengali cultural and literary icon Rabindranath Tagore, Shah vowed to restore the state to its old glory when it was called "sonar Bangla" (Bengal of gold) if the BJP is voted to power.

"I have attended and organised several roadshows in my life but have never seen one like this. This roadshow is a reflection of people's anger against the Mamata Banerjee government. This crowd reflects people's faith in the agenda of development of Narendra Modi Ji," Shah told the massive gathering at the roadshow. He said the yearning was not about changing a political leader but "getting rid of corruption, political violence, extortion and Bangladeshi infiltration".

Shah also slammed the Mamata Banerjee government over the recent attack on BJP chief J P Nadda's convoy, and asserted the Centre had the right to summon state IPS officers responsible for providing him security for central deputation. He alleged Banerjee had failed to control the law and order situation in the state, which was rapidly falling on all development in-

dices. Shah, while addressing a press conference here, said Banerjee and the ruling TMC were raking up the "outsider-insider" issue to divert public attention from the failures of the state government.

"The Centre is well within its rights to send a letter (summoning IPS officers for central deputation) to state government...If they have any doubt they can go through the rule book," Shah said.

On the "insider-outsider debate", Shah said a son of the soil will become the chief minister in West Bengal if BJP is voted to power. "I think Mamata di has forgotten a few things. When Mamata di was in Congress did she call Indira Gandhi an outsider? Did she use to term for Prime Minister P V Narashima Rao? Is she trying to create a country where people of one state are not allowed in other states?" he said.

Shah paid homage to Rabindranath Tagore during a visit to the Vishva-Bharati on Sunday, crediting the Nobel laureate for turning Shantiniketan into a centre for cultural exchanges. He said that as the Vishva-Bharati nears its centenary year, Tagore's teachings should spread across the world, helping Indian knowledge and culture achieve international acclaim through his works. "Tagore has not only enriched the philosophy and literature of India, but also made Shantiniketan a base for connecting Indian culture with that of many other countries," Shah told reporters at the end of his two-hour-long visit to the central university.

## BEAUTY AT WORK



A honey bee sucking nectar from a flower at a park in Agartala

UNI PHOTO

# IMA moves SC over 'mixopathy'

INDO-ASIA NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has moved the Supreme Court against a Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) order to authorise postgraduate practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda system of medicine to be trained to perform general surgical procedures.

"The petition was filed Saturday to urge the court to set aside or quash the amendment to regulations to the Postgraduate Ayurveda Surgery by CCIM and declare that the council does not have the powers to include modern medicine in syllabus," IMA President Dr Rajan Sharma said.

The central government had allowed PG students of Ayurveda to perform various kinds of general surgery and medical procedures, including orthopaedic, ophthalmology, ENT and dental, by notifying an amendment in a gazette notification the CCIM issued in November.

The latest amendment allows PG Ayurveda students to receive for-



mal training for such procedures. The training modules for surgical procedures will be added to the curriculum of Ayurvedic studies.

The CCIM amended the Indian Medicine Central Council (Postgraduate Ayurveda Education) Regulations, 2016, to include the aforementioned regulation to allow the PG students of Ayurveda system to practice general surgery.

Thee move has drawn a lot of criticism from doctors of modern medicine, leading to a series of protests by IMA members across the country this month. Lakhs of doctors, including those employed in government hospitals, wore black armbands at work and hit the streets

in small groups to agitate against the CCIM's notification. The IMA has been openly opposing such policy moves by the Centre, especially the plan to mix modern medicine with the traditional systems of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) in coming years. Sharma had earlier said that an integrative system of medicine would create a "khichdi medical system" and produce hybrid doctors.

The apex body of private practitioners of modern medicine had also condemned the Centre's ambitious 'one nation one system' policy in medical education and called it a cocktail of disaster.

# Man flees after marrying two women in five days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Khandwa, Dec 20:** A 26-year-old software engineer allegedly married two women in five days in Madhya Pradesh and then fled, police said Sunday.

Based on a cheating complaint filed by a woman's family here on Saturday, the police are conducting a probe into the matter. Khandwa's Kotwali police station inspector B L Mandloi said.

The accused, resident of Musakhedi area in Indore, allegedly married a woman in Khandwa December 2 and another woman at Mhow in Indore on December 7, the official said quoting the complaint.

According to the complaint, one of the Khandwa victim's relative who had gone to a wedding dinner in Mhow tehsil of Indore sent photographs to her family through mobile phone on December 7 of the accused's second marriage in five days, the

police officer said. Subsequently, the Khandwa woman's family lodged a police complaint here, seeking registration of an FIR against the accused. The complaint also stated that the accused, after marrying the woman here, took her to his place in Indore. After a few days, he told her that he had to go to Bhopal for some unavoidable work, but, he went to Mhow to marry another woman, the official said.

On December 2, the accused had come for the wedding here with his parents, brothers, sister and other relatives, he said. When the Khandwa victim's family spoke to the woman with whom the accused tied the knot in Indore, she told them that her marriage was arranged and not a forced one, as per the complaint. After December 7, the accused did not return home and switched off his mobile phone, Mandloi said. Search was underway for the absconding accused, he added.

# INDIA, VIETNAM EXPECTED TO INK PACTS TODAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** India and Vietnam are likely to seal a number of agreements and make certain announcements to further expand overall ties including in areas of defence, energy and health-care at a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc Monday, official sources said.

The evolving situation in the Indo-Pacific is expected to figure prominently in the talks as both countries have shared interest in a free, open, peaceful, prosperous and a rules-based regional order, they said.

In the summit, the two sides are also likely to issue a joint vision for future development of 'India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' with an aim to chart a new course of enhanced cooperation in a range of areas, they said.



## KCR back to old games

After a virtual drubbing at the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation polls, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao is back at his old games. He is trying to tell the BJP that he was never against the party and that his real fight is with the Congress. KCR had managed to convince the Congress high command way back in 2014

that he would merge his Telangana Rashtriya Samiti if his demand for the creation of the Telangana state, by bifurcating Andhra Pradesh, was fulfilled. Just ahead of the 2014 general elections, the United Progressive Alliance government agreed to divide Andhra Pradesh. But what he actually did? KCR went on to finish off the Congress in Telangana by refusing to merge. Instead, he took the credit of creating a separate state and in the process virtually destroyed the Congress in the state. Now he is doing the same with the Prime Minister and the BJP. The unexpected performance of the BJP in corporation polls seems to have brought KCR on his knees now. He came to Delhi last week for a three-day visit and went about meeting top BJP ministers. He was photographed presenting a shawl to the home minister, Amit Shah. Incidentally, Shah is the same

person who had launched a bitter attack on KCR seeking to make the BJP the main challenger to the ruling TRS.

## Yechury new Oppn coordinator

CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury seems to be emerging as the new coordinator of the Opposition parties against the BJP. Though certain media reports said Rahul Gandhi was the chief architect of the Opposition leaders calling on the President together. It now surfaces that it was not Rahul Gandhi but Sitaram Yechury who coordinated these efforts and took the first initiative. Normally, veteran socialist Sharad Yadav used to coordinate such efforts. But he has been hospitalised for two months due to Covid and related health issues. The death of Ahmed Patel

was another body blow to the Opposition who had a following cutting across party lines. The Congress has not chosen to appoint anybody for the role played by Patel. It was at this juncture that Sitaram Yechury donned the mantle.

## Modi's solo show

Prime Minister Modi is creating a history and wants to leave behind a historic mark. After he singularly stole the show at Ayodhya by laying the foundation stone of a massive Ram temple this year, he went on to build a new Parliament House building complex. In Ayodhya, he took the plea that it was the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas which invited him to lay the foundation stone. It was also explained that if L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and other seniors were not invited to

the event, the question better be addressed to the Nyas. Eyebrows were raised in the absence of the President, Ramnath Kovind also. But it was explained by the Lok Sabha Secretariat that the President had been overlooked by the members of the Gandhi family on two previous occasions. First when the foundation stone-laying ceremony Parliament Annexe building was laid by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The President was not present when she laid the foundation stone. The President was not present when late Rajiv Gandhi laid the foundation stone of the Parliament's library building. While the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Om Birla was present and Deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha was also witness to the ceremony, they were not part of the foundation stone pooja. Why M Venkaiah Naidu did not show up for the

prayer meeting continues to baffle the political class.

## The Sikh factor

The BJP is facing a huge problem handling the farmers' agitation primarily from Punjab initially and now from other states. The BJP's handicap is the absence of any prominent Sikh leader to talk to these farmer groups from Punjab. Navjot Singh Sidhu quit the party in utter disgust and senior Lok Sabha MP SS Ahluwalia is being kept at arm's length by the Modi establishment for some strange reasons. Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri is Modi's most-trusted person. But he was a career diplomat before becoming a Minister. The Akalis are no more with the BJP. Secondly, the Sikhs can't be treated the way CAA protesters were dealt with.



## of the day quote

Why hasn't Modi uttered a single word? Why is our Prime Minister 'maun' (silent)? Our 'annadatas' (food providers) are sitting on the Delhi borders along with their wives and children in one of the coldest winters Delhi has experienced, but our Union Home Minister Amit Shah has no time for them but has time to go to West Bengal

SHAMA MOHAMMED | CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar will likely meet farmer unions agitating at the borders of the national capital for repeal of three farm laws in a day or two

AMIT SHAH | HOME MINISTER

It is a matter of pride for Madhya Pradesh that the state has emerged as a leading state in India in the field of investment promotion

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | CHIEF MINISTER OF MADHYA PRADESH

## SHORT TAKES

### TDB makes nCoV test mandatory

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Devotees visiting the hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala must carry a COVID-19 negative certificate after undergoing an RT-PCR test, the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) which manages the temple said Sunday. TDB President N Vasu said the RT-PCR test certificate, taken not more than 48 hours prior to their visit to the temple, is must for pilgrims from December 26. "COVID-19-negative certificate after a RT-PCR test, taken not more than 48 hours prior to their visit to the temple, is a must for the pilgrims to visit the shrine."

### Constable hangs self

**Raigarh:** A constable allegedly hanged himself from a tree in Uradana area of Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district Sunday morning, police said. Dipak Minj, a native of neighbouring Jashpur district who was posted in Ajak police station, was found hanging in the Police Lines, an official said. "He was on leave for the last one month. No suicide note has been found from the spot. We have registered an accidental death case and further probe is underway," he added.

### Cop killed

**Thane:** A 31-year-old constable was killed in Bhiwandi area of Thane district after a speeding vehicle knocked down his motorcycle, police said on Sunday. Satish Chavan, attached to Bhiwandi taluka police station, was on his way to his home in Kharigaon at around 11:30 pm on Saturday when the accident happened at Mankholi bridge on Mumbai-Nashik highway, sub inspector SB Ganeshkar of Narpoli police station said.

### Freedom fighter dies

**Bikaner (Rajasthan):** Hariram Dhaka, a 105-year-old freedom fighter from Churu district in Rajasthan, passed away and his mortal remains were cremated with state honours at his native village Sunday. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his predecessor Vasundhara Raje expressed their condolences on Dhaka's demise. Dhaka died Saturday, his grandson Baldev Dhaka said.



In a major relief to central government pensioners amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the date for submission of life certificate has been extended up to February 28 next year

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

## Revamp forest department in Delhi: NGT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the authorities concerned to revamp the forest department in Delhi appropriately for the protection of environment and a meaningful enforcement of the rule of law.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel took note of a report filed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Department of Forests on the issue of filling of posts. According to the report, the sanctioned posts were taken out of the purview of the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB) and the Department of Forest and Wildlife, Government of NCT of Delhi undertook the process of recruitment of a total of 226 vacant sanctioned posts of four forest rangers, 211 forest guards and 11 wildlife guards.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** Cold wave conditions continued across north India on Sunday, with most places in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh experiencing sub-zero temperatures and Delhi recording the season's lowest temperature so far.

The national capital recorded the coldest morning of the season so far at 3.4 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

On Saturday, the minimum temperature at the Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, had settled at 3.9 degrees Celsius. "The observatory recorded a minimum of 3.4 degrees Celsius, five notches below normal, on Sunday morning. The maximum temperature is likely to settle around 22 degrees Celsius," an IMD official said. The

## INDIA-B'DESH BORDER TALKS TO BE HELD IN GUWAHATI

The 51st director general-level border coordination conference between the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be held in Guwahati from December 22 to 26, an official statement said



## GATKA SKILL



A young Sikh practices gatka during farmers' sit-in protest against the Centre's farm reform laws, at Delhi-UP border in Ghaziabad

PTI PHOTO

# North India reels under cold wave



mercury dipped to 3.3 degrees Celsius at Lodhi Road as icy winds from the snow-laden Western Himalayas barrelled through the city, the IMD said. There was some improvement in the minimum temperatures across Kashmir on Sunday but the valley continued to experience sub-zero nights, even as the 40-day harshest winter period -- "Chillai-Kalan" -- starts from Monday, MeT officials said. The night temperature rose slightly across the

valley owing to a cloud cover, but the minimum still settled below the freezing point, they added. Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 6.2 degrees Celsius, slightly up from the previous night's minus 6.6 degrees Celsius, the officials said. Icy winds swept through the hills of Himachal Pradesh as several places recorded sub-zero temperatures, the meteorological department said. The tribal district of Lahaul-Spiti's

administrative centre, Keylong, continued to be the coldest place in the state at minus 11 degrees Celsius, Met centre, Shimla Director Manmohan Singh said.

Keylong, Kalpa, Manali and Mandi shivered at sub-zero temperatures in the last 24 hours. The cold wave conditions sweeping Punjab and Haryana for the last few days continued unabated, with Adampur recording a minimum temperature of zero degree Celsius, the IMD said.

While Adampur was the coldest place in Punjab, Amritsar too reeled under an intense chill, recording a low of one degree Celsius. In Haryana, Narnaul was the coldest place, recording a low of 2.4 degrees Celsius.

Cold wave conditions prevailed in Rajasthan too, with the state's only hill station, Mount Abu, recording a low of minus 1.5 degrees Celsius, the IMD said.

## CBSE board exams' schedule on Dec 22

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** The schedule of Central Board of Secondary Education exams for Classes 10 and 12 proposed to be held next year through the paper-pen mode is likely to be announced Tuesday, official sources said.

Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank is expected to make the important announcement regarding the examination dates. As part of the central government initiative to conduct examinations on time amid the pandemic, the Minister has planned a three-way dialogue with the students, parents and teachers across the country. CBSE officials have clarified that there is no proposal to hold the board exams online.

Authorities have been holding discussions this year with students, parents and teachers regarding the board exams even as schools and colleges across the country are in the process of resuming normal classroom teachings for various classes in December 2020 and January 2021.

## Govt plans to measure depth of Himalayan glaciers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** As global warming affects the Himalayas, the Ministry of Earth Sciences is planning to measure the depth of glaciers in the region to assess their volume and gauge the water available in them, officials said Sunday.

The project will start next summer, sometime in June-July, said, M Rajeevan, the ministry's secretary. Ravichandran, the Director of the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), which will execute the project, said the country's remote and high-altitude research centre, Himansh, is also studying the Himalayan climate.

The centre was established in 2016. "The plan is to first study seven glaciers in the Chandra river basin," he said.

The Chandra river is a major tributary of the Chenab river which itself is a tributary of the Indus. The Himalayan glaciers are



a major source of water for rivers originating from there. The Himalayan rivers are also a lifeline for the Indo-Gangetic plains, home to several million people.

The NCPOR director said while the area of the glaciers is already known with the help of satellites, what needs to be known is the volume. "The purpose of studying the depth of the glaciers is to understand the volume. This will also help us understand the availability of water and whether the glaciers are increasing or shrinking," Ravichandran added.

# Nirav's brother charged in \$2.6mn fraud in New York

AGENCIES

**New Delhi/ New York, Dec 20:** Nehal Modi, the brother of fugitive jewellery merchant Nirav Modi, has been charged by a New York prosecutor in an alleged \$2.6 million fraud carried out through a multi-layered scheme to cheat one of the world's biggest diamond companies.

Announcing the charges against Nehal Modi on Friday, the prosecutor, Cy Vance, said, "While diamonds maybe forever, this flawed scheme was not, and now Mr Modi will face the clarity of a New York Supreme Court indictment."

Modi was charged in the state supreme court with "grand larceny in the first degree" for allegedly "fraudulently obtaining over \$2.6 million worth of diamonds from a diamond wholesale company located in Manhattan," said Vance, who is the prosecutor for the city's Manhattan district.

The crime of grand larceny in the first degree under New York State



laws is theft involving more than \$1 million and it carries a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison.

According to the New York Post, Modi told the court he was not guilty of the charge and was released without bail.

In a short video on the Post site, Modi is seen walking with a man who may be his lawyer in what appears to be the corridor of a court building. Asked about the case, he replied, "There's nothing about the case."

Asked about the Interpol notice, the man accompanying him, said, "We are not discussing anything

about the case, I told you that." Nehal Modi is wanted in India in connection with an alleged Rs 13,500 crore (about \$1.9 billion) fraud involving the Punjab National Bank, and at the request of India the Interpol has issued a Red Notice, which is a request to law enforcement worldwide to arrest him pending extradition.

Under the judicial procedure in New York, the prosecutors first presented the case to a grand jury -- a panel of citizens -- to determine if there was a prima facie case to proceed with prosecution. The grand jury indicted him -- a finding that there were enough grounds to charge him.

The alleged crime goes back to 2015 when Nehal Modi asked a company identified as LLD Diamonds USA to obtain over \$2.6 million worth of diamonds with "false representations", some of which he pawned for loans and sold the rest as steeply discounted prices, the prosecution said in a statement.

# 72% of nCoV-related cyberattacks coming via fake emails

HACKERS ARE USING MULTIPLE TACTICS TO DISGUISE MALICIOUS LINKS AND AVOID DETECTION BY URL PROTECTION SOLUTIONS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** As cyberattacks grow in magnitude globally including in India, cyber criminals now prefer to use Covid-19 in scamming attacks that focus on fake cures and donations, compromising email accounts in Indian organisations.

In fact, 72 per cent of Covid-19-related attacks today are scamming or spear-phishing which is the fraudulent practice of sending emails ostensibly from a known or trusted sender in order to induce targeted individuals to reveal confidential information.

In comparison, 36 per cent of overall attacks were found coming from scammers. "Nearly 13 per cent of all spear-phishing attacks come from internally compromised accounts, so organisations need to invest in protecting their internal email traffic as much as they do in protecting from external senders," according to the report from cloud-enabled security solutions provider Barracuda Networks.

Business email compromise (BEC) attacks are increasing as cybercriminals see how lucrative this type of attack can be. Attackers' exploitation of fears around the COVID-19 pandemic shows how



quickly they can adapt to current events. "A massive 71 per cent of spear-phishing attacks include ma-

licious URLs, but only 30 per cent of BEC attacks included a link," the findings showed.

"Hackers using BEC want to establish trust with their victims and expect a reply to their email, and the lack of a URL makes it harder to detect the attack". According to Murali Urs, Country Manager (India), Barracuda Networks, cybercriminals adapt very quickly when they find a new tactic or current event that they can exploit.

"Their response to the Covid-19 pandemic proved it too well. The organisations in India today are facing increasing threats from highly-targeted phishing attacks," he said. Hackers are using multiple tactics to disguise malicious links and

avoid detection by URL protection solutions. The report took an in-depth look at new tricks being used to successfully execute attacks -- spear phishing, business email compromise, pandemic-related scams, and other types.

"Business email compromise (BEC) makes up 12 per cent of the spear-phishing attacks analysed, an increase from 7 per cent in 2019," the report said. "The organisation must invest in technology to block attacks and provide training to help people act as a last line of defense and avoid falling victim to scammers' latest tricks," said Urs.



## of the day quote

Without projects such as Emergency Family Income and Assistance for Work and Production, poverty rate would be much higher



ALBERTO FERNANDEZ | PRESIDENT, ARGENTINA

More Americans will die from Covid than those who died during World War II. And a failed vaccine program will be the culmination of 10 months of federal failure in managing the Covid crisis



ANDREW CUOMO | GOVERNOR, NEW YORK STATE

The political crisis in Iraq is linked to three issues: power, money, and corruption. We are working to address the crisis from an economic standpoint and with a bold decision to overcome the obstacles of corruption and money



MUSTAFA AL-KADHIMI | PRIME MINISTER, IRAQ

## SHORT TAKES

### Netherlands ban UK flights

**The Hague:** The Netherlands is banning flights from the UK for at least the rest of the year in an attempt to make sure that a new strain of coronavirus that is sweeping across southern England does not reach its shores. The ban came into effect Sunday morning and the government said it was reacting to tougher measures imposed in London and surrounding areas Saturday by British PM Boris Johnson.

### Netanyahu gets Covid vaccine

**Tel Aviv:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was vaccinated against the novel coronavirus on a live television broadcast. Netanyahu and Health Minister Yuli Edelstein received the shot at Sheba Medical Center in Tel Aviv Saturday evening, reports Xinhua news agency. Netanyahu was the first Israeli to receive the vaccine, hours before a major roll-out of the vaccinations was to begin in the country. "This is a great day," Netanyahu said.

### Pak summons Indian diplomat

**Islamabad:** Pakistan Sunday summoned a senior Indian diplomat to register its protest over the alleged ceasefire violations by the Indian forces along the Line of Control (LoC). The Foreign Office alleged that a civilian sustained injuries due to the firing in the Rakchikri Sector Saturday. The Indian side was called upon to respect the 2003 Ceasefire Understanding, investigate this and other such incidents of ceasefire violations and maintain peace along the LoC and the Working Boundary.

### Bomb blast kills 9

**Kabul:** A car bomb blast that rocked Afghanistan's capital Sunday morning killed at least nine people, according to the Afghan Interior Ministry. Interior Minister Masoud Andarabi told reporters at the site of the attack that the attack wounded around 20 others, including a member of parliament, Khan Mohammad Wardak. Andarabi said the lawmaker was in "good condition." The interior minister added that the casualty toll could rise further. The attack happened while the lawmaker's convey was passing through an intersection in Kabul's Khoshal Khan neighborhood.

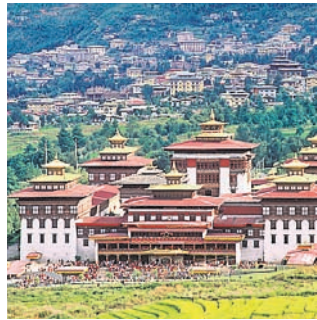


I expect that the Foreign Intelligence Service will continue to respond flexibly to the highly changeable international context, actively participating in identifying and neutralising potential threats to Russia

VLADIMIR PUTIN | PRESIDENT, RUSSIA

### THIMPHU GOES INTO LOCKDOWN

Bhutan's Thimphu, went into a complete lockdown Sunday after a 25-year-old woman, who visited a flu clinic at the National Referral Hospital in the city, tested positive for the novel coronavirus



## COVID IN UK

# MILLIONS ENTER LOCKDOWN AMID nCoV VARIANT SURGE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, Dec 20:** A surge in the infection rate caused by a new variant of coronavirus has led to millions entering a stringent new stay-at-home lockdown in the UK from Sunday, with non-essential shops and businesses now closed. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the new rules at a briefing from 10 Downing Street Saturday evening, which means a planned five-day "Christmas bubble" of relaxed rules has been cancelled in favour of a new Tier 4 level to the current three-tier lockdown system to try and control the surge in infections being caused by the new mutation of the deadly virus.

**UK PM Boris Johnson announced the new rules at a briefing from 10 Downing Street, which means a planned five-day "Christmas bubble" of relaxed rules has been cancelled**

"It seems that the spread is now being driven by the new variant of the virus," Johnson said. "We have alerted the World Health Organisation and are continuing to analyse the available data to improve our understand-

ing," said Professor Chris Whitty, the Chief Medical Officer for England.

"There is no current evidence to suggest the new strain causes a higher mortality rate or that it affects vaccines and treatments although urgent work is underway to confirm this," he said.

The state-funded National Health Service (NHS) is set to vaccinate people against the coronavirus on Christmas Day as part of a drive to accelerate the number of inoculations nationally, according to 'The Sunday Times'. More than 100,000 Pfizer jabs have been booked at general practitioner (GP) surgeries and hospital hubs across the country for the coming week.

Under the new Tier 4, people would be banned from mixing with anyone outside of their household, including on Christmas Day, and for the other tiers, Christmas rules allowing up to three households will now be limited to Christmas Day of December 25 only, rather than five days. The changes will last for two weeks with the first review now due December 30.

The new restrictions - similar to the second national lockdown which ended in November - applies to all areas in the South East which were in tier three, covering Kent, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Surrey (excluding Waverley), Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, Rother and Hastings.

### Pak govt cancels fake licences of 50 pilots



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, Dec 20:** The Pakistan government has cancelled the licences of 50 pilots for flying with fake credentials and authorities will probe how they obtained the certificates through unfair means, the country's Civil Aviation Authority has informed a top court here.

The issue of fake licences surfaced in the wake of the tragic crash of a Pakistan International Airlines plane in Karachi May 22, killing 97 people, when Minister of Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan told the media that 260 of the country's 860 active pilots had either fake licences or had cheated in their exams. Their names were made public to avoid any negative impression about other pilots, including those working outside Pakistan.

Dawn newspaper reported that authorities told the Islamabad high court that under the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, they have reviewed licences of 860 commercial pilots and cancelled 50 of them.

## BRAVING THE COLD



A pedestrian walks amid snowing in Boston, Massachusetts, USA

REUTERS

# China appoints new military commander amid Ladakh standoff

AGENCIES

**Beijing, Dec 20:** Chinese President Xi Jinping has appointed a new General as the Commander of the People's Liberation Army's Western Theatre Command which oversees the China-India border, amidst the military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

President Xi, who heads the Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high-command of the two million-strong People's Liberation Army (PLA), appointed Gen. Zhang Xudong as the Commander of the Western Theatre Command, according to the Chinese media.

Xi has promoted four senior Chinese military and armed police officers. Among them was Gen.



Zhang, Commander of the Western Theatre Command of the PLA, state-run Xinhua news agency reported Friday.

The other officers who were promoted include Guo Puxiao, Political Commissar of the Logistic Support Department of the CMC; Li Wei, Political Commissar of the PLA Strategic Support Force and Wang Chunming, Commander.

The new appointments at the top of the PLA Western Command comes in the midst of the standoff between the Chinese and Indian military in eastern Ladakh since May.

Not much is known about Gen. Zhang, especially his association with Western Theatre Command, as he reportedly served mostly in other theatre commands of the PLA.

He succeeds 65-year-old Gen. Zhao Zongqi who headed the Western Theatre Command during the 2017 Doklam standoff where the Indian Army stood up against the PLA's plan of laying a road close to the Indian border in an area claimed by Bhutan.

# Sydney isolated from rest of Australia as outbreak grows



REUTERS

**Sydney, Dec 20:** Sydney was isolated from the rest of Australia Sunday after all of the country's states and territories imposed travel restrictions on its residents as a coronavirus cluster in the city grew to around 70.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) sent a stern 'do not come to us' message to Sydney, the country's most populous city of more than five million people, warning its residents they would be quarantined for 14 days if they arrived.

"If you are not an ACT resident and have been in greater Sydney...our message is simple: do not travel to the ACT," the ACT health department said. The states of Victoria and Queensland, and the Northern Territory, banned people arriving from Sydney as of Monday.

Queensland police will reintroduce road checkpoints at the New South Wales state border to help enforce the new declaration of greater Sydney as a COVID-19 hotspot.

South Australia state imposed a 14-day quarantine for Sydney arrivals on Sunday and banned travellers from affected suburbs. The island state of Tasmania took similar steps Saturday. Western Australia state imposed a hard border closure.

# South Korea registers highest daily Covid-19 cases

AGENCIES

**Seoul, Dec 20:** South Korea Sunday reported 1,097 new coronavirus cases, the highest-ever single-day spike after staying above 1,000 for five straight days, raising the overall infection tally to 49,665.

The daily number of infections hovered above 100 for 43 days since November 8 due to small cluster infections in Seoul and its surrounding Gyeonggi province, as well as imported cases, reports Xinhua news agency.

For the past week, the daily average number of infections was 986.

The cluster infections were linked to religious facilities, nursing homes and workplaces, as well as gatherings among families and acquaintances.



Of the new cases, 470 were Seoul residents and 244 were people residing in Gyeonggi province.

Twenty-five were imported from overseas, lifting the combined figure to 5,082. Fifteen more deaths were confirmed, increasing the death toll at 674. The total fatality rate stood at 1.36%.

A total of 388 more patients were discharged from quarantine after making full recovery, pulling up the combined number to 34,722.

The total recovery rate was 69.91 per cent. Since January 3, the country has tested more than 3.68 million people, among whom 3,493,954 tested negative for the virus and 139,475 are being checked.

# Pearl murder accused claims he is 'scapegoat': Pak lawyer

PEARL, THE 38-YEAR-OLD SOUTH ASIA BUREAU CHIEF FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, WAS ABDUCTED AND BEHEADED WHILE HE WAS IN PAKISTAN INVESTIGATING A STORY IN 2002 ON THE LINKS BETWEEN THE COUNTRY'S POWERFUL SPY AGENCY ISI AND AL-QAEDA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, Dec 20:** A lawyer representing the parents of slain US journalist Daniel Pearl has produced a handwritten letter in Pakistan's Supreme Court in which the key accused in the case claimed that he was a "scapegoat" arrested under "US pressure" and the real mastermind was a Karachi-based terrorist.

Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for The Wall Street Journal, was abducted and beheaded while he was in Pakistan investigating a story in 2002 on the links between the country's powerful spy agency ISI and al-Qaeda. British-born al-Qaeda leader

Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides were convicted and sentenced in the abduction and murder case of Pearl. In April, they were exonerated by the Sindh High Court and an appeal against their acquittal is being heard in the Supreme Court.

According to a Express Tribune report Sunday, Faisal Siddiqui, counsel for Pearl's parents, has produced the handwritten letter in the Supreme Court in which Sheikh claimed that the real culprit was a militant, Attaur Rehman, from Karachi.

Siddiqui told the apex court that the letter was submitted to the Sindh High Court July 19, 2019. In the letter, Sheikh claimed that

he was "a scapegoat" arrested on the "US pressure" and that the real culprit was Rehman.

The letter was produced during a hearing of the appeals against the acquittal of the four accused in the Pearl murder case. A three-judge special bench led by Justice Mushir Alam heard the appeals of the Sindh government and Pearl's parents, Ruth and Judie Pearl, against the high court ruling.

Siddiqui contended that the bench must consider it. However, the apex court will decide on it on the next date of hearing on January 4, the report said.

Sheikh further said in his letter that he had been in prison under the death sentence since 2002, charged



and convicted for the abduction and murder of Pearl. However, it was on public record that neither did he abduct Pearl nor did he murder him and it had been acknowledged by the US government and by



Pakistan's former president Pervez Musharraf in his book.

Sheikh said his role in this case was a relatively minor one, which did not warrant the death sentence, adding that he had already served

in prison - most of which has been in illegal solitary confinement.

According to the letter, the pressure on the Pakistan government at the time (in 2002) by the US was so intense that Sheikh was used as a "scapegoat" to lessen that pressure.

"Therefore, evidence was fabricated against me to convict me of the abduction and murder of Daniel Pearl," Sheikh claimed.

"Later, when the person (Rehman alias Naem Bukhari) who actually abducted Daniel was arrested, he was not charged with the case because to do so would have exposed the lies and perjured evidence that the Musharraf government used to convict me," he added.



## of the day quote

It's humbling to see over 10 lakh small businesses associated with Amazon in India. This year has been unprecedented and has impacted the way we work and live

**AMIT AGARWAL** | SENIOR VP AND COUNTRY HEAD, AMAZON INDIA

Though 5G is a driver from a technological advancement standpoint, uncertainties on spectrum availability, clear use cases and high prices might restrict its uptake to few bigger cities initially

**SACHIN MEHTA** | MARKET ANALYST, CLIENT DEVICES, IDC INDIA

India sets the benchmark for global fund industry on several fronts, including monthly full portfolio disclosures, which has been further enhanced to fortnightly disclosures for fixed income funds

**KAUSTUBH BELAPURKAR** | DIRECTOR MANAGER RESEARCH, MORNINGSTAR INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### Net enrolments rises 56%: EPFO

**New Delhi:** Net new enrolments with retirement fund body EPFO rose by 56% to 11.55 lakh in October compared to 7.39 lakh in the same month last year, according to its latest payroll data, providing a perspective on formal sector employment amid the coronavirus pandemic. The net payroll additions, however, have registered a slight dip in October compared to 14.19 lakh in September this year, according to a statement by the Labour Ministry.

### Kishore becomes IL&FS exec dir

**Mumbai:** Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) Sunday said the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has approved the appointment of Nand Kishore as the group's executive director. Till now, Kishore was serving on the IL&FS board as non-executive director, the company said in a release. "Based on the recommendation of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee, the IL&FS board in its meeting held December 19, 2020," the release said.

### BoB completes integration

**Mumbai:** State-run Bank of Baroda (BoB) Sunday said it has completed integration of 3,898 branches of erstwhile Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with itself. In a first three-way amalgamation, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank were merged with Bank of Baroda from April 1, 2019. The bank has completed the integration of 1,770 erstwhile Dena Bank branches in December 2020, and had earlier completed the integration of 2,128 erstwhile Vijaya Bank branches in September 2020, the lender said in a release.

### Oriflame records 25% growth

**New Delhi:** Direct selling beauty brand Oriflame has witnessed around 25% increase in number of sales partners in India during COVID-impacted 2020, a top company official said. The company recorded higher growth in sales in the third and fourth quarter, and expects to cover up the loss of business in the second quarter due to imposition of lockdown in the country, Oriflame VP and Head of South Asia and MD of India Frederic Widell said.



**A positive monsoon, strong rural demand and the availability of finance were all indicators of a good economic recovery and buoyant demand, going forward**

**VEEJAY NAKRA** | AUTOMOTIVE DIVISION CEO, M&M

# Need multiple bad banks to address NPA issue: CII to Govt

*In its pre-budget memorandum submitted to the government, the industry body has recommended the government to consider enabling FPIs and AIFs to purchase NPAs*

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has urged the government to consider creation of multiple bad banks to address the adverse impact of non-performing assets accumulated by public sector banks in the recent past, and which have got further accentuated during the pandemic.

In its pre-budget memorandum submitted to the government, the industry body has recommended the government to consider enabling Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) and Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) to purchase NPAs.

CII President Uday Kotak said: "In the aftermath of Covid, it is important to find a resolution mechanism through a market determined price discovery. With huge liquidity, both globally and domestically multiple bad banks can address this issue in a transparent manner and get the credit cycle back in action."

As per the industry body, a robust market-based mechanism will encourage public sector banks to sell their bad loans, without fear of questions being raised later. With cleaner balance sheets, PSBs should be able to raise capital from the market, obviating the need for re-



capitalisation by government, a bill which the government can ill-afford to foot at this point of time, it said. The government has put in ₹80,000 crore in bank re-capitalisation in FY18, ₹1.08 lakh crore in FY19 and ₹70,000 crore in FY20. In September this year, the parliament approved another ₹20,000 crore of capital infusion into PSBs.

So far, the NPAs have largely been sold to Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs). Due to the limited capital that ARCs have, many sales are made not on cash basis but on security receipts (SR). SR is an instrument wherein the payment is made only upon recovery which means that the sale price is not a 'true sale'.

A CII statement on Sunday said that based on recent RBI data on outstanding SRs, industry estimates

that the net recovery rate of ARCs is low and may be in the range of only around 10-12 per cent. The outstanding SRs are ₹1.46 lakh crore. This represents the "non-cash" consideration received by banks against sale of loans, it noted.

The low recovery rates and the sale on the basis of SRs is not a very attractive proposition for banks. The best way to achieve true price discovery and better realizations is to open the buy side and enable a clear path for capital to flow for purchase of NPAs, as per the CII.

The buy side could be opened by allowing FPIs and AIFs to purchase NPAs, it said.

The RBI has already contemplated this in a consultative paper wherein, it has proposed that regulated entities may be permitted to purchase NPAs.

## BMW 2 Series Gran Coupé 'Black Shadow' edition launched



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** BMW Group India launched the new BMW 2 Series Gran Coupé 'Black Shadow' edition. The new limited edition is available in M Sport design scheme which is priced at ₹42.30 lakh. The first 24 customers can avail the special 'Black Shadow' edition kit at an exclusive price.

The BMW TwinPower Turbo diesel engine melds maximum power with exemplary efficiency and offers spontaneous respon-

siveness even at low engine speeds. The two-litre four-cylinder diesel engine produces an output of 190 hp and a maximum torque of 400 Nm at 1,750 - 2,500 rpm. The car accelerates from 0-100 km / hr in just 7.5 seconds.

BMW Safety technologies include six airbags, Attention Assistance, Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) with Brake Assist, ARB technology (actuator contiguous wheel slip limitation system), Dynamic Stability Control (DSC) including Dynamic Traction Control (DTC) and Electronic Differential Lock Control (EDLC), Cornering Brake Control (CBC), electric parking brake with auto hold, side-impact protection, electronic vehicle immobilizer and crash sensors, ISOFIX child seat mounting and integrated emergency spare wheel under the load floor.

## 5G connected cars to take 40% of Chinese market by 2025

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** 5G connected car sales volume in China will reach 7.1 million units in 2025, accounting for 40% of the country's total connected car sales volume, according to latest research.

The sales volume of 4G connected cars are expected to reach 7.8 million units in 2020 to account for 95% of the country's total connected car sales volume, according to Counterpoint Research's Smart Automotive service.

However, with 5G seeing a fast rollout in China and the automotive industry expected to grow faster starting 2021, the share of 5G connected car sales volume will show rapid growth.



"Despite the impact of COVID-19, China's connected car sales volume are expected to reach 8.2 million units in 2020, a slight increase of 0.8% Yo-Y from the 8.1 million units shipped in 2019," said Senior Analyst Aman Madhok.

In terms of the global share, China is expected to grab 26.8 per cent of the sales volume in 2020, becoming the second-largest con-

nected car market.

With a projected share of 30%, the US will continue to lead the market while Europe will take the third spot, but with almost the same volume as China.

The three state-owned telecom operators in China - China Mobile, China Unicom, and China Telecom - are expected to invest around \$184 billion in 5G networks by 2025.

Luxury brands Mercedes Benz, BMW, and Audi have been offering 4G connectivity in most cars since Q1 2019. After Huawei released the world's first 5G telematics module (MH5000) in April 2019, Audi quickly deployed it in its passenger cars and showcased it at the Beijing-Chongli Expressway demonstration in 2019-end.

## With worst behind, FMCG sector optimistic about 2021

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** Crisis brings opportunities. This could not have been truer for the FMCG industry in 2020 even as the world grappled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sector is learning, innovating and rising from disruptions to put the worst behind and looking forward to the new year with optimism and a new-found confidence.

With food, personal care items, especially hand sanitisers and dis-

infectants -- the hero products of the pandemic -- managing to push the industry to post positive growth amid the crisis, in 2021, the FMCG industry is looking forward to carry on with the momentum and sustained revival across categories in rural and urban markets of India.

With lessons learnt on how to navigate through the hurdles and uncertainties thrown up by the once-in-a-lifetime occurrence, the sector is more confident going into 2021, having fast tracked adoption of digital medium for distribution



and realigned product portfolio, such as ayurvedic preventive healthcare items tailored for the new normal.

"2020 has been a year of disruption and learning at the highest

level for one and all. As a business and (as a) team, we have come closer, are more aligned, and continue to innovate to meet our consumers' needs while ensuring the well-being of our people and their families," PepsiCo India President Ahmed ElSheikh told PTI.

As potential COVID-19 vaccine candidates are expected to hit the market soon, he said, "we are cautiously optimistic that 2021 will witness sustained revival and eventually growth. Our focus areas remain on prioritising profitable

channels, diligently managing SKUs (Stock-Keeping Units), further investing in digitisation and driving execution to meet the ever-evolving consumer demand".

In 2021, companies would continue to align their product portfolio in line with the 'new normal' and work on increasing penetration.

Sounding bullish, Parle Products Senior Category Head Mayank Shah said, "the worst is behind for the FMCG sector. We are expecting next year to be a great one for the entire FMCG industry".

## GOLD IMPORTS DECLINE

India's gold imports declined by 40% to nearly \$12.3 billion during the April-November period as demand weakened amid the pandemic, as per Commerce Ministry's data



## ONGC opens 8th hydrocarbon producing basin

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Sunday opened India's eighth hydrocarbon producing basin when it started oil flow from a well in the Bengal basin.

Oil production commenced from the well Asokenagar-1 in 24 Pargana district, the company said in a statement.

"The well Asokenagar-1 was completed as an oil producer under early monetisation plan issued by the Government of India," it said.

With this ONGC has discovered and put to production seven out of the eight hydrocarbon producing basins of India, covering 83 per cent of established oil and gas reserves.

ONGC is India's largest oil and gas producer contributing 72 per cent of the country's hydrocarbon production.



The Bengal basin is spread across nearly 1.22 lakh square kilometres, with nearly two-third of it falling under the waters of the Bay of Bengal. Till now, ONGC has invested ₹3,361 crore to explore hydrocarbon in the Bengal basin, the statement said adding ₹425 crore will be spent on exploration activities in the basin in the coming two years.

## Nayara Energy, Shell Lubricants join hands

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** Nayara Energy, a new-age integrated downstream energy company and Shell, the global leader in finished lubricants, announced a strategic partnership that will provide customers access to Shell Lubricants' best-in-class products, including the premium range of Ultra engine oils at Nayara and Essar fuel stations.

Nayara Energy operates an extensive network of over 5,900 fuel stations across the country. Since October 1, 2020, Nayara Energy is launching new retail outlets with Nayara brand and has already unveiled over 200 new Nayara fuel stations in the country.



CEO of Nayara Energy B Anand said, "The partnership of Nayara Energy and Shell Lubricants will leverage the combined strength of both brands to offer world-class products and services to cater to evolving needs of our customers across the country, while reinforcing Nayara Energy's commitment to excellence across the value chain."

Country Head of Shell Lubricants India Raman Ojha said, "With this partnership, we will also expand our presence in the lubricants market across India bringing our world-class technology products and service offerings to a much larger number of consumers."

## 'NE can be an ideal tourist destination post-Covid'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, Dec 20:** Due to its close proximity with five countries, unique culture and traditions besides picturesque beauty of its mountains and lush green landscapes, northeast India could be an ideal tourist destination post-Covid, experts and administrators said on the final day of the North East Festival (NEF) here Sunday.

The two-day 8th edition of NEF concluded after setting the NE growth agenda as its priority with businessmen, administrators and experts expressing their strong confidence on the travel and tourism industry's revival in post Covid situation, by showcasing potentials of the region.

Assam Tourism Secretary Razvee Hussain said that Covid-19 can be a blessing in disguise.

"All northeastern states can be a great tourism destination. Focus should be on tea tourism where old bungalows can get converted to boutique hotels. Experiencing the life of a tea planter here can be a tourist attraction. Chopper service availability from Guwahati to Kaziranga, Majuli etc will also help the tourism industry here," he said.

Assam Tourism Department Director Deba Kumar Mishra said that focus on local tourism, more from domestic tourists, creatively planned projects for establishments of good tourism would attract and

appeal more people. Mishra said: "Northeast region shares borders of different countries and it is an incredible boon. Assam has 'Chicken-Neck' with West Bengal and five international frontiers along the eight northeastern states are best for tourism. Stress on eco-cultural tourism, flourishing more local commodities, local lifestyle and food could boost the tourism industry."

"One more major focus is in 'Medical Tourism'. Need to wel-



come high level and leading tours from Mumbai, Telangana, Delhi and other big states. We are blessed with resources, we have to think with regional perspective," the Director added.

Budget airliner Spicejet's Chief Operating Officer (Sea Plane department) Santanu Kalita claimed

that seaplanes can bring revolution in the tourism sector.

"Northeast is a God gifted and most beautiful natural land in India. We will see and reflect on the fly plan scheme, Guwahati to Kaziranga to Dima Hasao. We have sufficient eight months to set the fly plan scheme which will result in concern

more in the act of flourishing of tourism," Kalita said

North Eastern Council Adviser R. Lalrodingi, in his address in the valedictory session, said that the local people must get benefits from tourism. Stressing on the creation of community based tourism, he said: "We must think straight and properly organise it. Good marketing is essential.

One main factor to be highlighted is within the northeast area must have an operational area for more organised and systematic tourism. Let people learn more about their own region to speak more about their own region to prepare a good atmosphere for tourists."

In the concluding session, NEF's chief organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta said: "We need support at the initial stage in the tourism sector."



SHORT TAKES

Creditable show

**New Delhi:** Indian women boxers Simranjeet Kaur (60kg) and Manish (57kg) notched up gold medals with contrasting final wins in the Cologne World Cup in Germany. Manish defeated compatriot Sashki 3-2, while Simranjeet got the better of German Maya Klienhans 4-1 to finish on top in their respective categories. India finished the competition at the second spot overall after claiming three gold, two silver and four bronze medals. The event featured boxers from the host country, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Poland and Ukraine.

New additions

**New Delhi:** The Sports Ministry has approved the inclusion of four indigenous sports, including 'Gatka' and 'Kalaripayattu', in the Khelo India Youth Games 2021, scheduled to take place in Haryana. The other two games included are 'Thang-Ta' and 'Mallakhamba'. "India has a rich heritage of indigenous sports, and it is a priority for the Sports Ministry to preserve, promote and popularise these games. There is no better platform than the Khelo India Games where athletes of these games can compete," Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said.

Thuram apologises

**Monchengladbach:** Borussia Mönchengladbach forward Marcus Thuram has apologised for spitting at defender Stefan Posch of Hoffenheim during the Bundesliga game played Saturday. The forward was sent off and now faces a lengthy ban. Hoffenheim won the game 2-1. "Something took place that is not in my character and must never happen. I reacted to an opponent in a wrong way and something occurred accidentally not intentionally," Thuram wrote on Instagram. "I apologise to everyone, to Stefan Posch, to my opponents, to my team-mates and to my family. Of course, I accept all the consequences of my gesture," he added.

Seifert steals show

**Hamilton:** Opener Tim Seifert (84 n o, 63b, 8x4, 3x6) batted brilliantly as New Zealand defeated Pakistan by nine wickets to go 2-0 up in the three-match T20 series here Sunday. Seifert and Kane Williamson (57 n o, 42b, 8x4, 1x6) had an unbroken 129-run partnership to seal the series for the Kiwis. Batting first, Pakistan riding on a blistering innings from Mohammed Hafeez (99 n o, 57b, 10x4, 5x6) had posted 163 for six in their 20 overs. However, the Kiwis, thanks to Seifert and Williamson easily overhauled the target with four balls to spare. They finished on 164 for one in 19.2 overs. Tim Southee (4/21) was the best bowler for the hosts.

In dad's footsteps

**New York:** The guy with a swoosh on his shirt and a Tiger head cover on his driver looked pretty good. So did Tiger Woods. Charlie Woods, the 11-year-old son of the 15-time Major champion, made his national TV debut Saturday in the PNC Championship. And according to his dad, he played just like he does at home. Charlie confidently twirled his club before shots, quickly picked up the tee on his drives and even pumped his fist on the par-5 third hole with a 3-wood into 3 feet for eagle. "I don't really care about my game," Woods said. "I'm just making sure that Charlie has the time of his life. And he's doing that."

Arsenal lose

**Liverpool:** Manager Mikel Arteta's woes deepened as Arsenal were beaten by Everton 1-2 here Saturday. This is the second successive game the Gunners have gone without a win. Everton went ahead through Rob Holding's own goal. However, Arsenal were quick to apologise with Nicolas Pepe converting a penalty. However, Yerry Mina's header on the stroke of half time sealed victory for Everton. The winners were no doubt the better side.

HUMILIATING EIGHT-WICKET LOSS AGAINST AUSTRALIA IN THE FIRST TEST

Drastic changes on cards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** Widespread changes are expected in the Indian team after their humiliating loss to Australia in the first Test. The Men in Blue were bowled out for 36 (their lowest score in Test cricket) as Aussies won by eight wickets to go 1-0 up in the series.

Veteran wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha and opener Prithvi Shaw will certainly be benched in the upcoming Boxing Day Test. Their places will be taken by Rishabh Pant and Shubhman Gill. With Mohammed Shami being ruled out of the remainder of the

series with a fractured wrist, his place will be taken by Mohammed Siraj. On the other hand, KL Rahul will come in place of Virat Kohli as Rohit Sharma will not be in contention till the third Test.

With Saha's batting not giving any confidence to the dressing room, the team management will certainly look at Pant. He had scored a hundred Down Under during his previous tour, as keeping might not be a factor on pitches with firm and even bounce.

Former chairman of selectors MSK Prasad said that during his regime, certain plans were chalked out on the Saha-Pant conundrum. "Look, our committee was clear that Rishabh will be our first choice keeper in places like England and Australia. Only when we are

looking at matches in India where you don't need batting after No.6 most times, you can have a specialist keeper," Prasad said Sunday.

"I believe Rishabh has worked on his fitness issues during the past month and looked in good touch during the pink ball practice game. So I would agree with the team management if they give Rishabh a go for the next three Tests," Prasad added.

The Indian team management could mull bringing Hanuma Vihari up the order in the absence of Kohli. Prasad has seen Vihari from close quarters. He feels it won't be a bad idea to play him at No. 5. "Vihari has a very sound technique and temperament and he can serve this Test team for a long time. In absence of

Kohli closes gap with No.1 Smith

**Dubai:** India may have suffered an embarrassing defeat in the series-opener against Australia but skipper Virat Kohli fractionally closed the gap with top-ranked Test batsman Steve Smith, following his knock of 74 in the first innings in Adelaide. Kohli gained two points for his half century to get to 888 while Smith (911) lost 10 points in the table after scoring one and one in his two innings. Ravichandran Ashwin is now India's top-ranked bowler after taking four wickets in Australia's first innings. Ashwin, now ranked ninth, overtook pacer Jasprit Bumrah who slipped to the 10th spot.

Virat, it would be a great opportunity for him and KL (Rahul) to stand up and be counted," Prasad pointed out.

"I would prefer Vihari batting at No. 4 or 5 in the next few Tests and face the challenge. He is a gutsy boy and I have confidence that he will do well if given the challenge. KL can be a good No. 6 in this series," Prasad pointed out.

Hazlewood finally gets rewarded for his 'Josh'



**DEADLY SPELL:** Pacer Josh Hazlewood (left) leads the Australian team off the field after the end of the India innings at the Adelaide Oval, Saturday

AGENCIES

**Sydney, Dec 20:** Josh Hazlewood has sometimes been overshadowed by his fellow members of Australia's bowling attack. However, at the Adelaide Oval he stepped firmly into the limelight Saturday with a blinding spell that humiliated India in the first Test. He and Pat Cummins were instrumental in dismissing India for their lowest Test score – 36. Hazlewood (5/8) bagged the most economical five-wicket haul by an Australian bowler in 73 years.

The big quick from rural New South Wales bowled three maidens in his five overs. In the process he dismissed Mayank Agarwal, Ajinkya Rahane, Wriddhiman Saha, Ravichandran Ashwin and Hanuma Vihari at the cost of just eight runs.

"(We knew we had) something special going, and I just felt like if we kept bowling in those areas that nicks were going to keep coming," Hazlewood recalled Sunday. "We just didn't let up really. It was just one of those days when everything went to plan, we kept putting it in on that spot and the nicks (edges) kept coming. It happened so quickly, it was over before we knew it," the tall fast bowler added.

The dismissal of Ashwin gave Hazlewood his 200th Test wicket, the

**It was just one of those days when everything went to plan, we kept bowling at the right spot and the edges kept coming continuously**

JOSH HAZLEWOOD

17th Australian to reach the milestone. Hazlewood admitted the Australians had been as surprised as anyone at the quick turnaround of the game. "We were probably a bit more stunned when we came off from bowling," the 29-year-old said. "The mood didn't change too much throughout the whole game to be fair," the pacer added.

Hazlewood's partner-in-crime Cummins (4/21) on the other hand said that he would prefer a similar wicket at the MCG when the Boxing Day Test starts.

"I thought the Ashes Test (2017-18) and the Indian Test at the MCG a couple of years ago were pretty flat wickets," Cummins was quoted as saying by 'cricket.Com.Au'. "As a bowler, last year against New Zealand, it was a really good wicket, a bit of sideways movement and a bit of pace and bounce, so, hopefully, much the same (this year). Then it will be enjoyable to bowl on," Cummins added.

CA prepared for all contingencies

AGENCIES

**Adelaide, Dec 20:** Cricket Australia (CA) said Sunday that the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) remains its preferred venue for the third Test against India after reports emerged that the governing body is contemplating swapping the last two games of the four-Test series due to growing COVID-19 cases in Sydney.

Australian cricket officials were put on high alert last week after an outbreak of the virus in the northern beaches in Sydney, which will host the third Test from January

7. "There were reports that the CA was mulling options and 'swapping the third and fourth Tests between Sydney and Brisbane was the top alternative'.

However, CA's interim chief executive officer Nick Hockley said he is hopeful of staging the third Test between Australia and India at the SCG only

"We have made no changes to our schedule and our preference remains to play the match at the SCG," Hockley was quoted as saying by 'Sydney Morning Herald' in a statement.

"Cricket Australia has devel-

oped a solid track record of delivery throughout this most challenging of summers. We will continue to make appropriate and proportionate decisions in consultation with our bio-security team, governments, state and territory associations, the Australian Cricketers' Association, our partners and venues," he added.

With cases growing, Australia opener David Warner and pacer Sean Abbott – both recovering from injuries – were Saturday flown from Sydney to Melbourne. The second Test begins December 26 at Melbourne.

Burns cleared to play in MCG Test

**Melbourne:** Hit on the elbow during the pink-ball series opener, Australia's Joe Burns was Sunday cleared to play the second Test against India. However, young Will Pucovski was ruled out as he continues to recover from concussion. Burns suffered a nasty blow on his elbow off a Jasprit Bumrah delivery. "Joe Burns has been cleared of serious damage to his arm, while concussed young gun Will Pucovski has been ruled out of a Boxing Day Test debut," a report in 'The West Australian' said. Meanwhile, David Warner has also arrived here and is also racing against time to get fit for the Boxing Day Test.

Ronaldo's brace helps Juventus thrash Parma

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Milan, Dec 20:** Cristiano Ronaldo responded to recent criticism with two goals to help Juventus win at Parma 4-0 in a Serie A game played Saturday. Dejan Kulusevski scored Juve's opener against his old club as the nine-time defending champions moved level with Inter Milan, a point behind leader AC Milan. Both Milan sides play Sunday.

Juventus has drawn half of their 12 Serie A matches. In the last stalemate midweek against Atalanta, Ronaldo had an unusually sub-par performance and a penalty saved.

"Ronaldo was angry for having missed the penalty, but we had a few days to think about it. He showed how much he cares about scoring goals, even better when during open play," Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo said.

Kulusevski was given a start against his old club. The 20-year-old was quickest to react to a low cross from Alex Sandro from the left, knocking it into the far bottom corner in the 23rd minute.

Juventus doubled their lead just



**ON THE MONEY:** Cristiano Ronaldo is delighted after scoring against Parma in the Serie A game Saturday

three minutes later when Alvaro Morata floated in a cross from the right and Ronaldo leapt up high to head it in. Ronaldo had his second three minutes into the second half with an angled drive past Luigi Sepe after being picked out by Aaron Ramsey with a lovely through ball. Morata added the fourth when he headed in Federico Bernardeschi's cross.

BENGALURU FACE ATKMB CHALLENGE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Margao, Dec 20:** An absorbing contest is on the cards when two in-form teams ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) and Bengaluru FC (BFC) face each other in their ISL encounter here Monday. While ATKMB boast of a strong attacking line-up, they have even better defensive statistics. BFC's figures aren't bad either. They are yet to taste a defeat in their ISL campaign so far.

Though aware of the challenge his side face, ATKMB coach Antonio Habaas has his sights set on nothing less than three points. "I think it's impossible to win every match. The teams are more balanced and it's very difficult for all teams to keep on winning three points," said Habaas. "But then the idea in football is to get three points," the Spaniard added.

BFC coach Carles Cuadrat faces a huge task to maintain his unbeaten start against a 'physical challenge' from ATK Mohun Bagan. "ATKMB have a team with very tough players. So we have to take advantage of counter-attacks and open spaces," explained Cuadrat.

HFC suffer season's first defeat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Vasco, Dec 20:** Vignesh Dakshinamurthy pulled off a stunning goal to set up Mumbai City FC's (MCFC) 2-0 win over Hyderabad FC (HFC) in an ISL match here Sunday. Both sides struggle to create clear-cut chances and Vignesh's acrobatic 38th-minute strike stood out as a genuine quality moment. Adam Le Fondre put Sergio Lobera's men further ahead in the 59th minute as Hyderabad tasted their first defeat of the season.

The eagerness that marked much of the game was evident from the fact that Vignesh's goal was the only shot on target in the first half. With Hugo Boumous missing yet again, MCFC's creative struggles continued Sunday as well.

They had the better of Hyderabad in all departments of the game. They dominated possession, peppered the opposition box with crosses and completed many more passes. But for a long time, it looked like a goal would not come.

Bipin Singh was a lively figure in attack for MCFC. The winger, in the 15th minute, whipped in a cross that was headed back into danger by Rowlin Borges at the



**FINISHING TOUCH:** Adam Le Fondre celebrates after scoring the second goal for MCFC against Hyderabad FC, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

far post, only for the Goan to be flagged offside.

But just when it looked like a goal was unlikely, it came in the most spectacular of fashions. A free-kick from Jahouh was met with the deftest of touches by Bipin. He diverted the ball into the path of the onrushing Vignesh. The youngster volleyed it into the net for one of the best goals of the season so far.

Early in the second half, Mumbai increased their lead through Le

Fondre who slotted the ball past Subrata Paul.

In the second game of the day, SC East Bengal (SCEB) drew 1-1 with Kerala Blasters FC at Bambolim. The result meant East Bengal remained winless even after six games. SCEB went ahead when Bakary Kone scored an own goal. However, there was heartbreak for SCEB when in the last minute of added on time, Jeakson Singh scored the equaliser for Kerala Blasters.

YEAR'S FIRST GRAND SLAM DELAYED BY THREE WEEKS

Federer may play in Australian Open

AGENCIES

**Melbourne, Dec 20:** Australian Open organisers are confident they will see a full slate of the world's top players, including six-time champion Roger Federer (in pix), at next year's delayed opening Grand Slam. Tennis Australia and the Victorian state government said Sunday the tournament has been pushed back three weeks to start February 8 after drawn-out negotiations over COVID-19 health security measures.

"We have a commitment from every player in the world to be in Australia," tournament director Craig Tiley said. "Obviously it being the start of the season anything can happen with that entry list, but the commitment is there. Every player, including Roger (Federer), have committed," he added.

Federer had cast some doubt as to whether he would be fit enough for the tournament after he had



two surgeries on a knee injury last year and missed virtually the entire playing season. The 39-year-old Swiss told local media this month that his recovery was behind schedule, but Tiley said he had been in touch with the 20-times Grand Slam champion who had begun his usual pre-season training in Dubai.

"He (Federer) said to us that February 8 was a more suitable date for him in terms of preparing for the Australian Open," Tiley in-

**We have been touch with all the top players. Everyone including Roger Federer is committed to play the Australian Open**

CRAIG TILEY

formed. "But a lot will depend on how he responds to his surgery in the next two to three weeks."

The tournament will charter flights to bring all the main draw players to Australia, with qualifying taking place in Dubai and Doha.

Comfortable wins for Cuttack 'A', ECORSA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** Cuttack 'A' and ECORSA carved out emphatic victories Sunday in Super League matches of the OCA Inter-District Senior Men's T-20 League. Cuttack 'A' defeated Balasore by seven wickets at the Ravenshaw ground, while ECORSA trounced BBSR 'A' by nine wickets at the KIIT ground here.

Balasore were bowled out for 73 in 18.3 overs in the match against Cuttack 'A'. Sunil Rout (4/14), Deepak Behera (2/9) and Saurabh Kanojia (2/10) kept a tight leash on the Balasore batsmen. Chasing a victory target of 74 runs, Cuttack 'A' won the game easily.

In the other game BBSR 'A' were bowled out for 92 in 18.1 overs. Only Shantanu Mishra (42) offered some resistance Suryakant Pradhan (4/19) was the wrecker-in-chief. Kaneswar Barik (43 n o) then ensured win for ECORSA.

After quitting, Amir slams Misbah, Waqar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Karachi, Dec 20:** Pacer Mohammad Amir has held the Pakistan team management responsible for his decision to quit international cricket at 28. He has slammed coach Misbah-ul-Haq and bowling coach Waqar Younis for 'spoiling' his image.

Speaking on his official 'Youtube' channel, left-arm pacer Amir made it clear that his problem was with Misbah and Younis.

"These people have been trying to slowly poison people's minds by saying that I didn't want to play Test cricket and only wanted to play in T20 leagues to earn money. They built a narrative that I had let down the team despite all the investment in me," Amir said.

"They have tried to spoil my image and it takes a lot of hard work to build your image. It was a very hard decision for me but I think the time has come when one shouldn't keep quiet. I took this decision to raise this issue and let people know what is happening," added the pacer.

Amir said that he had made himself available for the two white ball formats after retiring from Test cricket since last year. However, when the current management took over, they had been ignoring him.

"Obviously I was very hurt when they didn't select me even in 35 players for New Zealand. It was shocking and it prompted me to retire," Amir said.

**I have my self respect and I can't compromise on that. I believe in giving and getting respect**

MOHAMMAD AMIR