

RANI ON INCLUSIVITY
 Actor Rani Mukerji says *Black* and *Hichki* were emotional experiences that opened her eyes towards inclusivity and kindness **LEISURE P2**

SAFFRON SURGE
 BJP makes big gains in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation polls, while TRS falls short of majority **TWO STATES P7**

NEW PACT
 The US has approved the sale of \$90 million worth of military hardware and services to India **INTERNATIONAL P10**



Panigrahi now under ED lens

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is likely to probe the huge financial transactions in various accounts of Gopalpur MLA, Predeep Panigrahi. ED officials have sought the copy of FIR registered by the Crime Branch and other documents related to Panigrahi.

Following a request from the Vigilance department, ED has already been investigating into the massive money transactions in the bank accounts of suspended IFS officer Abhay Kant Pathak and his son Akash. Speaking to the media, sources in the ED said that the agency has asked the Crime Branch to provide them with the relevant documents, including the FIR copy, as Panigrahi has been arrested for his links with Pathak and his son.

On Thursday, Crime Branch arrested Panigrahi for allegedly collecting money from job aspirants on behalf of Akash on the pretext of providing them employment at Tata Motors. Panigrahi was later sent to 140-day judicial custody after his bail petition was rejected by the SDJM court Thursday night.

Meanwhile, Abhay moved the Orissa HC for bail Friday evening.

First shots for health workers

Some attendees from the Opposition parties asked the government to include downtrodden in the first list of people to be vaccinated

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Dec 4: The Centre Friday informed an all-party meeting in New Delhi that health workers, armed forces, police personnel, and municipal workers would be the first set of Indians to be inoculated against coronavirus once a new vaccine is ready for distribution in the country.

Besides these, around 27 crore senior citizens, too, would be receiving the vaccine, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan informed the meeting through a presentation explaining India's fight against the pandemic.

The first set to receive the Covid-19 vaccine will be about one crore frontline health workers and the next will be two crore armed forces, police, and municipal personnel, according to Bhushan's presentation, leaders who attended the meeting said.

The all-party meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and included top Union ministers. Some 12 leaders from leading parties with five or more MPs spoke at the meeting, sources said.

There was a minor interruption when TR Balu of the DMK tried to raise the farmers issue and Union Coal Minister, Prahlad Joshi, insisted



ALL-PARTY MEET ON PANDEMIC

against any diversion of the subject matter. Some attendees from the Opposition parties asked the government to include downtrodden in the first list of people to be vaccinated.

Speaking at the meeting, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad said, "Covid-like pandemics can pose a threat to the country's internal security and policy makers should address this challenge".

Addressing the all-party meeting convened by the government to discuss the Covid-19 situation, the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha also said that the country should be

Vaccination drive after scientists' nod: PM Modi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday said that experts believe that the wait for a Covid-19 vaccine will not be long and it may be ready in a few weeks, asserting the vaccination drive in India will begin as soon as scientists give the nod. In his remarks here at an all-party meeting held virtually, Modi said health-care workers involved in treating Covid-19 patients, frontline workers, who include police personnel and municipal staff, and old people suffering from serious conditions would be inoculated on priority. Noting that there have been questions about the price of the Covid-19 vaccine, the Prime Minister said it is natural to have such queries and asserted that public health will be accorded top priority in the matter and states will be fully involved. In his concluding address at the meeting called by the Union government to discuss the pandemic situation, Modi sought to address most burning aspects of the issue, ranging from India's vaccine readiness to its pricing, and reiterated that the country has done better than even some developed countries and those with better health infrastructure in tackling the pandemic.

Fuel prices hiked 12 times in a fortnight

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: Diesel price Friday crossed ₹73 a litre-mark in Delhi and petrol rate neared ₹83 after 12th increase in the last fortnight.

Petrol price was also hiked today by 20 paise per litre and diesel by 23 paise in line with the firming international oil rates, according to a price notification from oil marketing companies.

Petrol price in Delhi rose to ₹82.86 per litre from ₹82.66. Diesel rate went up from ₹72.84 to ₹73.07 per litre.

This is the 12th increase in rates since November 20 when oil companies resumed daily price revision after a nearly two-month hiatus. In 15 days, the petrol price has gone up by ₹1.8 per litre and diesel rate has risen by ₹2.61.

Prior to the November 20 hike, petrol price had been static since September 22 and diesel rate hadn't changed since October 2.

Public sector oil marketing companies - Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd - revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on benchmark international oil price and foreign exchange rate.

PRICES IN BHUB

PETROL: ₹83.49 (+0.20)
DIESEL: ₹79.60 (+0.25)

RBI holds rates at 4% amid high inflation

THE CENTRAL BANK MAINTAINS A MEDIUM-TERM CPI INFLATION TARGET OF 4 PER CENT WITHIN A BAND OF +/- 2 PER CENT

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 4: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept its key interest rates steady as widely expected Friday amid persistently high inflation but said it will ensure ample liquidity is provided to stressed sectors to keep a nascent economic recovery on track.

Its monetary policy committee decided to retain an accommodative policy stance at least for the current financial year and into the next to revive growth on a durable basis, while ensuring that inflation remains within target, Governor Shaktikanta Das said in an online briefing.

Das said the economy was rebounding faster than expected from a coronavirus-induced slump earlier in the year but warned signs of recovery were far from being broad based. Covid-19 infections are also continuing to climb, with the tally now 9.57 million people.

Das said MPC members voted unanimously to hold rates and retain the stance. The key lending rate of the RBI or the repo rate was left unchanged at 4% while the reverse repo rate or the key borrowing rate stayed at 3.35%. "The MPC is of the view that inflation is likely to remain elevated, barring transient relief in the winter months from prices of perishables," Das said.

"This constrains monetary policy at the current juncture from using the space available to act in support of growth."

Indian stocks extended earlier gains to hit



record highs after the decision, while the Indian rupee strengthened slightly to 73.76 against the dollar. The benchmark 10-year bond yield fell 3 basis points to 5.90%.

Das announced measures to help improve access to funding for stressed sectors and said the RBI will take further steps when necessary to ensure ample rupee liquidity to sustain visible growth impulses, without impacting inflation.

"Inflation targeting is uppermost in our agenda," Das said in a post policy news conference. The MPC sees inflation in the current quarter at 6.8% before cooling slightly to 5.8% in the Jan-March quarter. The October projections for H2 FY21 were for inflation between 5.4%-4.5%.

"We believe that improving signs of growth normalisation and elevated inflation in the near term suggest no additional scope for rate cuts," said Garima Kapoor, economist with Elara Capital.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	45079.55	↑ 446.90
NIFTY	13258.50	↑ 124.60
DOLLAR	74.10	↓ ₹0.19
EURO	90.18	↑ ₹0.01
GOLD	₹49,185	↓ ₹117
SILVER	₹63,796	↑ ₹166

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	31.0°C	30.6°C
TEMP MIN	16.6°C	15.0°C
Humidity	90%	82%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

Farmers call for 'Bharat Bandh'

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Dec 4: Hardening their position ahead of the fifth round of talks with the government, agitating farmers Friday announced a 'Bharat Bandh' December 8 and said they would occupy all toll plazas on that day.

Addressing a press conference, farmer leader Gurnam Singh Chadoni said if the Centre does not accept their demands during Saturday's talks, they will intensify their agitation against the new farm laws.

"In our meeting today, we have decided to give a 'Bharat Bandh' call on December 8 during which we will also occupy all toll plazas," said

Volunteers serve langar to farmers protesting at Delhi-UP border over Centre's farm reform laws, in New Delhi, Friday **PTI PHOTO**

Harvinder Singh Lakhwal, another farmer leader.

"We have planned to block all roads leading to Delhi in the coming days if new farm laws are not scrapped," he also said. Delhi's border points re-

Thursday. The farmer community has expressed apprehension that the new laws are "anti-farmer", and would pave the way for dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations.

However, the government has maintained that the new laws will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture.

Meanwhile, a petition filed in the Supreme Court Friday claimed that farmers protesting on the outskirts of Delhi must be removed because they are blocking emergency medical services needed to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

SAOEH Only mall in Bhubaneswar to be certified as SAFE, by Society for the Advancement of Occupational and Environmental Health

lifestyle PROJECT EVE OTRENDS max MARKS & SPENCER BIG BAZAAR

aurelia BIBA indya KAZO COVERSTORY AND GANT

BLACKBERRY'S Latin Quarters earthweave global desi ARROW USA-1851 Levi's spykar

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leisure



BRYAN ON LINGERING EFFECTS OF CORONAVIRUS

Actor Bryan Cranston is still dealing with the effects of Covid-19, and says he is yet to fully regain his sense of smell months after his battle with the virus. During his appearance on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, he opened up about his recovery from the illness, which he contracted back in March.

CHRIS HEMSWORTH: GREAT TO BE BACK ON SET

Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth is back to work, and he is cherishing every moment of it. Hemsworth has started shooting the psychedelic sci fi drama *Escape From Spiderhead* recently, and the actor shared the work update on Instagram with a picture with the film's unit.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are in a position to affect other peoples' lives. Since you are very compassionate and caring, people will look up to you whether as a peer or a superior. Make good use of this excess energy to solve prickly issues. Ganesha encourages large-scale projects.

TAURUS
Ganesha sees you taking a day off from your work and immersing your self in domestic activities. A lot of time will be spent blissfully with your family folk chatting away or doing this and that. The idea of getting your interiors redone and give your house a new look will surely occur to you.

GEMINI
There is a likelihood of some household disturbance cropping up today. Your family members could make a lot of demands from you. You may feel angry because of your inability to meet all their needs and wants. Unexpected expenses are also indicated. You need to control your spending, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Watch out for winds of change and ac accordingly. Ganesha warns you of drowning in a strong current. Your task will be easier if you adjust to circumstances. Fun and entertainment are today's password. In the social sector business, you will have success.

LEO
You are advised to be more attentive to your work today. You will try to do the best work possible by putting in your maximum efforts. However, the results might turn out to be lower than your expectations. You need to be wary of excessive expenses or financial loss today.

VIRGO
In all likelihood you will indulge in some writing or artistic work, which will bring about wonderful results. As you are passionate about these things, you may convert them into your hobbies, if you are not involved in them as a professional. Ganesha gives you the green signal to enjoy the clout that you wield over others with your sweet words.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will give more importance to your family and there may be concerns about the health of a family member. There may be news from abroad regarding the health of a close family member, which may disturb you today. Do maintain your mental balance today and remember that this too shall pass.

SCORPIO
A cloud of emotions surrounds you today and you would like to spend the entire day in introspection and self-analysis. You will try to raise your bar at professional level. Your far sightedness and capability to understand human psychology promises a leader in you, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
You are all set to groom your skills as a professional. Talking about work, determination and dedication are likely to rule you today. Putting your heart and soul, your work speaks volumes about your efforts. Appreciation, though slow in pace, is on its way to encourage you.

CAPRICORN
You'll have apparently no time for anything else, as partnerships and projects will keep you on your toes. Your communication skills and diplomacy will fetch you accolades in meetings, and also enable you to judge a person or a situation correctly, and form the right opinion.

AQUARIUS
You know how to examine the nuts and bolts of every assignment or project, and it consumes your resources to a great extent. But, like a stitch in time saves nine, your meticulous planning minimises the chances of a loss or a failure, feels Ganesha.

PISCES
You could find yourself re-establishing contact with long lost friends abroad, possibly on matters of business. You will also likely find yourself attending social events. There is a possibility that those who are unmarried, may find their match in these social settings.

'Learnt a lot about humanity doing *Black, Hichki*'

Mumbai: Actress Rani Mukerji says she learnt a lot about humanity essaying roles as the specially-abled Michelle McNally in *Black* and the Tourette Syndrome patient Naina Mathur in *Hichki*.

"I learnt a lot about humanity by doing these outstanding, sensitive films like *Black* and *Hichki*. I think these films contributed to making me a better human being and I'm fortunate that I got to do these films and be a part of such beautiful cinematic visions of Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Siddharth P. Malhotra. I hope these films managed to spark the right conversations in society about the need to treat everyone as an equal," she said.

"Learnt about the resolve of people who are determined to triumph despite the odds stacked up against them, their dreams, their aspirations and essaying these powerful girls on screen, made me a stronger human being. I'm grateful that I can talk, see, hear and I realised that, as human beings, we might be taking these things for granted," she added.

The 42-year-old actress says for her, *Black* and *Hichki* were emotional experiences that opened her eyes more towards inclusivity, kindness and gratitude.

"As citizens of this country, we must all do our bit to constantly bring conversations about inclusivity and equality to the fore. Every citizen has rights and I realised that there is a lot of work that we all need to put in individually, to stop discrimination and stereotyping of individuals like those I have portrayed in *Black* and *Hichki*," she said.

ANS



Varun, Neetu, Raj Mehta test Covid positive

Mumbai: Actors Varun Dhawan and Neetu Kapoor, and director Raj Mehta, have tested Covid-19 positive. The stars as well as the filmmaker are part of the unit of the film *Jug Jugg Jeeyo*, which arrived in Chandigarh a few days ago for an outdoor stint.

Shoot has been temporarily halted, as per a report in filmfare.com. The cast and crew had arrived in Chandigarh in the second week of November.

The film's other two lead actors, Anil Kapoor and Kiara Advani, have tested neg-

ative for the virus, informed celebrity photographer Viral Bhayani on his verified Instagram account on Friday afternoon. No other person in the unit is known to have tested Covid positive.

All cast and crew members were tested for the virus, before shoot started in November.

The film also features Maniesh Paul and YouTube sensation Prajakta Koli, who makes her Bollywood debut with the role.

ANS

KANGANA reacts to legal notices against her

Mumbai: Actress Kangana Ranaut Friday reacted to legal notices piling up against her. "Film mafia filed many cases on me, last night Javed Akhtar filed one more, Maharashtra government filing one case every hour now congress in Punjab is also joined the gang.... *Lagta hai mujhe mahan banake he dum lenge* (I think they will take a break only after making me great.) Thank you," Kangana Ranaut tweeted from her verified account Friday reacting to a news piece talking about the legal notice. Earlier, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee sent a legal notice to Kangana, seeking an 'unconditional apology' for her derogatory tweets against farmers and activists involved in the farmers protest against the Centre's three Farm Laws, the committee's president.

"We have sent a

ANS

legal notice to Kangana Ranaut for her derogatory tweet calling the aged mother of a farmer as a woman available for Rs 100. Her tweets portray farmers protest as anti-national. We demand an unconditional apology from her for her insensitive remarks on farmers protest," Manjinder Singh Sirsa, President of DSGMC tweeted.

The notice comes in the wake of a tweet from the actress alleging that the 'Shaheen Bagh dadi' also joined the farmers' agitation over the new agri laws at various border points of the National Capital Region.

She had retweeted the post with pictures of two elderly women, including Bilkis Bano, and wrote that the 'same Dadi' who featured in Time Magazine was 'available in 100 rupees'.

Akshay gets nod to shoot in Ayodhya for *Ram Setu*: Reports

Mumbai: Actor Akshay Kumar will reportedly shoot his next film, *Ram Setu*, in Ayodhya after getting permission from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The actor had met the UP Chief Minister for dinner at the Trident Hotel in Mumbai Tuesday night, according to a government spokesman. The Chief Minister appreciated Akshay's efforts in making films with social messages.

The actor on his part had lauded the steps being taken by the Yogi Adityanath gov-

ernment to promote filmmaking in Uttar Pradesh.

Akshay had announced his new project titled *Ram Setu* in November during Diwali. "This Deepawali, let us endeavor to keep alive the ideals of Ram in the consciousness of all Bharatiyas by building a bridge (setu) that will connect generations to come. Taking this mammoth task ahead, here is our humble attempt - #RamSetu. Wishing you & yours a very Happy Deepawali," he had tweeted.

The film will be directed by Abhishek Sharma, whose *Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari* was the first Bollywood to release in theatres since the lockdown.

Ram Setu is backed by Akshay's production house.

ANS

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

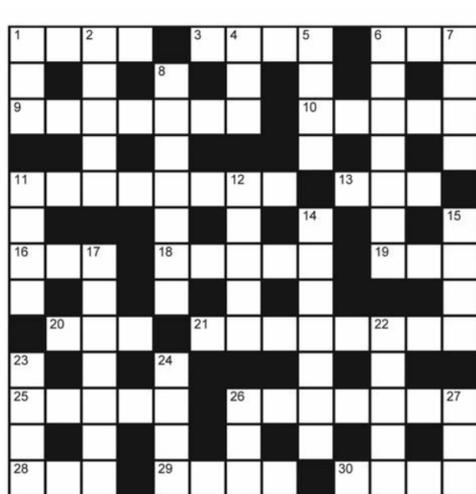


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Backgammon equipment
 - 3 Much of Mongolia
 - 6 Flyspeck
 - 9 Eau de cologne
 - 10 Rustic digs
 - 11 Military strength
 - 13 Milk producer
 - 16 Flow's partner
 - 18 Around that time
 - 19 Hot springs
 - 20 Overhead light?
 - 21 Kind of ad
 - 25 Blink of an eye
 - 26 Thankless wretch
 - 28 Dashed
 - 29 Diving bird of northern seas
 - 30 Kon-Tiki Museum site
 - 6 Doubtful
 - 7 Muscle quality
 - 8 Small hill
 - 11 Bailiwick
 - 12 Hospital figure
 - 14 Corridor
 - 15 Cry like a baby
 - 17 Largest tuna
 - 22 Approaches
 - 23 Not quite closed
 - 24 Vega's constellation
 - 26 Annoy
 - 27 Conceit
- Down
- 1 Party preparation
 - 2 Pool shot
 - 4 Flowery verse
 - 5 Ancient Andean

SUDOKU

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

5	A					7	B	4	
	D		8	1	B	6	7	3	
7		C		4	3	2	9	A	
	0	1			A	B		E	
	E				D	5	6	2	
						1	2	7	3
5	A	B		C	1	0			
A	7	0		2	8		C		
		E	D	4	6		8	2	
C	6	D		E	9	3			
		5		3	E		6	C	2
B			8			4			
4	9			5		E	1	6	7
1	3								
	2	E	7	0		B	A	D	

SOLUTIONS

S	A	U	C	E	F	E	S	T	I	V	E
T	O	W	N	P	U	N	A	G	A	M	A
I	E	R									T
C	O	R	G	I	B	E	E	S	P		
V	T	E	W	L							
C	H	E	D	D	A	R	C	H	E	E	S
U	E	R	I	C							
S	U	E	C	O	Y	S	Q	U	A	B	
T	R	O	P	A	I						
O	S	I	E	R	F	O	E	D	I	N	
M	C	P	R	R	O	G					
S	P	A	S	S	K	Y	S	E	R	G	E

CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

ELEPHANT CORRIDOR PLAN

State pleads with NGT for more time



JUMBO FACTS

Experts claim that if elephant corridor notification comes into effect, the notified areas are likely to enjoy protection similar to the protected areas in tiger reserves

The move would help to prevent exploitation of such eco-sensitive areas by polluting industries and mining

As per the 2017 Elephant Census, Odisha has 1976 elephants and is the fifth state vis-à-vis the number of elephants

In the east central region, Odisha hosts the highest number of jumbos. However, as per wildlife groups, up to 528 humans have been killed by jumbos in the state due to elephant-human conflicts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: Notwithstanding an earlier order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to the state to submit a detailed action plan for notification of 14 proposed 'elephant corridors' in the state, the government again failed to come up with the same.

The government in its latest plea before the NGT has sought another extension for submitting a detailed action plan as per the recommendations of the Asia Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF), which conducted studies on the issue on behalf of the state government. The government, in its defence, cited the need for more consultations with the stakeholders before submitting the action plan. "Government counsel submits that the state requires at least three months more time to prepare the action plan as directed vide order dated 26.03.2020 which was reiterated in the order dated 17.09.2020," the NGT said.

In a written order, the NGT said that as it had given extensions to the government earlier too, it was anticipating that the government would submit the action plan as directed by the tribunal. The NGT has now given the state a "last opportunity" to submit the action plan for establishing 'elephant corridors' in Odisha.

"Considering that the order for the preparation of the action plan was passed on 26.03.2020, which is more than five months ago, it was expected of the state to have expedited the process. However, considering the submissions made by the learned counsel for the state, in the interest of justice, we allow the more time as a last opportunity," the NGT order read.

Earlier, the tribunal, during a hearing March 23, had asked the

state government to submit an action plan within two months. In September, during the next hearing, the state government expressed its inability to file the report despite the tribunal order.

In 2017, the government had told the NGT that the work of assessing habitat viability and ground assessment of the already identified elephant corridors were handed over to the Asia Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF) under an agreement. The ANCF submitted its report January 12, 2018.

Experts claim that if elephant corridor notification comes into effect, the notified areas are likely to enjoy protection similar to the protected areas in tiger reserves. This would help to prevent exploitation of such eco-sensitive areas by polluting industries and mining.

As per the 2017 Elephant Census, Odisha has 1976 elephants and is the fifth state vis-à-vis the number of elephants. In the east central region, Odisha hosts the highest number of jumbos. However, as per wildlife groups, up to 528 humans have been killed by jumbos in the state due to elephant-human conflicts. The conflicts often are said to have triggered due to human interference in the paths of elephants.

STIR GATHERS STEAM



A road blockade by activists of CITU, AIDWA, DYFI and other outfits near Satsang Vihar Square in Bhubaneswar, Friday, opposing the new farm laws leaves many vehicles stranded on the NH-16

HC orders action against police highhandedness

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 4: Hearing a plea alleging police highhandedness during a face mask checking in the Silver City here November 17 this year, the Orissa High Court Friday ordered the Lalbagh police to take action within four weeks.

According to the petitioner's counsel—RK Routray, his client Santoshi Behera was about to put on her face mask after having a scoop of ice-cream in Mangalabagh area here November 17 when a Covid norms enforcing police team stormed towards her.

"As Behera didn't put on the face mask, the police officials began interrogating her. Within no time, the issue snowballed and a mountain was made out of a molehill with the officials manhandling and pushing Behera," Routray said. Behera approached the Lalbagh police with a complaint, but the inspector in-charge of the police station abused her and refused to entertain the complaint as well. Behera later sent a copy of the complaint to the Cuttack deputy commissioner of police though registered post November 23, but to no avail. After getting a cold shoulder from the police, Behera approached the Orissa High Court November 27 seeking justice.

5 FRESH COVID FATALITIES

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: State's Covid-19 tally mounted to 3,20,394 Friday as 377 more people tested positive for the infection, while five fresh fatalities pushed the death toll in Odisha to 1,760, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the new cases, 215 were reported from different quarantine centres and 162 detected during contact tracing.

Khurda district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the maximum number of fresh cases at 56, followed by Sundargarh at 47 and Angul at 28. Three districts—Boudh, Gajapati and Nawrangpur—have not registered any fresh case, said the H&FW department official.

Taking to the Twitter, the H&FW department said, "Regret to inform the demise of five Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

Of the five fresh fatalities, two were reported from Keonjhar and one each from Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri and Nuapada.

Khurda district accounted for 299 of the 1,760 deaths, followed by Ganjam (245), Sundargarh (149), Cuttack (134) and Puri (104).

As many as 53 coronavirus patients have so far died in the coastal state due to comorbidities, the official said.

CMC caps wedding guests at 100

CUTTACK: The Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) has issued a set of new guidelines for organisation of social events in this month by considering the Covid-19 situation in the Silver City here.

Moreover, children below 10 years, elderly persons, pregnant women and people having Covid-19 infections have been barred from participating in social events.

"The Covid-19 situation has improved a lot in Cuttack city in recent days. On an average, the city is reporting around 15 new cases in a day. We are taking all possible steps to improve the situation further," said CMC commissioner Ananya Das.

Notably, the upper limit for wedding ceremony related gatherings has been fixed at 200 by the state government in its Unlock 7 guidelines, while a maximum of 50 people have been permitted to participate in funerals.

The state has so far conducted over 60.60 lakh sample tests, including 40,936 Thursday.

Odisha's positivity rate now stands at 5.29 per cent, the official pointed out. Meanwhile, another 642 Covid patients recovered in Odisha, taking the total recovered cases in

CM unveils sanitation unit in Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday launched several initiatives for introduction of modern sanitation facility in Sundargarh district, through video conferencing mode.

Naveen launched the facility in Rourkela Municipal Corporation and Biramitrapur municipality along with Koida and Kutra blocks. The government has deployed 24 varieties of 190 vehicles and machines with modern techniques to improve the sanitation facility in the towns. A micro-composting centre was also inaugurated on this occasion.

Steps are being taken to minimise human interference and maximise the use of machines in the sanitation works. The government has engaged women self help groups (SHGs) in the work, Naveen said.

With the launching of the new



technologies, people from mining affected areas will be benefited, he said. The Chief Minister also thanked the women SHG members for their contribution to the society in creation of awareness among people about sanitation.

Among others, Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy, Development Commissioner SC Mohapatra, Housing & Urban Development secretary G Mathivathanan and Secretary to CM (GT) VK Pandian attended the event.

Case against Amazon over Nirmalya sale

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Dec 4: Singhadwar police has registered a case against Amazon India for online sale of Nirmalya (Dry Mahaprasad) of Srimandir without getting valid permission from the temple authorities.

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) had earlier lodged a complaint in this regard with the police.

In its complaint, the SJTA had claimed that the e-commerce giant has not received any permission from the temple authorities and the Suar and Mahasuar Niyog of Srimandir for online sale of Nirmalya. It has also alleged that Amazon India is charging high prices for Nirmalya.

Sandalwood worth ₹70L seized; 3 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 4: The Special Task Force (STF) of Crime Branch Thursday night busted a racket involved in illegal trade of sandalwood under Tangi police limits in this district and arrested three persons. Sandalwood worth over ₹70 lakh was also seized, said sources.

Acting on a tip-off, STF personnel reached Dalajodi forest under Tangi police limits where sandalwood was kept by the smugglers. In the process, the CB sleuths also foiled the efforts of the smugglers to sell the sandalwood.

The three arrested have been identified as Hemanta Chhatoi, Kanhu Chanran Bhoi and Dandapani Das. Huge cache of sandalwood weighing around 4.6 quintal and some incriminating instruments were seized from their possession.

Tangi police have registered a case (No. 248/2020 U/s 379/411/34 of IPC and Section 55-C(2) of the Orissa Forest Act 1972).

₹10.75 crore grant for Mo School

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: In the 19th Executive council meeting of the 'Mo School' project headed by Satyabrata Sahoo, principal secretary of School and Mass Education department, the council granted ₹10.75 crore for the project.

This sanctioned money will be distributed in 2,657 schools of 28 districts. This time, around 20,000 alumni contributed to the project. As many as 1,610 schools in 25 districts of the state have joined the 'Mo School' campaign till now and more than 2 lakh alumni contributed to the project.

Youth 'must' find scientific solutions to challenges

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: Science and technology applications have significant impact on society and younger generations must strive to find appropriate solutions to the challenges facing humankind, said Ashok Panda, Minister of Science and Technology here Friday.

He was addressing students and other participants on an online platform while inaugurating the "Virtual Open Day and Science Festival" organized by Institute of Life Sciences (ILS), Bhubaneswar in partnership with Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC).

Panda highlighted various initiatives the state government is undertaking for promotion of scientific education, research and entrepreneurship in the state. He informed that in a bid to encourage scientific temper and creativity among students, the state government will set up science centres and parks in 10 districts in first phase and another 10 districts in the second phase.

He also complemented ILS and RMRC for their contribution to COVID testing and research. The Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar has conducted more than 1 lakh COVID-19 sample tests in Odisha.

Ajay Parida, Director, ILS in his welcome address mentioned that the



two-day festival is a curtain raiser of the India International Science Festival 2020 to be held December 22-25, 2020 organised by Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences on the theme of "Science for Self-Reliant India and Global Welfare."

Parida said that the year 2020 witnessed the world passing through a critical phase because of the outbreak of an infectious novel coronavirus. Scientists the world over have been struggling to find the cure for the pandemic. Needless to say the situation has forced everyone to find the solutions that are essentially local. This science festival will bring an opportunity to demonstrate the strength and potential of India Science and Technology (S&T) to the entire international community said Parida.

Sanghamitra Pati, Director, RMRC mentioned that it is heartening to note that more than 2,500 students from across the state and outside are participating in the event.

Open labs for research work: Saswat Mishra

Bhubaneswar: The Higher Education department Friday decided to permit the higher education institutions (universities and colleges) to open the laboratories, only for research scholars (PhD), M Phil students and Post Graduate students in Science and Technology streams requiring laboratory/experimental work, in adherence to following the Covid 19 guidelines. Higher Education department's Commissioner-cum-Secretary Saswat Mishra, in a letter, informed all the vice-chancellors and principals in this regard Friday.

Women in Agriculture Day celebrated

Bhubaneswar: ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture, Bhubaneswar in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Khurda celebrated "Women in Agriculture Day" here Friday. Among the entire farming community, more than 30% of women are cultivators themselves and more than 45% serve as agricultural laborers. Women in Agriculture Day is celebrated to acknowledge the contribution of women in the field of agriculture, in improving food security and eradicating poverty as women's contribute substantially to agricultural work force (around 50%). Bindu R. Pillai, Head, APED, ICAR-CIFA, highlighted the contribution of women in agriculture and added that women should be aware of the special schemes available for them by the government and banking sectors. K D Mohapatra, Pr. Scientist, ICAR-CIFA, highlighted the role played by women in farming.

Cancer hosp expansion soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 4: Acharya Harihar Postgraduate Institute of Cancer would be expanded as part of the expansion of Sriram Chandra Bhanja Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) here, said Revenue Divisional Commissioner (Central) Anil Kumar Samal Friday.

the coastal state to 3,14,665, the H&FW department tweeted.

The Orissa High Court, the lower courts and tribunals in the state would remain closed on all Saturdays of this month. The HC has issued a notice in this regard recently.

"A private agency from Haryana is drafting a master plan for expansion of SCBMCH and cancer hospital. With the expansion work, SCBMCH would have 3,000 beds and cancer hospital 600 beds," Samal said.

Post the expansion work, both the hospitals would come under one premises, said cancer hospital director Lalatendu Sarangi.

STIR OVER FEES



Students of self-financing courses at Ravenshaw University stage a sit-in near the VC office in Cuttack demanding reduction in fees, Friday

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VIMSAR's ₹16-cr library complex hangs fire

DELAY OF THE PROEJCT HAS LEFT JUNIOR DOCTORS, MEDICAL STAFF AND PROFESSORS FUMING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Dec 4: The state government has announced a library complex on the premises of Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Science and Research (VIMSAR). Although one of the major projects of VIMSAR, its work is being delayed despite no shortage of funds, a report said.

Exact reason for the delay is not yet known but the stalemate in its construction is allegedly blamed on lack of coordination between VIMSAR authorities and the public works department.

According to the report, announcement for the library complex with 1,000 seats was made in April, 2019. The government has even sanctioned Rs 16 crore. The library complex bears much importance for students, teaching faculties and professors of VIMSAR.

The fund is lying unutilized while students, medical staff and professors are deprived of the advantage such a facility could offer them. Meanwhile, Resident Doctors' Association has demanded immediate start of the project.

Sanjib Mishra, president of the Resident Doctors' Association, said, "Students, doctors and teaching



THE JUNIOR DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION HAD SUBMITTED A MEMORANDUM TO HEALTH MINISTER NABA KISHORE DAS IN JULY 2019 AND TOOK UP THE ISSUE WITH ADDITIONAL PRINCIPAL SECRETARY SURESH MOHAPTRA IN NOVEMBER

AS NO STEPS WERE TAKEN FOR ITS CONSTRUCTION WORK, JUNIOR DOCTORS AGAIN RAISED THE ISSUE BEFORE CHIEF SECRETARY ASIT TRIPATHY DURING VISIT TO SAMBALPUR IN JANUARY THIS YEAR

faculties have been facing problem in routine study and updating their medical knowledge in the absence of a library. Earlier, the number of MBBS students at VIMSAR was 500, but now their number has doubled to 1,000. There were only 70 to 80 PG students, but their number has gone up to 340 now. They need a spacious library for routine study."

He added that the old library was closed for want of space during the pandemic. At the time of examination, MBBS students had complained of problems in studying, he noted.

Director of VIMSAR, Professor Lalit Meher said there is a plan for a library complex. "Before I joined here, the dean of the VIMSAR had initiated the process of the

project. But we have to find out why there is a delay in the project," he said.

As for the delay of the project, SDO of the PWD, Seikh Muktar said the blueprint of the project has been drawn as per the cost estimate. After it was approved by the DMET, the blueprint has been sent to the government for approval, he added.

He exuded hope that the work of the project would be taken up soon. Notably, Junior Doctors' Association of the VIMSAR had demanded a spacious library complex. The members of the Junior Doctors' Association had submitted a memorandum to Health Minister Naba Kishore Das while he was visiting VIMSAR in July 2019. Later,

the association had taken up the issue with additional principal secretary Suresh Mohaptra in November the same year. Das and Mohaptra had assured the junior doctors that immediate steps will be taken for construction of the project. However, its construction work did not get started.

The junior doctors again raised the issue when Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy came on a visit to Sambalpur in January this year. The Chief Secretary had reportedly insisted on the PWD taking up the work as soon as possible. Despite all this, the work has not been started. The library complex will be a five-storied building with facilities of lifts and parking lots and 1,000 seats.

JOBLESS MAN ENDS LIFE IN DHENKANAL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Dec 4: A contractual employee of the District Planning & Statistics Office was found dead in his official quarters here in Dhenkanal town Friday. The deceased was identified as Suryakant Swain, a resident of Patharakhamba village under Parjang police limits.

The deceased's wife alleged that her husband took the extreme step as he had been under severe stress since losing his job due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Suryakant was working as an outsourced employee at the District Planning & Statistics Office since 2006-7, after his father's demise. As his agreement was not renewed in March due to the Covid-19 outbreak, he lost his job. But, he was still living in the official quarters.

Suryakant was alone when he decided to take the extreme step. His wife and children had gone to her parents' house.

The deceased's wife said her husband had forced her to visit her parents as she was not keeping well. "I called him Thursday morning, but his phone was switched off. My neighbours and brother-in-law found the door shut from inside," said Suryakant's wife.

Later, police broke the door open only to find Suryakant's body hanging from a window.

Villagers refuse to cede forest land to MCL's mine expansion

Vana Surakhya Samiti firm on saving forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Lakhanpur, Dec 4: The Mahanadi Coalfield Ltd (MCL) has been carrying out the expansion of its open cast mine at Lakhanpur in Jharsuguda, but people of Soladia have strongly been opposing it. They opposed the proposed clearing of a reserve forest they have been nurturing for years. The local resistance has affected the coal mine expansion in the area, a report said.

However, efforts are on to sort out the issue. The forest department is trying to convince the local people. Assistant conservator of forests Basil Barla took part in a tripartite meeting with locals and staff of the MCL.

The issue of expansion of the coal mine project was taken up at the meeting. The expansion needs clearing of a reserved gramya jungle. But local Vana Surkya Samiti has vehemently opposed it.

They said they have been protecting the forest for the last 20 years. At the meeting, the villagers made it clear that the well-preserved forest will not be spared for coal mine expansion.

Reports said, three months ago,



some staff of the MCL had come to the reserve forest. They were cutting down trees and trying to plant electricity poles. They were counting the number of trees when some members of the Vana Surakhya Samiti (VSS) opposed it. The MCL staff had to stop their work, the villagers said.

Following the incident, members of the VSS had drawn attention of the Jharsuguda DFO, lodging strong opposition to the MCL's bid to clear the forest for its mine's expansion.

They had also sent copies of their complaint to the Prime Minister, Union Minister of Forest and Environment, the minister of the forest and environment department, the National Green Tribunal, and the Collector.

Two leopard cubs rescued in Balasore



POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, Dec 4: Two leopard cubs were rescued from a bush at Allipur village under Soro police limits in Balasore district Friday.

Ramchandra Barik was working in his farmland Friday morning, when his attention was drawn to a bush from where unusual cries were coming intermittently. As he went near the bush, he found two cubs hiding there. Sensing possible danger from dogs, he took them out of the bush.

Locals believed the cubs could have strayed from nearby Kuldaha sanctuary. The forest department was immediately informed about it. However, forest officials did not reach the village till the time of filing of this report.

NH-326, a death trap for wildlife

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boipariguda, Dec 4: The recent death of a hare in an accident on National Highway (NH)-326 connecting Ranchi with Vijayawada near Boipariguda forest division of Koraput district has underscored the need for taking immediate measures to check recurring of such incidents.

This highway stretching nearly 60 feet connects Ranchi in Jharkhand to Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh. Out of 86 km, at least 40 km pass through the crucial wildlife habitats of Boipariguda forest division. Notably, the construction of the road had been completed in 2018. As the road is connecting two major cities of the two states, the road experiences heavy vehicular traffic and has seen the highest number of wild animal deaths due to accidents.

More than 25 deer, hares, rabbits, bats and owls have been crushed to death under speeding vehicles on the highway in the last six months, a report said.



Locals demanded certain areas be declared animal sensitive zones and vehicular speed controlled as the highway vehicular speed has become a curse to wildlife

Repeated loss of lives of animals due to careless and reckless driving has become a matter of concern among wildlife activists and conservationists.

The highway from Jeypore to Malkangiri passes through three forest areas—Jeypore, Boipariguda and Gobindpali — home to a wide range of wildlife. While Jeypore area comprises forests from

Dangarchintru to Patraput, Boipariguda forest range extends from Kota to Panditbeda and Gobindpali area in Malkangiri district covers Saptadhara river to Gobindpali Ghat.

With 60 ft-wide roads, it is difficult for animals to cross them from one side to the other.

Moreover, the number of buses plying from Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Berhampur, Raipur and Malkangiri has tripled in last one year, making the road one of the busiest. Since most of the bus services are at night, they pose serious threat to the animals crossing the highway.

"Death of animals is seen on a daily basis on this road," a local said, adding there is an urgent need to take steps to protect the animals. Earlier, some wild animal activist urged Boipariguda forest range officer Ramesh Chandra Rout, to take action in this regard. "We will take steps to install caution signboards displaying speed limits across the highway road in the forest area along with CCTVs at accident prone areas," he added.

Mild quake felt in Baripada, outskirts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 4: Mild tremors were felt in Baripada town of Mayurbhanj district and parts of Balasore at about 2.13 am Friday. The magnitude of the earthquake, having depth of 10 km, was measured 3.9 on the Richter scale, informed the National Centre for Seismology.

Most people were indoors when the tremors started.

Panic gripped Baripada town dwellers and most of them remained outside their houses even after the tremors stopped.

Apart from Baripada, the quake was also felt in Badasahi, Khunta, Betanoti, Manatri and Udala of the district. However, no loss of property has been reported.

Earlier August 8, 2020, a low-intensity earthquake had struck several parts of Ganjam and Gajapati districts.

Similarly a mild earth quake was felt in Daringibadi town of Kandhamal district at about 2.57pm, June 4, 2020.

Pregnant wife hacked to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bonai, Dec 4: In a shocking incident, a man hacked his seven-month pregnant wife to death at Podadihi village under Koida police limits of Bonai sub-division in Sundargarh district late Thursday night. The couple had a quarrel over a trivial family issue and it ended with the woman losing her life. Police recovered the body from the crime spot Friday morning and sent it for post mortem.

The deceased was identified as Sambari Naik (35), wife of Budhu Munda (30).

Sources said, Budhu and Sambari were from Podadihi locality. They fell in love and tied the nuptial knot a few years back. The couple had three children and was expecting their fourth one.

During the quarrel, Budhu lost his temper. He picked up an axe and hacked Sambari multiple times till she collapsed on the ground and breathed her last.

On being informed, a team from Koida police station reached the spot and seized the weapon from the crime spot. Registering a case, the police have detained Budhu and are interrogating him.

Aska Sugar mill neck deep in debt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Dec 4: The Aska Cooperative Sugar Industries Limited (ACSIL) in Ganjam is the first sugar mill in Asia and the oldest cooperative industry in the state. However, the plant is beset with a host of problems and the major problem is the mill is neck deep in credit.

In 1995, its management had taken Rs 8 crore loan to enhance its production capacity from 12,500 tonnes/day to 2,500 tonnes/day.

Now, the loan, its interests and other pending dues have added up to Rs 36 crore, a report said.

Though the principal loan amount



FILE PHOTO

of Rs 8 crore has been paid off, other dues are yet to be cleared. The government has already ordered confiscation of the movable and immovable assets.

A large number of farmers in 16

blocks of Ganjam depend on the sugar mill, which has been in great loss.

Members of the Aska Samabaya Chinikala Karmachari Sangh discussed the issue with Collector Vijay Amruta Kulanga Thursday. All issues related to workers and employees were discussed.

They had urged the Collector for looking for ways to revive the sugar mill, which has been providing direct and indirect jobs to thousands of people in the district.

It was learnt that another meeting will be held with sugarcane farmers and workers. Sugarcane farmers and workers in the district are living in miserable condition.

Malkangiri: Girl living her dreams through YouTube



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Dec 4: Those days have gone when it was widely believed that 'no knowledge can be had without a guru (teacher)'. Now there are various modes and mediums of learning with one of them being the YouTube channel. More and more youngsters are falling back on YouTube to increase their knowledge.

This 22-year-old girl from a backward area of Malkangiri district is a case in point. Meet Reba Biswas, daughter of

Ganesh Chandra Biswas of MPV 7 village of Mandapalli panchayat under Kalimela block. She is doing her B Tech in civil engineering. Her father is a homoeopathy doctor and her mother, an Anganwadi worker.

Reba is acquiring fame as a painter across Malkangiri district. Her parents are happy that Reba is giving shape to her imagination on canvass. They are also surprised at Reba's blossoming as an artist during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reba has the answer to

this question. "I remember as a child I had a fascination for drawing sketches. But then there was hardly any scope for learning drawing or painting in a backward area like ours," Reba informed.

"The Covid-19 forced us to remain confined to our home. I enjoyed the first few weeks of lockdown and shutdown. But then I started feeling bored. Then the idea of honing my drawing and painting skills surfaced. I turned to YouTube and learnt the basics of art," she claimed.

Reba has now become an artist skilled enough to attend exhibitions. She paints various types of subjects ranging from landscapes to figurines and cityscapes to portraits. Once her paintings became viral on social media platforms, she gained fame and her name became well-known in the district.

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e-Procurement Notice No. 04/2020-21 on Dated 01.12.2020
E-mail ID: eenidnimapara@gmail.com

- Type of Works : Restoration of Embankment and Canal
- Total No. of Works : 10 (Ten) Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs.4.84 to 49.98 lakhs
- Period of Completion : 60 to 120 days

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount in Lakh Rs.	Availability & Submission of Bids Online
Executive Engineer, Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara	NID- 106/2020-21	Rs.4.84 to	From 09.12.2020
	NID- 115/2020-21	Rs.49.98	10.00 A.M. to 18.12.2020 5.30 P.M.

Date of Opening of the Bid : 21.12.2020 at 10.00 A.M.
Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Executive Engineer
Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara
OIPR-32097/11/0005/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Office of the Executive Engineer
Puri (R&B) Division, Puri
Phone/Fax: (06752) 223433; E-mail: eerbpuri@yahoo.co.in

Invitation for Bids
Bid Identification Bids No. E.E. (R&B) Puri-33/2020-21

- The Executive Engineer, Puri (R&B) Division, Puri, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in Single Cover system in ONLINE MODE only.
- Nature of work : Buildings
- No. of work : 1 No.
- Tender Paper Cost : Rs.6,000/- to be remit online only.
- Class of Contractor : "D" & "C"
- Availability of Bid Documents in the website : From Dt.03.12.2020 at 10.00 hours to Dt. 10.12.2020 at 17.00
- Date of opening of Bid : Dt. 11.12.2020 at 11.30
- EMD/Bid Security : As specified in the notice to be remitted online only.
- The Bidders shall have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Puri (R&B) Division, Puri
No. B-495 OIPR-34064/11/0007/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
KALAHANDI MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA
Ph. 06670-230755, E-mail: eeimklid@rediffmail.com Dt.02.12.2020

e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. Online kldmi-06/2020-21
No. A-328: Bid documents consisting of Work, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender Paper, EMD, Time of Completion, Class of Contractor, the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

- Name of the Work : Civil Construction/Renovation Works
- No. of Works : 7 (Seven) Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs.15.00 lakhs to Rs.60.00 lakhs (Approximately)
- Period of Completion : (61) Sixty One days to (85) Eighty Five days
- Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal : From 07.12.2020 (10.00 A.M.) to 18.12.2020 (5.00 P.M.)
- Last date/time of receipt of bids in the portal : 18.12.2020 (5.00 P.M.)
- Date of Opening of Bid : 21.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M. onwards
- Name and address of the OIT : Executive Engineer, Kalahandi Minor Irrigation Division, Bhawanipatna
- Mode of Payment of Bid Cost & Bid Security : Online
- Date of transparent lottery if cases arise : 30.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M. onwards
- N.B.: Bidders are requested to mention their valid e-mail ID & Telephone/Mobile Contact No. for communication (must be a valid ID & Mobile Number). This office has not been responsible for invalid email & Mobile No. of the bidders.

**Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement market place <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

Sd./- R.K. Sabat
Executive Engineer
Kalahandi M.I. Division, Bhawanipatna
OIPR-32035/11/0002/2021

FOCUS ECONOMY

SOARING SENSEX, DIPPING GDP



On the one hand, global and ground reports tell of our economy and banking sector being under stress. On the other hand, major banks are reaping profits while our share market is buoyant and has touched historic peaks

The president of the World Bank has said recently that the world economy has already entered into a recession that is likely to continue for many years. Another report said that the United States' banks had already suffered a 30 per cent decline in their profits by June 2020. A report by global consultancy group Deloitte says banks in Hong Kong are making large provisions to bear the expected losses due to the pandemic and their profits are under pressure. Our banks have bucked this global decline and our major public sector and private banks are showing higher profits. At the same time our share market is buoyant and has touched historic peaks.



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

THIS SITUATION COULD REMAIN STABLE FOR SOME TIME UNTIL THE PAIN OF RETAIL BORROWING BY NON-GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AND SMALL INDUSTRIES BEGINS TO APPEAR

This golden situation of Indian banks comes along with certain caveats. A report by IIFL Finance says that construction, small industries and civil aviation sectors are under pressure. A shopkeeper from Uttarakhand said business of schools and coaching centres had almost come to a standstill. Another said that borrowers are reducing their personal expenditures and repaying loans to banks because they are afraid of penal actions. Yet another said that borrowers were not able to encash the post-dated cheques given to lenders at the time of taking loans. A Chartered Accountant from Faridabad said that business of his clients had declined by about 30 per cent. Small businesses that were paying ₹1000 to file GST returns earlier were now paying ₹600 to ₹700 for the same filing, he said. A number of global agencies have reckoned a decline in India's GDP this year.

Thus, we are confronted with two contrarian indicators. On the one hand, global and ground reports tell of our economy and banking sector being under stress. On the other hand, our major banks are reaping profits and the Sensex is scaling historic highs.

The composition of lending by our banks helps us unravel this mystery. Our banks have lent 33 per cent of their total loans to large corporates; 33 per cent to retail bor-

rowers; 13 per cent to international borrowers; 12 per cent to small industries; and 9 per cent to agriculture. The large corporates, international borrowers and agriculture have been buoyant during the pandemic hence this lending is good. We need to look closely at the lending to the retail and small industry sectors.

One major component of retail is vehicle loans. According to knowledgeable sources, eighty per cent of these have been given to government employees. Second major component is personal loans. Ninety four per cent of these are given to government employees. Third major component is home loans. Fifty per cent of these are given to government employees and 20 per cent to employees of large corporations. The exposure of banks to the 'common man' is relatively less. The government employees have continued to enjoy stable incomes during the pandemic; therefore, the retail lending portfolio of banks does not show distress.

Contrary to ground reports, the lending to small industries also does not appear to be under stress. We should have expected small businesses in construction, tourism and coaching to default on their borrowings. There are three possible reasons for normalcy in these sectors. One, the government had placed a moratorium on loan re-

payments from March to August. Borrowers developed some cushion in this period and are repaying loans from this backstop. Two, the RBI has asked banks to be liberal in rescheduling repayment of loans hence repayment has been pushed into future. Three, the government has guaranteed additional loans provided by banks to small businesses. Thus, small businesses may be borrowing under this scheme to keep themselves afloat. The repayment crisis of small borrowers has been pushed back and not appeared in the open because of these steps.

This discussion means the Indian economy has been divided into two sections. One section is of sectors that are doing well. These include large corporates, international borrowers, and agriculture which are all doing well; and retail borrowing which is driven by government employees. Further, the trouble that may be brewing in the small industries' sector is also not visible at present because of various steps taken by the government and the RBI.

This situation could remain stable for some time until the pain of retail borrowing by non-government employees, and small industries begins to appear. Today the government employees constitute of about two crore in population. They may account for

about eight crore if their family members are counted. The remaining 127 crore population does not have a comfortable income and may not be able to repay loans taken for much time. The relief granted to small industries by moratorium, rescheduling and government guarantee too is temporary. Their incomes are down but this distress has been pushed into future. The Indian economy is like oil floating on water making colourful patterns but hiding the stench in the water below.

Two possible scenarios can unfold here onwards. As of now, the economy is showing rising Sensex and declining GDP. The economy is shrinking while the share of big corporates is rising. The 127 crore people are unlikely to come out unscathed from this decline in GDP given the distress in employment-intensive sectors like tourism, coaching, small industries and construction. Nevertheless, this situation could hide a beneficent future if the government is able to provide direct cash transfers to all people to meet their basic needs. In that case we will establish a golden economy where there will not be a need for every person to 'work'—as Karl Marx had dreamt. On the other hand, this same could hold dangerous portents if the common man is left to fend for himself while the Sensex roars and banks make money. The common man will get agitated and the anger will erupt in one form or the other.

The buoyant performance of the Indian banking sector—contrary to both ground reports and global movements—is like a person moving cleverly to the high end of the sinking ship thinking that he will save himself. The challenge before the government is either to persuade the 127 crore people to accept their distress without demur; or to make direct cash transfers to enable them meet their basic needs.

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

SPECTRUM PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The secret of Pakistan's Covid success



Zulfikar A. Bhutta

DESPITE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES, PAKISTAN HAS SUCCEEDED IN KEEPING RATES OF COVID-19 CASES AND DEATHS RELATIVELY LOW, THANKS IN PART TO THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT OF POLIO PREVENTION INFRASTRUCTURE

When the coronavirus first arrived in Pakistan in late February, there was widespread concern about the country's ability to manage the increased disease burden. Covid-19 cases were rising quickly as people returned home from other regional hotspots, and the public-health system urgently needed to be reinforced.

In this moment of crisis, Pakistan turned to the team working to eradicate polio. Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan are now the only two countries in the world where wild poliovirus remains endemic, after Africa was recently declared free of the disease. The Pakistani government works closely with the Global Polio Eradication Initiative—a partnership including Rotary International; the World Health Organization; UNICEF; the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—to vaccinate children in every corner of the country and track the virus to its remaining redoubts.

Pakistan has made major progress in combating polio since I returned to the country to begin my academic and public-health career some 35 years ago. At that time, children paralysed by polio would wait at nearly every traffic intersection and beseech passersby

for support. Today, it is extremely uncommon to find young people affected by polio—a testament to the eradication program's efficacy.

But this March, the pandemic forced the polio program to suspend its vaccination campaigns in order to protect the health and safety of its workforce and local communities. The expertise and infrastructure that have been instrumental in combating polio pivoted quickly to stopping Covid-19, which has proved critical in Pakistan's response. This underscores the importance of continued international investment in the polio program—not only to stop polio, but also to address other health priorities. Renewed financial commitment now could provide just the catalyst the country needs.

Crucially, the polio program is helping to monitor the spread of the coronavirus using some of the same methods and tools it employs to track poliovirus, including collecting and analysing sewage samples. To slow the rate of both Covid-19 and polio infections, the program now tracks and tests for the two viruses in tandem. To date, more than 100 labs across Pakistan have been adapted to test for Covid-19 and collect data on when and where the coronavirus is infecting people.

Although Covid-19 itself can have potentially devastating conse-

quences, misinformation about the virus can compound the threat by eroding public trust in the pandemic response. Having had years of practice in responding to similar rumours and falsehoods, the polio program is now using social media platforms, especially WhatsApp, to disseminate Covid-19 prevention messages and engage trusted community influencers and religious leaders to provide people with accurate health information. Within the first few months of the pandemic, the program reached nearly 25 million individuals through social media channels alone.

The polio program has also been creative in its use of other platforms to furnish the public with reliable information. For example, the Sehat Tahafuz 1166 health protection helpline in Islamabad was originally designed to give parents and caregivers information about polio and other vaccines, but now fields up to 70,000 calls per day since the Covid-19 pandemic began. The hotline provides advice about symptoms and preventive measures, as well as contact information for testing centres and connections to hospitals for medical support.

Despite significant challenges, Pakistan has succeeded in keeping rates of Covid-19 cases and deaths relatively low, thanks in part to the rapid deployment of polio preven-

tion infrastructure. In early September, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus praised the country's pandemic preparation and response, while the US economist Lawrence Summers recently touted Pakistan's Covid-19 control program as an exemplar. Unfortunately, the suspension of polio vaccination campaigns from March through August has undoubtedly caused poliovirus to spread more widely throughout the country, in part prompting WHO and UNICEF to launch an emergency call to action to help avert a potential epidemic. Campaigns have resumed with added safety measures for vaccinators and families, while the programme remains committed to supporting Covid-19 response. But these disruptions serve as a reminder of how quickly progress against polio and other diseases can be reversed.

By investing further in Pakistan's polio programme, the world will be able to tackle both longstanding and emerging global health threats more effectively. The Covid challenge clearly shows such support has never been needed more.

The writer is Founding Director of Aga Khan University's Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Be courageous, enduring, and vigilant and above all, be sincere, with perfect honesty. Then you will be able to face all difficulties.

THE MOTHER



Haryana's cadre unrest

As noted in an earlier column, there is a degree of discontent among Haryana babus over what many consider is a consistent attempt by the Manohar Khattar government in the state to allow the 'usurping' of IAS cadre posts by other services. The Haryana government has appointed several IPS, IFS and IRS officers to the cadre posts of the IAS.

Now Haryana IAS officer and well-known whistleblower Ashok Khemka has entered the fray with his take on the issue. Not known to mince words, which has often landed him in trouble, Khemka has reportedly written to Chief Secretary Vijai Vardhan and demanded that such cases should be referred to the Centre for consideration.

Those in the know say that in his letter the IAS officer pointed out that the IAS cadre rules stipulated that a non-cadre officer may be appointed temporarily (maximum three months) to a cadre post if no suitable cadre officer is available. For continuing an officer for a longer period requires prior approval of the Centre. He urged Vardhan to refer the cases of IPS, IRS and IFS officers appointed on the cadre posts of IAS officers to the central government.

And Khemka is not a solitary voice, it turns out that he has now been joined by the Haryana Civil Service Association whose president Dr Vandana Disodia too has highlighted the issue. It is not going to die down.

EMANELMENT BLUES

The trend of reduced representation at the joint secretary level has got the 'heaven born' worried. But none are more worried than the 2003 batch of IAS officers whose wait for empanelment is getting inordinately prolonged even by the standards of the Modi sarkar.

Sources say that since August 2019 only one fresh round of 37 officers of the 2002 batch and 25 officers from previous batches have been empaneled as joint secretaries. But the 2003 batch officers continue to await their turn. Meanwhile, four fresh batches of IAS (from the early 1990s) have been empaneled as additional secretaries and two batches (1987 and 1988) have been empaneled as secretaries.

Further, only 17 per cent of the empaneled officers are from the IAS, with the lion's share going to non-IAS officers. This trend is likely to stay in the back of the minds of senior IAS officers even as the 2003 batch continues to hope that their empanelment happens sooner than later.

CLEARING THE AIR ON VACCINE

In October Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said the government was preparing to reach every single citizen with the Covid vaccine. In the run-up to the Bihar assembly elections, the BJP even promised free vaccine to the state's voters in lieu of their support.

The election done and dusted, the government has now changed its stance. Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan has 'clarified' that the government never spoke about vaccinating the entire country! He said that it is important that the discussion be based 'only on factual information.' Bhushan said that the average daily positivity rate in India is 3.72 per cent and India has the lowest number of cases per million count among all major countries, with 211 cases per million.

According to him, the government's aim now is to vaccinate a critical mass of people and break the transmission of the virus, this not having to vaccinate the entire population, which by itself would be a challenging exercise. This ties in with the view of the World Health Organization (WHO) experts who say that 65 per cent - 70 per cent vaccine coverage rate is sufficient to reach herd immunity.

But the question is whether the voters of Bihar will get the vaccine first as promised in the BJP's poll manifesto or was it just another jumla?

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

WISDOM CORNER

- Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power. LAO TZU
- Do what you will, this world's a fiction and is made up of contradiction. WILLIAM BLAKE
- We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them. KAHILIL GIBRAN

WORDSWORTH

Virosphere

The virosphere is all those places where viruses are found or in which they interact with their hosts. It has also been spelled as virosphere, though this is less common and seems to have been supplanted by the other form. Its appearance shows how scientists are coming to realise that the viruses are not mere causes of disease and parasitic nuisances on the fringes of life but a key part of the living world. Vastly more virus species exist than previously thought (100 million or more, outnumbering any other type of organism) and they are to be found in pretty much every environment on the planet. They contain more genetic material than the rest of life, so much of it unique that it's no longer possible to dismiss them as an irrelevant aside but a separate class of biological existence that may be even older than bacteria. A significant part of the human genome turns out to consist of viral genes and it is beginning to look as though the ability of viruses to transfer genes to and from their hosts and each other—so spreading genes throughout the biological world—may have been an important factor in the evolution of species. The term appeared in 1997 in a poster issued by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, in the slightly different sense of the diversity of virus types. Professor Curtis Suttle of the University of British Columbia used it in the current sense (but spelled virosphere) in the journal Environmental Microbiology in 2005 and its current usage dates from that. It remains uncommon, even in scientific literature, but a few straws in the wind suggest it is becoming a standard term.

LOL

PHOTOGRAPHER

There was this haunted house on the outskirts of the town which was avoided by all the townfolk - the ghost which 'lived' there was feared by all. However, an enterprising journalist decided to get the scoop of the day by photographing the fearsome phantom. When he entered the house, armed with only his camera, the ghost descended upon him, clanking chains et al. He told the



ghost "I mean no harm - I just want your photograph." The ghost was quite happy at this chance to make the headlines - he posed for a number of ghostly shots. The happy journalist rushed back to his dark room, and began developing the photos. Unfortunately, they turned out to be black and underexposed. So what's the moral of the story? The spirit was willing but the flash was weak.

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

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Climate change

Sir, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has strongly reacted to the issue of climate change, discussing deeply the actual challenges posed by the climate crisis. This news has caught the attention of the world community, having been highlighted by media houses like CNN. It is time to conduct such serious climate change talks at the global stage. Factors like carbon dioxide-greenhouse gases contributing to the climate crisis have to be dealt with in a proper way as chalked out at climate change summits so far. Volatile weather patterns and climate change impacts have started eating into the growth of the world. Intense tropical storms have become the order of the day. Just as in the American continent, Asian nations have been encountering plenty of storm systems. This aside, there have been reports of rigorous deforestation activities going on in the Amazon rainforests. The fact that the Amazon has been home to rich biodiversity should dawn on everyone out there to protect this rich green area forever. The international community should get ready to handle the climate challenges through mutual cooperation and strong green strategies. P. Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI

Second wave

Sir, Time and again, health experts have been warning a second wave of Covid-19 infections during December-January as happened in several other countries. In India, the situation was very much under control from March to June but it went out of control thereafter. A similar situation may occur next month due to the prevailing chill weather conditions in some states. Several districts in Odisha were also facing chill weather with temperature plummeting sharply. This kind of weather was said to be suitable for the virus to spread among people. Fearing a second wave of Covid-19 during the end of this December and January next year, the state government's Covid-19 Technical Advisory Committee needs to recommend imposition of night curfew from 8 pm to 6 am. The committee may consider the possible second wave of Covid-19 which may push up the number of corona positive cases and casualties across the state. Already, several European nations were experiencing a second wave of corona resulting in spurt in positive cases. In India, Delhi and Kerala have been witnessing explosions in corona positive cases and deaths. These two states were reporting thousands of positive cases daily much to the worry of the Union government. It is high time the state government seriously considers taking precautions. K Ravi, BHUBANESWAR

BJP makes big gains in GHMC polls, TRS falls short of majority

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 4: Signalling its emergence as a dominant force in Telangana, the BJP won 48 seats in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) polls to deny the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) a clear majority.

Though the TRS was heading to retain power in the 150-member municipal body with lead in 70 divisions at around 4 p.m., the scene changed dramatically with BJP racing ahead in divisions where it was locked in neck-and-neck battle with the TRS.

Performing beyond its own expectations and making big inroads in the state capital, the BJP has won 48 seats.

TRS, which bagged 55 seats, emerged as the single largest party but fell short of the majority mark.

It may have to seek the support of Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM), which won 44 seats. The Congress finished a distant fourth with just two seats.

While the election was held for 150 wards, the results of 149 were announced as counting of votes had to be stopped in a ward as per a High Court order.

The newly elected corporators and 52 ex-officio members elect the Mayor. Since TRS has majority ex-officio members, it required 65 corporators to have its Mayor. The party may now have to negotiate power sharing agreement with the MIM if the latter doesn't extend unconditional support. In 2009,



Union ministers Amit Shah, Prakash Javadekar and Smriti Irani, BJP president J.P. Nadda and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath campaigned for the BJP

BITTERLY CONTESTED

The bitterly contested elections saw a high-decibel campaign with the participation of several Central ministers and top national leaders of the BJP

Congress, MIM and Telugu Desam Party were among the other major contesting parties. The campaign saw no holds barred attack by political opponents, while remarks by some leaders created controversies. The promise by the BJP leaders to change the name of Hyderabad to Bhagyanagar if the party is voted to power also sparked a row

when GHMC polls had thrown a similar verdict, the Congress had shared power with the MIM, leaving the post of Mayor to MIM for two years. The post of Mayor this time has been reserved for woman. The results have come as a huge shock to the TRS, which had bagged 99 seats in the 2016 polls. The BJP, which had secured only four seats in the previous elections, saw a big jump in its numbers to emerge as the second largest party, a position which MIM was enjoying.

The saffron party made big gains as it fought the polls this time with all the might at its disposal with top Central leaders and Union ministers campaigning for its candidates. Counting of votes cast in all the

150 divisions began at 8 a.m. at 30 places in the city with Telangana State Election Commission deploying over 8,000 personnel.

The police made elaborate security arrangements in the city in view of the counting. Prohibitory orders and traffic restrictions were imposed around the counting centres. The police in Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda have imposed a ban on victory rallies for the next 48 hours.

Out of the total 74.67 lakh voters, 46.55 per cent had cast their votes in 149 divisions Tuesday. There were 1,925 postal ballots. Polling in one division was stopped due to discrepancy in ballot paper and re-poll was held Thursday.

Illegal coal-mining thrives in Bengal

Illegal coal mining, which has a daily turnover running into crores is considered to be a parallel economy in the industrial town belt of Asansol-Raniganj and its surrounding areas

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 4: With the federal investigation agencies carrying out marathon raids to nab nefarious elements, the spotlight turned on the illegal coal mining empire in West Bengal's infamous Raniganj-Asansol belt that remained a hotbed of illegitimate operations of coal for over four decades.

Only a few names like Anup Majhi, alias Lala, and Joydeb Mondal have resurfaced on the list of central agencies but sources said that there are many such big mafias involved in the illegal racket of pilferage and mining of 'black diamond' in the region. They virtually operate a parallel administration in the colliery belt in connivance with top politicians, local administration and the Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL) authorities.

"We are investigating the matter. We can't say anything more," a CBI spokesperson told IANS from Delhi. Asked if the agency has got hold of Lala and Joydeb Mondal, the official said: "No arrest has been made so far, officially."

The CBI had conducted raids at as many as 45 locations across various districts of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and neighbouring Jharkhand last week (November 28). The CBI's anti-corruption branch, divided in 22 different teams, had carried out the raids in connection with a coal-smuggling racket in Raniganj-Asansol belt.

According to police sources, the entire syndicate of illegal coal handling takes place in an organ-



ised manner. The three-layered mechanism of operating illegal coal mining in the ECL leasehold area is divided into three different parts—first, illegal rat-hole mining that mostly takes place in abandoned ECL collieries, operating depots to stockpile the illegal coal and the last and final part is transportation of those illegally-mined minerals.

All big players are involved in the third part as the key profits lie there only. Insiders say that in about 3,500 illegal coal mines in the Asansol-Raniganj area, at least 35,000 people are directly employed while another 40,000 get indirect employment. The work force is mostly brought from neighbouring impoverished pockets of Jharkhand. Only 5 per cent of the total manpower associated with the organised illegal mining syndicate is local.

"The expanse of illegal coal min-

ing starts from Salanpur and covers areas like Gourandi, Asansol north and south, JK Nagar, Barabani, Jamuria, Pandabeswar, Kunushtaria, Raniganj, Ukhra, Ballalpur till Mejia in Bankura border. The organised crime syndicate of illegal coal mining started during the early 80s after ECL was nationalised in 1973," local sources said, who did not wish to be named fearing backlash from the coal mafia syndicate.

Miners who work in hundreds of these high-risk narrow pits to dig out coal for a living work directly under these mafias. They risk their lives, against meagre payments, to keep the business running. Illegal coal mining, which has a daily turnover running into crores is considered to be the parallel economy in the industrial town belt of Asansol-Raniganj and its surrounding areas. Besides digging up plots, those engaged in il-

legal mining extract coal from mines abandoned by ECL.

Raniganj Coalfield, which falls under ECL, is the birthplace of coal mining in the country. Raniganj Coalfield remained the principal producer of coal in India in the 19th Century and considerable period of the 20th Century. In 1973, all non-coking coal mines were nationalized and brought under Eastern Division of Coal Mines Authority Limited. In 1975 Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL), a Subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL) was formed and inherited all the private sector coal mines of Raniganj Coalfields.

ECL mining leasehold area is 753.75 Sq-km and surface right area is 237.18 sq-km. It is situated in two States—West Bengal and Jharkhand. Raniganj Coalfield is spreading over Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura and Purulia districts in West Bengal.

Why farmers from Telangana are not protesting new laws



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 4: At a time when farmers of Punjab, Haryana and other northern states are up in arms against the new farm legislations, the silence by Telangana farmers has been surprising.

A variety of factors are keeping Telugu farmers away from the protests. The difference in agricultural pattern and marketing mechanism compared to Punjab and Haryana, lack of leadership among farmers, various pro-farmer schemes being implemented by the state government and the different viewpoints over the new legislations are believed to be the reasons for ryots not taking to streets.

Telangana saw no major protests when the All India Coordination Committee of Farmers Movements called a nationwide strike in September to protest the passage of three bills in Parliament.

The legislation allows the farmers to sell their produce outside the government-run Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) regulated marketing yards.

States like Punjab and Haryana have strong government procurement infrastructure. Since farmers in these states fear that the government may do away with APMC procurement process as well as the system of Minimum Support Price (MSP), they are on warpath.

However, unlike agriculturists in Punjab and Haryana who own 10-15 acres of land, their counterparts in Telangana are small farmers who own 1-2 acres of land.

Most of the farmers in Telangana directly sell their produce to traders or customers. "There is big difference in farming between Punjab, Haryana and states like Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The issues and needs of the farmers of the two regions are entirely different," said V. Naveen Kumar, a social entrepreneur, who is the founder and managing director of NaPanta, a mobile app catering to farmers in both

the Telugu states. Food Corporation of India (FCI) data from 2015 to 2020 shows that nearly a quarter of farmers in Telangana did not access the marketplace for MSP fixed by the Centre. While rice procurement by FCI averaged between 95 per cent to 79 per cent in Punjab, it averaged between 77 per cent and 51.8 per cent in Telangana.

The opinion is also divided among farmers over the legislations. Farmers, who depend on government-run market yards, are apprehensive but are unable to register their protest due to lack of unity and strong leadership.

"Farmers' organizations are not every active these days. They have not yet drawn a protest plan. Maybe the Covid-19 pandemic is the reason," Murali Krishnam Raju, a farmer, told IANS.

He, however, believes that the farm legislations have some good provisions for farmers. He said the government should reconsider those aspects which could affect the interests of farmers.

Another farmer Bandaru Srinivas pointed out that the imports of agriculture commodities by the government before every agriculture season is affecting the farmers. "Farmers are not getting the MSP because of this policy by the government," he said.

Another reason why farmers are not agitating path is various pro-farmer schemes being implemented by the government in Telangana.

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) opposed the new farm bills and alleged that they were aimed at benefiting corporates. Analysts say this stand by the TRS government reassured the farmers in the state. Farmers are availing the benefits of 'Rythu Bandhu' under which the state government is providing Rs 10,000 every year as investment support per acre. Farmers are also happy with the government for procuring entire paddy and maize in their villages during the Covid-19 pandemic.

BJP selling farmers' rights to corporate houses: TMC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 4: The Trinamool Congress Friday expressed its ire against the "draconian" farm bills, which it alleged were passed without consultation with stakeholders, and accused the BJP of selling farmers' rights to corporate houses.

TMC Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien met the agitating farmers in Haryana in the afternoon.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also spoke with the farmers over phone and expressed her solidarity with their agitation, a party statement said.

She tweeted earlier in the day, "14 years ago on 4 Dec 2006, I began my 26-day hunger strike in Kolkata demanding that agricultural land cannot be forcefully acquired. I express my solidarity with all farmers who are protesting against draconian farm bills passed without consultation by Centre #StandWithFarmers."

The TMC supreme was then an opposition leader during the Left Front rule in the state.

Banerjee had Thursday threatened to launch a country-wide agitation if the 'anti-farmer' farm laws were not withdrawn.

In a statement, the TMC said that Brien spent a few hours meeting various groups of farmers who have parked their tractors and other vehicles on a highway at Delhi's Singhu border with Haryana.

"The CM spoke to the farmers. Four telephone calls to different



We demand that these laws be withdrawn. These laws were passed not to help the farmers but to help multinational companies and corporate houses. The intention of the BJP is to sacrifice the interests of the farmers to serve its own interests

MAMATA BANERJEE | CM

groups from Haryana and Punjab. They shared their demand (Centre must repeal farm bills) with the Bengal CM and thanked her for her solidarity. They also expressed their gratitude for all her support to farmers and land movements in the past," the statement said.

Banerjee also said that she will stand by the farmers in this movement to repeal the farm laws, it added.

Senior TMC MP Kakoli Ghosh Dashtidar alleged that the new farm laws are 'unconstitutional' and were passed to help the corporate houses.

"We demand that these laws be withdrawn. These laws were passed not to help the farmers but were done to help multinational companies and corporate houses. The intention of the BJP is to sacrifice the interests of the farmers to serve its own interests," she told reporters here.

She also said that the TMC will launch a country-wide movement

if the farm laws were not withdrawn.

Marathon talks between the Centre and the agitating farmer unions Thursday failed to end the standoff over the new farm laws as the protestors refused to budge on their demands and another round of discussions will be held Saturday in a bid to forge a resolution.

The government side, led by Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, assured the group of nearly 40 farmer leaders that all their valid concerns would be discussed and considered with an open mind, but the other side stuck to their demand of repealing the three "hastily-passed" farm laws, saying there were several loopholes and deficiencies.

Agitating farmers had Wednesday demanded that the Centre convene a special session of Parliament and repeal the new farm laws as they threatened to block other roads in Delhi and "take more steps" if it failed to do so.

Telangana seeks NTCA help to deal with tigers

2 PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN TIGER ATTACKS OVER THE LAST 18 DAYS IN ASIFABAD DISTRICT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 4: Telangana's Forest Department has sought help of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in dealing with tigers in Asifabad district after they mauled to death two persons in last 18 days. The department has requested the NTCA and the WII to send their representatives to review the measures being taken to deal with the tigers and give their advice and suggestions.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests R. Sobha spoke to NTCA officials in this regard.

The PCCF has also constituted a seven-member monitoring committee as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) of the NTCA to track and deal with the tiger which mauled to death a 15-year-old tribal

girl November 29 in Bejjur reserve forest in Asifabad.

The NTCA has nominated Imran Siddiqui of HyTICOS, as its nominee to the committee constituted for technical guidance and monitoring. C. P. Vinod Kumar, Conservator of Forests and a nominee of the Chief Wildlife Warden of Telangana, is the Chairman of the committee.

Siddiqui, Venkat of NGO RECAP, Dr Shwetha, veterinary assistant surgeon, Upasi Sanjeev, sarpanch, Kondapally and the district forest officer are members of the panel and the division forest officer is member secretary.

Special teams of staff and animal trackers have been placed around the clock at Kondapally village as the villagers are under constant fear that the tiger may enter again. The Conservator of Forests in-



formed that, instructions have been issued to place the teams in village and surrounding hamlets/villages and also to make by tom-tom announcements for alerting the villagers. The Forest Department has also issued dos and don'ts for villagers residing in nearby forest areas with movement of tigers and other wildlife. The villagers have

been asked to avoid leaving pathways in agricultural fields and also avoid using routes passing through the forest areas. The department said check gates placed by it along the forest roads should not be objected to. A minimum of 8 to 10 people shall go to agricultural fields for harvesting or other agricultural operations. In that group, one per-

son should be compulsorily deployed as sentry, whose duty is to make sound by drum beating and whistling.

The Forest Department has asked farmers to stay on machans in agricultural fields while guarding their crops. The shepherds shall go in groups and shall not take the cattle deep inside the forest for grazing and restrict themselves to half-a-km from the village. The shepherds shall go for grazing after 9 am and return by 4 pm.

The human-animal conflict in the district has claimed two lives in 18 days. In the first incident November 11, a 20-year-old tribal youth was mauled to death by a tiger in Girelli forest area of Rebanna Range in Asifabad division.

The forest officials suspect that two different animals were involved in the two incidents.

national



Waqf Boards will soon be established in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, and the process for it has already started

NADDA BEGINS TOUR

BJP president J P Nadda launched his 120-day nationwide tour Friday by visiting Uttarakhand where he will hold more than a dozen meetings over the next four days besides participating in various booth and 'mandal' level programmes of the party



of the day quote

COVID-like pandemics can pose a threat to the country's internal security and policy makers should address this challenge



GHULAM NABI AZAD | CONGRESS LEADER

The SAARC grouping can become an effective and vibrant network to promote prosperity and well-being of a vast population of the region if all the countries come together sincerely to stamp out the scourge of terrorism



M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

There is regular coordination between Goa's Mines and Geology department and the Union mines ministry. If there are no more legal hurdles, then the mining industry in Goa can resume in six months



PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CM

SHORT TAKES

Dineshwar Sharma no more

New Delhi: Administrator of Lakshadweep Dineshwar Sharma, who earlier headed the Intelligence Bureau, died at a Chennai hospital Friday following a severe lung disease, officials said. Sharma, 66, was recently shifted from the national capital to a Chennai hospital for specialised treatment of the lungs where he breathed his last on Friday morning, they said. A statement released by the MGM hospital in Chennai said Sharma, a 1979 batch IPS officer, had been admitted on November 25 for interstitial lung disease. He was admitted with Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) support, a treatment whereby blood is circulated through an artificial lung back into the bloodstream.

Guj eases rule

Ahmedabad: A doctor's prescription will no longer be necessary to get oneself tested for coronavirus in Gujarat, the state government announced Friday. Earlier this week the state government had reduced the rate for RT-PCR test for coronavirus at private laboratories from Rs 1,500 to Rs 800. As per the new guidelines issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), people can get themselves tested at designated laboratories without any prescription or recommendation from doctors, which was compulsory till now for RT-PCR tests, a government release said.

One held

Chennai: The Chennai Air Customs Friday said that it has arrested an air passenger from Dubai at the airport here on charge of gold smuggling after contraband valued at Rs 35.5 lakh was seized from him and a co-passenger. Based on intelligence that gold was likely to be smuggled from Dubai, Syed Abuthahir, 37, of Chennai and Jahuberali Abdul Kader, 54, of Ramanathapuram were intercepted when they landed here from Dubai by an Indigo flight on Thursday, said Commissioner of Customs, Chennai International Airport.

5 kids injured

Farrukhabad (Uttar Pradesh): Five children within the age group of five to eight years are fighting for their lives after receiving serious burn injuries while playing with explosive material extracted from firecrackers in an Uttar Pradesh town here.

INDIA PROTESTS TRUDEAU'S REMARKS ON FARMERS' STIR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 4: India Friday summoned Canadian High Commissioner Nadir Patel, and told him that the comments made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and others in his cabinet on the farmers' protest constituted an "unacceptable interference" in the country's internal affairs and these actions, if continued, will have a "seriously damaging" impact on the bilateral ties.

Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau, backing the agitating farmers in India, had said that Canada will always be there to defend the rights of peaceful protesters, and had expressed concern over the situation. "The Canadian High Commissioner was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs today and informed that comments by the Canadian Prime Minister, some Cabinet Ministers and members of Parliament on issues relating to Indian farmers constitute an unacceptable interference in our internal affairs," the MEA said, adding a demarche was made to the envoy.



"Such actions, if continued, would have a seriously damaging impact on ties between India and Canada," the ministry asserted. The MEA said these comments by the Canadian leaders have encouraged "gatherings of extremist activities" in front of the Indian High Commission and Consulates in Canada, raising issues of safety and security.

"We expect the Canadian government to ensure the fullest security of Indian diplomatic personnel and its political leaders to refrain from pronouncements that

legitimize extremist activism," the MEA said. Tuesday, the ministry had reacted very strongly to the comments made by Trudeau and some other Canadian leaders, terming them as "unwarranted".

"We have seen some ill-informed comments by Canadian leaders relating to farmers in India. Such comments are unwarranted, especially when pertaining to the internal affairs of a democratic country. It is also best that diplomatic conversations are not misrepresented for political purposes," the MEA had said.

Canada has a significant number of Indians and most of them are from Punjab. Canada's Indian-origin Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan too had expressed concerns over reports of the "peaceful protesters being brutalised in India".

"The reports of peaceful protesters being brutalized in India are very troubling. Many of my constituents have family there and are worried about the safety of their loved ones. Healthy democracies allow peaceful protest. I urge those involved to uphold this fundamental right," he tweeted Sunday.

BJP wins 3 seats, loses Varanasi

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 4: The BJP has won three seats in the UP Legislative Council, of the six where results have been announced. All these six seats are in the teachers' constituency.

The BJP has won seats in the teachers' constituencies in Lucknow, Meerut and Bareilly

The BJP has won seats in the teachers' constituencies in Lucknow, Meerut and Bareilly. Meanwhile, a major setback for the BJP is that the party candidate has lost Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency, where the Samajwadi Party's Lal Bahari Yadav has won the election.

In Gorakhpur too, an independent Dhruv Kumar Tripathi has won the elections. Meanwhile, candi-



dates and their supporters fought a pitched battle with the police in Jhansi at the counting centre on Friday afternoon.

BJP workers roughed police personnel when they were prevented from entering the counting arena. The Samajwadi Party candidate had been leading in the counting and the BJP workers alleged that malpractices were taking place inside. Meanwhile, in Varanasi, senior IAS

officer Ajay Kumar Singh, who was a poll observer, fainted on duty. He was taken to Shubham hospital where the doctors said that he had suffered a cardiac arrest. He is being treated at the hospital. Meanwhile, Yogeshwar Ram Mishra, CEO, state electoral office, said that the remaining results were likely to be announced on Saturday morning since the counting process was complicated.

Militants attack DDC poll candidate in J&K

This was the first attack on a candidate contesting the eight-phase DDC polls in Jammu and Kashmir being held from November 28 to December 19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 4: In the first attack on a District Development Council (DDC) election contestant in Jammu and Kashmir, militants shot at and injured an Apni Party candidate in Anantnag district on Friday, police said.

Aneesul Islam Ganaie was shot at by the terrorists in Sagam area of Kokernag in the south Kashmir district, a police official said. Ganaie, who is contesting the on-going DDC polls on an Apni Party

ticket, sustained minor injuries to his hand and leg.

"Today at about 1200 hours Anantnag police received information about a terror crime incident at Sagam Kokernag area of District Anantnag, where terrorists had fired upon a DDC candidate. Senior police officers immediately reached the terror crime spot," a police spokesperson said.

This was the first attack on a candidate contesting the eight-phase DDC polls in Jammu and Kashmir being held from November

28 to December 19. The spokesperson said Ganaie was allocated cluster accommodation in Khanabal. "After the end of the scrutiny period, Ganaie was instructed to get escort personnel for campaigning purposes which he did not take," he added. The police spokesperson said all the candidates have already been instructed to inform the police before going out for campaigning.

"The information regarding Ganaie's movement was neither conveyed to PCR nor to concerned police station," he added.

TIDE TURNING WITHIN RAJASTHAN BJP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Dec 4: Equations within the Bharatiya Janata Party's Rajasthan unit seem to be taking a turn as former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje's followers have started a social media campaign pitching her as their leader for the 2023 polls.

Raje, over the last several months, has maintained a conspicuous distance from state party headquarters and has adopted a silence on any of the party's activities as well. The start of these campaigns on social media as such is being seen as a turn in the Raje camps.

The social media handles here these days are flooded with messages of Raje supporters who want

to see her as the next Chief Ministerial candidate. Raje visited the BJP state headquarters twice or thrice in many months now. Her silence and side-lining both have been discussed many times in political circles.

Presently, Satish Poonia is the state party president in Rajasthan and is known to be Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah's choice. Ever since Poonia was appointed as party president, Raje's absence from the BJP state headquarters has been discussed widely.

The rift between Raje and central leadership was quite open post the 2019 Lok Sabha polls when central leadership elevated anti-Raje group



as union ministers, which included Gajendra Singh Shekhawat as a Cabinet Minister while other leaders, including Arjunram Meghwal and Kailash Chaudhary were appointed as Ministers of State.

All three are not known to be

SPECIAL DAY



Chief of the Army Staff General MM Naravane, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh and Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria, after paying homage to the fallen heroes, on the occasion of Navy Day, at National War Memorial in New Delhi

Youth beaten in court for interfaith marriage

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh), Dec 4: In another fallout of the new anti-conversion law, a Muslim youth was allegedly abused and beaten inside the court premises in Aligarh where he had come with a girl, to get legally married.

The incident took place Thursday and video clips of the incident have gone viral on the social media. In the video, the 21-year-old youth is seen being forcibly taken away by a bunch of policemen in an e-rickshaw.

In the other video, the girl is also seen being taken away by

women constables as she shouts that she is an adult and wants to live with the youth. The girl, who is from another faith, had come from Chandigarh for the marriage while the youth, Sonu Malik, who is a local resident. Malik works in Ambala in Haryana. The couple was taken to the Civil Line police station Aligarh but no FIR had been registered till late Thursday. Circle officer (CO) Anil Samaniya said, "The matter is under investigation." The incident comes days after the new anti-conversion law came into force and the first arrest was made late Wednesday in another case in Bareilly.

Vijay Mallya's assets worth ₹14 cr seized

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 4: Businessman Vijay Mallya's property worth Rs 14 crore located in France has been seized under the anti-money laundering law, the Enforcement Directorate said Friday.

It said the action was undertaken by French authorities "on the request of the Enforcement Directorate" and the property bears the address: 32 Avenue FOCH in France.

The value of the seized asset is Euro 1.6 million that is worth about Rs 14 crore, the central probe agency said in a statement. Investigations conducted under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act revealed that "a large amount was remitted abroad from the bank account of Kingfisher Airlines Ltd (KAL)" for creation of the asset, it said.

Mallya, 64, an accused in a bank loan default case of over Rs 9,000 crore involving his defunct Kingfisher Airlines, is in the UK since March, 2016. He is on bail on an extradition warrant executed three years ago by Scotland Yard on April 18, 2017.

The Centre had on October 5 told the apex court that Mallya, a liquor and airlines businessman, cannot be extradited to India until a separate secret legal process in the UK, which is judicial and con-



The value of the seized asset is Euro 1.6 million that is worth about ₹14 crore, the central probe agency said in a statement

fidential in nature, is resolved.

Acting High Commissioner of the UK Jan Thompson had told reporters here last month that Mallya cannot be extradited to India till the resolution of a confidential legal matter and that it is trying to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

The ED booked Mallya and others under money laundering charges in 2016 after studying a CBI FIR into the alleged bank fraud done by his companies and others.

Loco pilot held for rape

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur (UP), Dec 4: A loco pilot has been booked under the stringent POCSO Act and arrested by the Kanpur police on the charges of raping, filming and blackmailing a 13-year-old girl, police said Friday.

Accused Abhishek Patel of Prayagraj was arrested after the girl's father complained to police that his daughter had narrated her ordeal to the family a few days ago. "Abhishek lured the girl on some pretext, sexually assaulted her and also made a video clip of the crime. He later started blackmailing her and also threatened her with dire consequences if she revealed the crime to anyone," Superintendent of Police (South) Deepak Bhuker said.

Abhishek was arrested under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and sent to jail on Thursday. "We have seized his mobile phone which he used to shoot the objectionable video to blackmail her. Further investigations are underway," the SP said.

NIA takes over Nagrota case

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 4: Fifteen days after a Jaish terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Nagrota that saw four militants killed, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday said it has taken over the investigations into the November 19 incident, officials said here.

A senior NIA official related to probe said the case was handed over to the anti-terror probe agency following a notification issued by the Central government. It is also probing another encounter at the same spot that took place in January.

On November 19, four Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists, who were hiding in a truck ferrying them to Kashmir, were killed in an encounter with security forces on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway near Nagrota.

Two policemen were also injured during the gunfight with the terrorists. According to NIA officials, the encounter between the terrorists and security forces started around 5 a.m. at Ban Toll Plaza.

Also, the BJP's alliance with Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal's Rashtriya Loktantra Party widened the differences as Beniwal and Raje never had cordial relations and there was a question mark on this alliance from Raje's followers.

Beniwal in fact had left the BJP and floated his own party following his growing differences with Raje. Raje remained absent when this alliance was announced before the Lok Sabha polls in 2019 in Jaipur. Amid all this, Raje was out of the CM war. She had been the Chief Minister for two terms from 2003-2008 and again from 2013-2018.

Things, however, started changing in the last few months when her followers started pitching for her.

MLAs from her camp have already started an open war with her rival Beniwal. MLA Pratap Singh Singhi warned Hanuman Beniwal on Twitter to stop mudslinging against Raje and termed him as a regional leader who has his influence in a limited region. Beniwal also openly accused Singhi of helping the Gehlot government in different ways. Earlier, Beniwal had accused Raje of helping Gehlot government to retain his government during the political crisis. On Wednesday, former BJP President Ashok Parnami, a staunch supporter of Raje, who was removed by central leadership as party president after it lost bypolls in 2018, joined the war of words with Beniwal.

national



The Centre should withdraw the laws without any delay and should seek apology from the farmers for the misbehaviour
ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

NIGHT TEMP DIPS

Night temperatures remained below the freezing point in both Kashmir and Ladakh Friday as the weather office forecast another spell of rain and snow beginning Sunday



of the day quote

ECI must call an all party meeting adhering to the practice since independence before making major changes in voting procedures, like the current proposal for NRI voting
SITARAM YECHURY | CPI(M) GENERAL SECRETARY

Stubble burning has stopped now but Delhi's air pollution situation remains serious
PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

If the COVID-19 positivity rate in the national capital stays below 4 per cent for five consecutive days, it would mean Delhi has been successful in combating the pandemic
SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

MLC POLLS: MVA EMERGES WITH FLYING COLOURS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 4: In an extended celebration of its first anniversary in office, the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) emerged trumps in 4 of the 6 Maharashtra Legislative Council seats in the biennial elections, the results of which were announced here Friday.

While the MVA has bagged three seats and was leading in one, the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party managed a single win and in the remaining one, an independent candidate was leading.

The elections were held for three Graduates Constituencies, two Teachers Constituencies and finally for the Dhule-Nandurbar Local Bodies Constituency, all of which were hotly contested by the two alliances - the MVA versus the NDA.

In the Aurangabad Division Graduates Constituency, NCP's Satish Chavan won the seat trouncing BJP's Shirish Boralkar,



Nationalist Congress Party workers celebrate outside NCP office in Mumbai, Friday

in Nagpur Division Graduates Constituency, Congress' Abhijit Wanjari defeated the BJP's Sandeep Joshi, while Pune Division Graduates Constituency

was bagged by NCP's Arun Lad, beating BJP's Sangram Deshmukh.

Congress' Jayant Asgaonkar was in a comfortable position in

the Pune Teachers Constituency seat as Independent Dattaraya Sawant trailed behind him, while in the Amravati Division Teachers' Constituency, Independent Kiran Sarnaik led with a safe margin over the Shiv Sena's Shrikant Deshpande.

On anticipated lines, in the Dhule-Nandurbar Local Bodies constituency, academician and veteran social worker Amrish Patel - a former Congress legislator - won with a massive margin, trouncing his Congress rival Abhijeet Patil.

The defeat of BJP in the Nagpur seat is considered a major setback as it was the party's bastion and the seat was once held by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari once before he shifted from state to national politics.

The state's Upper House comprises 78 members of which 12 are from the Governor's quota and currently lying vacant. The latest outcome of the six seats resulted in a sharp verbal war between the MVA-BJP.

UP policemen stall interfaith marriage



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 4: Days after the Uttar Pradesh government promulgated a stringent anti-conversion law, the police here stopped an interfaith wedding, saying the couple did not complete legal formalities.

The families of the bride and the groom were called to Para police station and informed about the new law. They decided to defer the wedding and follow the norms laid for an interfaith marriage under the Special Marriage Act, the police said.

For an interfaith marriage, a couple may get married without changing their religion by registering themselves under the Special Marriage Act. But if anyone wishes to convert to another religion, they will have to submit a declaration at least 60 days in advance to the respective district magistrate or additional district magistrate as per the recently promulgated Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020.

After receiving information about the wedding on Wednesday, a police team reached the venue in Para area's Duda Colony, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP), south, Suresh Chandra Rawat said on Friday. It was found

that preparations were underway to solemnise the marriage of Raina Gupta (22), a chemistry postgraduate, and Mohammad Asif (23), a pharmacist, with the consent of their families, he said.

Both the families were called to Para police station and informed about the new law. "The families were told that the new ordinance has provisions to check religious conversions carried out through allurements, coercion, force, fraud, or marriage. Both the families have now decided to follow the proper process for interfaith marriages," Rawat said.

"The police then asked the families to complete the necessary formalities for the marriage and they agreed," ADCP Rawat said. No FIR was lodged in the

matter, the police said. "Under the provisions of the ordinance, an inquiry will be conducted about the intention or purpose of the conversion and violation of this provision will have the effect of such conversion being rendered null and void," said senior lawyer Hemant Kumar Upadhyay.

The converted person will have to make another declaration in the prescribed format within six months of conversion. A violation of this will invite punishment from six months up to three years with a fine of ₹10,000," he said.

SHORT TAKES

Jumbo found dead

Kolkata: The carcass of an adult elephant was found in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district Friday and it is suspected she was electrocuted to death, a top forest official said. The female elephant was found dead in Huldi Bari tea garden area in Binnaguri in the morning, Chief Wildlife Warden V K Yadav said. "Site inspection suggests electrocution to be the cause of death due to sagging high-tension electric wires. However, it can be confirmed only after the post-mortem examination," he said, quoting a report by the Gorumara DFO. Nine elephants have died in north Bengal this year due to electrocution, as per the Forest Department.

Man ends life

Kolkata: A 63-year-old man, who had lost his job during the COVID-19 crisis, died on Friday after he allegedly jumped from the terrace of a four-storey building in the southern part of the city, police said. Soumitra Sen was in mental stress and jumped off the terrace of the residential building at Golf Club Road at around 4 am, they said. Locals spotted him lying in a pool of blood and took him to a private hospital where he was declared brought dead, a police officer said.

Explosives seized

Shillong: Six persons were arrested in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district with a huge quantity of explosives and detonators, police said Friday. Acting on a tip-off about possible movement of explosives, police conducted raids in the 4 Kilo area on Wednesday night, they said. An SUV with Assam registration was intercepted at Kongong in the Ladrymbai police outpost area, police said. Ten cartons with 250 kg of explosives (2,000 gelatin sticks), 1,000 live detonators and eight rolls of fuse were found in the car, said Assistant Inspector General of Police GK Langrai. Two persons who were travelling in the vehicle were arrested, he said.

Five killed

Kota: Five people were killed after their SUV collided head-on with a truck while trying to overtake another vehicle and fell into a drain on a highway in Rajasthan's Kota district, police said Friday. All the deceased, including the driver of the vehicle, hailed from Sheopur district. The four passengers were relatives. They were farmers who had come to Kota two days ago for the procurement of their crop at the grain mandi, they said.

A NEW BEGINNING



Brides and grooms wearing masks take part in rituals during a mass marriage ceremony in Mirzapur, Friday

SIT to probe deaths of three minors

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mirzapur, Dec 4: A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been constituted to investigate the mysterious deaths of three cousins in Uttar Pradesh's Mirzapur, whose bodies were found Wednesday.

The police had initially registered a kidnapping case, but injury marks found in post-mortem has changed the course of investigation. ADG, Varanasi zone, Brij Bhushan, said: "A panel of two doctors had conducted the post-mortem examination amid videography. As injury marks were found on the bodies, the case, which was initially registered under the IPC section 363 (kidnapping), was later converted into a murder case."

IIT-K HOLDS VIRTUAL PLACEMENT DRIVE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur, Dec 4: For the first time ever, the placement drive at IIT-Kanpur (IIT-K) is being held in an online mode due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Companies are not physically participating in the placement drive, yet the institute placement cell has managed to place around 460 students by the end of day three on Thursday. Last year, during the same period (first three days of the drive), about 520 students had been placed.

This year about 220-230 companies have registered with the IIT for hiring students against about 300 companies which had come to campus during the last placement season.

However, the placement cell and the students claim that a

higher salary package has been offered by any domestic company this year, compared to the last year.

This year, salary package by a domestic company has reached a high of ₹82 lakh per annum against ₹60 lakh offered last year. Also, the international offer (job offer made by an international/multinational company) has reached close to the salary package offered last year.

This year international salary offer has touched a high of ₹1.47 crore per annum against ₹1.54 crore (per annum) offered last year. Placement cell in-charge at IIT-Kanpur, Kantesh Balani said that for the first time, the entire placement drive is being held in an online mode where both students and participating companies are remotely located.

Death row commutation can't be delayed, says SC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 4: The Supreme Court Friday said that once the Centre has decided to recommend a presidential pardon for a convict on death row, pendency of appeal(s) of the co-accused in the apex court cannot be a ground to delay the process.

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde and comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian asked the Centre when it would send a proposal under Article 72 of the Constitution to the President to commute the death sentence of Balwant Singh Rajoana, convicted in the 1995 assassination case of then Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh.

The Article deals with the



President's power to grant pardon, suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases. The bench noted that on September 7 last year, a letter was sent by the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Punjab Chief Secretary to intimate that a proposal would be sent to the President to commute Rajoana's death sentence.

The Chief Justice cited this MHA letter which said that the release of

some prisoners, including Rajoana, was proposed on the 550th birth anniversary of first Sikh master, Guru Nanak Dev. Additional Solicitor General (ASG) KM Nataraj, representing the Centre, told the bench that the proposal was not sent to the President since an appeal of the co-accused in the case is pending.

The bench said: "Pending appeal of other co-accused has no relevance to the decision by the MHA to commute the death sentences of some convicts on the occasion of 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev."

The bench noted that it was not denied that the petitioner has not filed any appeal and thus there was no question of any appeal pending in this court.

Why Centre has softened its stand on farm laws

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

New Delhi, December 4: Hinting a breakthrough in the deadlock, the Union government Thursday, after talks with farm leaders, softened its stand and expressed its willingness in making amendments to the controversial farm laws passed by the Parliament during the Monsoon session.

Initially, the government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were resilient on the laws. The Prime Minister had also stressed that the newly enacted farm laws would double the income of farmers. However, during talks, the government softened its stand. This is very surprising as for the first time the Modi government, in its second term, has been lowering its head. It has been seen earlier that despite massive protests across the country against Citizenship Amendment Act, the government did not budge to the demand of protestors. So, why farmers' protest has forced the government to kneel down? Perhaps, the answer lies in the past. On



Farmers shout slogans during their protest against the Centre's new farm laws, at Singhu border in New Delhi, Friday

October 25, 1988, Mahendra Singh Tikait, leader of Bharatiya Kisan Union and a farmer from western Uttar Pradesh launched a massive rally against the higher electricity and irrigation tariffs to New Delhi. It is believed that around five lakh farmers from 14 states jammed the daily life of people of Delhi. Farmers occupied entire stretch from Vijay Chowk to India Gate with bullocks and tractors. The agitation of farmers continued for seven days and it also forced the ruling Congress

party to change the venue for holding a rally on Indira Gandhi's death anniversary. The then Congress government even used police force, opened fire and lathi-charged but was not able to stop the massive protest. Despite the use of brutal force, the then Congress government could not end farmers' agitation. To quell the protest, the government had to accept 35 demands of Mahendra Singh Tikait, that included waiver of electricity and irrigation charges for farmers and higher prices of

sugarcane and related issues. Mahendra Tikait died in 2011.

The current protests refresh memories of Mahendra Tikait's protest held 32 years ago. The agitation against the controversial laws started in August from Punjab. However, the agitation intensified after the passage of three controversial bills by the Parliament in September. Farmers in Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka Uttar Pradesh also started the agitation but with low intensity.

Farmers in Punjab blocked roads and railway lines. Initially the government did not pay much heed to the protest. In November, the farm unions gave 'Delhi Chalo' call and around lakhs of farmers marched to the national capital.

The government tried to stop farmers at Punjab-Haryana border. Haryana government also resorted to baton-charge and shelled tear gas on them but the use of force increased discontent among people against the government. On November 27, farmers reached at Singhu border (Delhi-Haryana bor-

der) and blocked the main highway connecting Delhi to Punjab, Jammu Kashmir, and Himachal. Farmers have also blocked partially five main entry points to Delhi.

Farmers are mainly protesting against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act. These Acts allow the farmers to sell their produce outside the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) regulated markets and also create mechanism of contract farming. That means the farmers can directly sell their products to private companies.

The farmers fear that the enforcement of these laws would end APMC mandis, the government procurement system, and would also end the minimum support price (MSP) regime on agricultural crops. If this happens, the farmers of Punjab, Haryana Uttar Pradesh would be the biggest sufferer.

Delhi conducts highest tests till date

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 4: With more than 85,000 tests for Covid-19 in a single day, the national capital conducted a record number of tests Friday since the pandemic struck the city, as per the health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

The capital city tested 85,003 samples in the last 24 hours, of which 4,067 returned positive. The city also reported 4,862 recoveries and 73 deaths in the same duration. The highest number of tests conducted till date pushed the positivity rate further down to 4.8 per cent, the government data showed.

The total tally of cases in Delhi has reached 5,86,125 while the death toll has risen to 9,497. Meanwhile, of the total 85,003 tests conducted in the last 24 hours, 40,191 were done through RT-PCR and 44,812 were Rapid Antigen Tests. The capital city has conducted 65,85,703 tests so far, government data showed on Friday.

Meanwhile, the number of containment zones in the national capital has been raised to 5,909. After battling the third surge with lack of healthcare facilities, and huge number of daily new infections and fatalities in November, December has arrived as a relief for Delhi. The number of daily cases and the positivity rate has gone down drastically this month. While the daily new cases are now limited to below 5,000, the positivity rate is also plunging below 5 per cent. The city had not reported the positivity rate this low since October 7.

However, in spite of the positivity rate and the number of cases going drastically down, fatalities have remained a matter of worry. In November alone, the capital city has reported 2,663 deaths which is 29 per cent of the total fatalities Delhi has witnessed since the outbreak of the pandemic in March. Currently, 6,653 out of 18,708 beds are occupied in the hospitals, 441 out of 7,942 beds in the dedicated Covid Care Centres and 141 out of 562 beds in the dedicated Covid Health Centres.

international



We have proven we can reduce our emissions and create hundreds of thousands of jobs in the process – uniting businesses, academics, NGOs and local communities in a common goal to go further and faster to tackle climate change
BORIS JOHNSON | UK PRIME MINISTER

NEW REVELATION

According to the international team of scientists, the diversity of microbes below the seafloor is as rich as on Earth's surface



of the day quote

We oppose any individual, organization or country interfering in Hong Kong's affairs, meddling in Hong Kong's judicial sovereignty and harboring Hong Kong criminals in any way
HUA CHUNYING | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON



South Africa will impose additional restrictive measures in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality in an effort to stem the resurgence of the Covid-19 cases
CYRIL RAMAPHOSA | PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA



India remains committed to help Yemen with humanitarian assistance
K NAGARAJ NAIDU | UN AMBASSADOR



SHORT TAKES

Anthony Fauci apologises

London: Dr Anthony Fauci, America's top infectious diseases expert, has apologised after his remarks created a bit of a stir here for implying that the UK's regulator had "rushed" the process when it became the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech for rollout. In an interview with the BBC, Fauci stressed that his remarks had been misconstrued as criticism of the UK's vaccine approval process, in which he has a great deal of confidence.

Rain havoc in western Indonesia

Medan: Torrential rains in Indonesia's third largest city caused four rivers to overflow, flooding thousands of homes and killing at least two people, officials said Friday. The local disaster mitigation agency said rescuers were searching for six missing people, including a toddler, after the heavy rains in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra province.

EU to retain ban on PIA flights

Islamabad: The European Union (EU) has moved to retain its ban on Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flights from operating in the bloc's member states, expressing dissatisfaction over the steps taken by Islamabad's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to address licensing and safety concerns, the media reported Friday. Responding to a letter sent by the PIA, the European Union Air Safety Agency (EASA) Thursday told the flag carrier that since the CAA had not taken any steps to address the licensing system, the ban will remain in effect. The Express Tribune reported.

Thousands killed in Ethiopia conflict

Nairobi: Several thousand combatants have been killed in Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region, an official with the fugitive regional government has asserted, although claims remain difficult to verify a month after the fighting erupted between Ethiopian and regional forces. Getachew Reda, a senior adviser to the Tigray leader, in an interview with Tigray TV aired Thursday urged young people and others in the region to "rise and deploy to battle in tens of thousands" days after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed over the weekend declared victory.

US spy chief warns on China threat

The Trump administration has taken a hard line on China, imposing tariffs on Chinese goods and accusing Beijing of intellectual property theft

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 4: China is the "greatest threat" to democracy and freedom since World War II and Beijing was preparing for confrontation with the US and intended to dominate the world "economically, militarily and technologically", according to America's top intelligence official.

Writing in the Wall Street Journal, Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe said China was growing its power by stealing US secrets and then replacing US firms in the market.

"The intelligence is clear: Beijing intends to dominate the US. And the rest of the planet economically, militarily and technologically. Many of China's major public initiatives and prominent companies offer only a layer of camouflage to the activities of the Chinese Communist Party," according to Ratcliffe.

The Trump administration's most senior intelligence official's stark warning was just the latest from senior administration officials about China's intentions, with some warning of possible military action in Asia and others pointing to unprecedented efforts to influence the incoming Biden administration.

The op-ed comes as the Trump administration has recently taken several punitive measures against Beijing, sharply limiting visas for members of the ruling Communist Party of China and unveiling new



sanctions on Chinese companies.

The Trump administration also ordered China to close their consulate in Houston earlier this year due to allegations that Chinese diplomats at the mission were intimidating US citizens and carrying out espionage efforts. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo earlier this year defined China's Communist Party as the "central threat of our times."

"This generation will be judged by its response to China's effort to reshape the world in its own image and replace America as the dominant superpower. The intelligence is clear: Our response must be as well," Ratcliffe wrote in the op-ed piece. "Beijing is preparing for an open-ended period of confrontation with the U.S. Washington should also be prepared. Leaders must work across partisan divides to understand the threat, speak about it openly, and take action to address it," he added.

In Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying dismissed Ratcliffe's article as yet another move to spread "false in-

formation, political viruses and lies" in hopes of damaging China's reputation and China-US relations.

"It offered nothing new but repeated the lies and rumours aimed at smearing China and playing up the China threat by any means," Hua said at a daily briefing on Friday. "It's another hodgepodge of lies being produced by the relevant departments of the US government for some time," she said.

Ratcliffe also accused Chinese intelligence services of introducing vulnerabilities into technology offered by top Chinese tech firms such as Huawei and said allies using Chinese technology would not have US intelligence shared with them.

He said US intelligence showed that China had carried out "human testing" on troops with the aim of developing soldiers with "biologically enhanced capabilities". He said China had engaged in a "massive influence campaign" targeting US members of Congress and their staff by encouraging unions at big firms to tell local politicians to take a softer line on China or face losing union members' votes.

US approves sale of \$90mn worth military equipment to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 4: The US has approved the sale of \$90 million worth of military hardware and services to India in support of its fleet of C-130J Super Hercules military transport aircraft.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to strengthen the US-Indian strategic relationship and improve the security of a "Major Defence Partner", the Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) of the Department of Defence said Thursday.

In a major sales notification to Congress, DSCA said that India continues to be an important force for political stability, peace and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region.

Among the requests made by India include aircraft consumables spares and repair/return parts; Cartridge Actuated



PICTURE CREDIT: US AIR FORCE

Devices/Propellant Actuated Devices (CAD/PAD) fire extinguisher cartridges; flare cartridges; Advanced Radar Warning Receiver shipset; 10 Lightweight Night Vision Binocular; 10 AN/AVS-9 Night Vision Goggle; GPS; Electronic Warfare; instruments and lab equipment support.

The estimated total amount is USD 90 million.

The Pentagon said that the proposed sale ensures the previously procured aircraft operates effectively to serve the needs of the Indian Air Force (IAF), the Army and the Navy transport requirements, local and international humanitarian assistance, and regional

disaster relief. This sale of spares and services will enable the IAF to sustain a mission-ready status with respect to the C-130J transport. India will have no difficulty absorbing this additional sustainment support, it said.

According to the Pentagon, the proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region. The prime contractor will be Lockheed-Martin Company, Marietta, Georgia. In a major move in 2016, the US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner" intending to elevate defence trade and technology sharing to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.

Adolf Hitler wins vote in Namibia

AGENCIES

Windhoek, Dec 4: While many Namibians have names originating from the ex-colonial power Germany, a newly-elected municipal councillor has overnight romped to prominence, not because of his victory but because he is called Adolf Hitler.

Adolf Hitler Uunona, 54, a politician of the ruling SWAPO party was last week elected local government councillor for Ompundja constituency in northern Namibia, with 85 percent of the ballots cast.

Sounding a tad annoyed, Uunona told AFP December 3 he was perplexed that people were intrigued by his being named after one of the world's most notorious dictators.

He refused to discuss the reasons he was named Adolf Hitler.

"I am not going to entertain the conversation, there is no reason we should be sitting here, having an entire conversation about my name," he retorted. "You really want us to have an entire conversation about my name? How will that make Namibia a better country, how will it contribute to the development of our country?"

Uunona asked when contacted by an AFP journalist. "No plans for world domination" the journalist said he has no plans of world domination or to subjugate Oshana, the region in the north of Namibia, where he secured over 84 percent votes to win the election.

German colonized Namibia - then South West Africa - from 1884 to 1915. After World War I, the League of Nations mandated South Africa to administer the territory as a protectorate which ruled for 75 years.

German occupiers in Namibia killed tens of thousands of indigenous Herero and Nama people in massacres from 1904 to 1908, which historians have called the first genocide of the 20th century.



Adolf Hitler Uunona



RAGING INFERNO

Firefighters battle a mulch and pallet fire burning out of control, fanned by Santa Ana winds in and around a recycling yard near Wilson Street and Fleetwood Drive in Riverside, California

PTI PHOTO

3 more JuD leaders get 15 years in jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Dec 4: A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has sentenced three more leaders of Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) to 15 years imprisonment each in two more terror financing cases.

Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore Judge Ijaz Ahmad Butt handed down the sentence to Abdul Salam bin Muhammad, Zafar Iqbal and Muhammad Ashraf on Thursday. JuD chief Saeed's brother-in-law Prof Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki was sentenced to six months

imprisonment in each case.

The suspects were presented in the court amid high security and the media was not allowed to cover the proceedings.

The sentencing comes a day after Saeed's spokesperson Yahya Mujahid was handed down another 15 years in jail by the ATC in a terror financing case. Mujahid was last month given a collective imprisonment of 32 years in two terror financing cases by the ATC. JuD's senior leader Zafar Iqbal will now undergo a collective imprisonment of 41 years in terror financing cases.

B'desh begins Rohingyas relocation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 4: Bangladesh Friday relocated the first batch of 1,600 Rohingyas to a remote island in the Bay of Bengal for a "better abode" amid reservation from rights groups fearing the place's vulnerability to tropical cyclones and climate change.

Rohingyas, who are Myanmar's ethnic minority Muslim community, fled their homeland to evade a ruthless military clampdown since August 25, 2017 and after initial reluctance Bangladesh offered them the refuge on humanitarian grounds. "The Rohingyas onboard six navy and one military ship reached the Bhashan Char (island)



AP PHOTO

this afternoon," Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Shah Rezwana Hayat told the media.

A batch of 1,600 Rohingyas were the first group of people who agreed to move to a "better abode", while

19 more ships were kept ready to ferry fellow refugees to the island in the next few days. Officials earlier said that Bangladesh spent \$350 million in the recent past to build the facilities to accommodate 100,000 refugees of over 1.1 million Rohingyas living in crammed makeshift camps in southeastern Cox's Bazar, which borders their homeland in Myanmar's Rakhine state. Aid agencies and rights groups, however, expressed their reservation against the relocation campaign fearing the vulnerability of the island to tropical cyclones and climate change. Many Rohingyas were reportedly unwilling to move to an isolated place severing ties with relatives and neighbours.

Govt accuses FB of discriminating against US workers

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Dec 4: The Trump administration is accusing Facebook in a lawsuit of discriminating against US workers in favour of foreigners with special visas to fill more than 2,600 high-paying jobs.

The Justice Department announced the suit Thursday, alleging that the social media giant refused to recruit, consider or hire qualified and available U.S. Workers for the positions that Facebook reserved for temporary visa holders. Facebook sponsored the visa holders for "green

cards" authorizing them to work permanently.

The so-called H-1B visas are a staple of Silicon Valley, widely used by software programmers and other employees of major US Technology companies

The lawsuit followed a two-year investigation by the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "Facebook intentionally created a hiring system in which it denied qualified U.S. Workers a fair opportunity to learn about and apply for jobs" that it instead sought to channel to temporary visa holders,



REUTERS PHOTO

the department said in a news release.

The positions at issue offered an average salary of around \$156,000.

The department is seeking unspecified civil penalties and back pay on behalf of US Workers deemed to have been denied employment.

"Facebook has been cooperating with the DOJ in its review of this issue and while we dispute the allegations in the complaint, we cannot comment further on pending litigation," the company, which is based in Menlo Park, California, said in a statement.

President Donald Trump has long advocated restrictions on both legal and illegal immigration, and has raised concerns for years about foreigners competing with American citizens for jobs.

In June, his administration extended a ban on green cards issued

outside the US until the end of the year and added many temporary work visas to the freeze, including those used heavily by tech companies and multinational corporations for their employees. Officials cast the move as a way to free up jobs in an economy reeling from the coronavirus.

Trump also has been persistently critical of Big Tech companies, accusing them of bias against conservative viewpoints on their social media platforms and threatening to remove their legal protection for content posted by users.



I have legally authorised the export of up to 30% of products. We're going to convert Venezuela into an exporting nation
NICOLAS MADURO | PRESIDENT, VENEZUELA

SENSEX HITS 45K MARK

The BSE Sensex crossed the 45,000 mark for the first time ever, after the RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said that the accommodative stance would continue for the rest of FY21 and revised the growth prospects. Around 11:10 am, Sensex touched an all-time high of 45,033.19 points. The Nifty50, also touched a



of the day quote

The availability of trained and industry relevant technical talent is an imperative ingredient for India's growth story. This is where IGnITE aims to bring in a systemic change in India's skilling environment



We have been working in the Indian market for over five years and have modelled a multi-million investments in the country



In the current year, PE investments have surpassed strategic investments in the country due to the prevailing coronavirus pandemic situation



SHORT TAKES

Dhenkanal among top three: Niti

New Delhi: Mamit district of Mizoram has topped the rankings of aspirational districts by government think-tank Niti Aayog for October. Banka (Bihar) and Dhenkanal (Odisha) have been placed at the second and third positions, respectively, Niti Aayog said in a tweet. Guna (Madhya Pradesh) and Pakur (Jharkhand) stood at fourth and fifth positions. The rankings took into account incremental progress made by over 112 aspirational districts across six developmental areas during October.

ADB approves \$190mn loan

New Delhi: Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$190 million (over ₹1,400 crore) loan for modernisation and upgradation of power distribution system in Bangalore. "ADB has approved a combined sovereign and non-sovereign loan of \$190 million to modernise and upgrade the power distribution system in Bangalore city in the state of Karnataka, India," ADB said in a release Friday. The funding for the Bangalore Smart Energy Efficient Power Distribution Project by ADB includes a \$100 million sovereign loan and a \$90 million without sovereign guarantee loan to BESCOM.

Flipkart unveils '2GUD Local'

New Delhi: Flipkart's independent value-driven platform, 2GUD Friday said it has launched '2GUD Local' aimed at extending the benefits of e-commerce to traditional retail businesses. The new format will offer offline stores, brands and shopping destinations an opportunity to unlock the benefits of technology and the social commerce hybrid retail model to reach millions of pan-India consumers, a statement said. 2GUD Local will enable local stores and retailers to expand their digital footprint to connect more effectively with their consumers, it added.

RBI allows RRBs to access LAF

Mumbai: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Friday allowed regional rural banks (RRBs) to access the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF), marginal standing facility (MSF) and call or notice money market, aimed at facilitating better liquidity management for these lenders.

Economy reviving faster than expected: FM

The RBI Friday also revised its growth outlook, seeing a milder 7.5% contraction in the fiscal year to March 2021 as opposed to its October forecast of a 9.5% shrinkage of the GDP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 4: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday said the economy reflatting at a rate faster than previously expected is not just due to pent up demand but also because of additional demand coming in, and the recovery will sustain.

Without delving into the budget she will present in two months, she said the government and the Reserve Bank are coordinating for a quicker economic recovery.

She also said the uptick in inflation, which held back the RBI from cutting interest rates on Friday, was seasonal and she was not overtly worried about it.

"The blip in inflation particularly of food items will ease out. I don't see this inflation, particularly on food items, continuing where it is, it will come down," she said at the HT Leadership Summit.

The shallower-than-expected contraction in GDP at (-) 7.5% in the July-September quarter has been attributed by some analysts to pent up demand for the lockdown pe-



riod and the festive season. They assume the recovery will flip once the festive season is over.

However, Sitharaman said the consistent ₹1 lakh crore GST collections for two months and expansion plans of industry in core sectors indicate that there is additional demand in the economy.

"I am not sure if just the pent up and festival demand will explain the more than ₹1 lakh crore collection in GST for two months...

I'm also talking to various industry leaders who are looking at capacity expansion.

"Core sector industry cement, iron and steel are all going towards expansion. It is an indication that additional demand is coming in. It is not something that is pent up or festival driven demand. It is likely to sustain," she emphasised.

The RBI Friday also revised its growth outlook, seeing a milder 7.5% contraction in the fiscal year

to March 2021 as opposed to its October forecast of a 9.5% shrinkage of the GDP.

This after a shallower-than-expected decline in the gross domestic product (GDP) in the July-September quarter.

India entered a technical recession last week - it was the first time in decades that Asia's third-largest economy saw two consecutive quarters of contraction. A coronavirus lockdown between late-March and May led to a collapse in private consumption and investment demand as well as significant job losses, which further curtailed spending.

Sitharaman said the fiscal deficit in the current fiscal to March 2021 will certainly be higher than the one projected in the budget for 2020-21. She, however, did not give specific details.

On inflation, she said "I am actually not worried about inflation to the extent that there are seasonal ups and downs in prices and commodities where we are seeing hike in prices are largely seasonal."

'Allowing corps to start banks not RBI's view'

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 4: Allowing corporates to promote banks is not the RBI's view, and the central bank will take a decision on it and other suggestions made by an internal panel recently only after perusing public comments, Governor Shaktikanta Das said Friday.

It can be noted that RBI's Internal Working Group's (IWG) suggestion to allow corporates into banking has received sharp criticism from experts, including former RBI governors, deputy governors and also chief economic advisors, who fear doing so may put depositors' money at risk as lending can happen to entities within a group.

The IWG has also suggested allowing NBFCs with over ₹50,000 crore in assets to be considered for conversion to bank, and also lowering the time taken before a payments bank can convert into a small finance bank. These proposals have also received some criticism. Without going into the specifics, Das said, "It is a report by an IWG of RBI. It should not be seen as RBI's point of view or decision. That has to be very clearly under-



It can be noted that RBI's IWG suggestion to allow corporates into banking has received sharp criticism from experts

stood." He said the five-member IWG, which had two members of RBI's central board and three officials from RBI, acted "independently" after deliberations and gave a certain point of view. "RBI has not taken any decision on these issues so far," Das said, adding that the central bank will peruse the stakeholders' and public comments before arriving at a "considered decision". It can be noted that as per the report, only one member of the panel supported allowing large corporate or industrial houses to promote banks.

HDFC ERGO IMPLEMENTS PMFBY FOR FARMERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: HDFC ERGO General Insurance Company, will be implementing the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) for loanee and non-loanee farmers in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Nabarangapur, Kendrapara, Debagarh, Bargarh, Bhadrak, Gajapati, Jajapur and Jagatsinghpur for Rabi 2020.

PMFBY scheme insures farmers against any losses in crop yield arising out of a wide range of external risks such as drought, floods, dry spells, landslides, cyclones, hurricanes, hailstorm, inundation, pests, diseases and others.

For the purpose of determining the loss in the yield, the State government will plan and conduct Crop Cutting Experiments (CCEs) on the notified crops in areas notified for the scheme. In case the yield data, based on CCEs conducted, concludes to be low then the farmers will be considered to have suffered a shortfall in their yield for which the claims will be



payable to the farmers.

The scheme provides insurance cover for all stages of the crop cycle including pre-sowing, harvesting and post-harvest risks. All the products under the PMFBY scheme are approved by the Department of Agriculture, Government of Odisha. Farmers can reach out to their respective banks, Common Service Centres (CSCs) in their district or contact the authorized HDFC ERGO agents to obtain the insurance cover under the PMFBY scheme.

Tata Power secures LoI for WESCO, SOUTCO discoms

THE COMPANY WILL HOLD 51% EQUITY WHEREAS THE REMAINING 49% WILL BE HELD BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: India's largest integrated power utility Tata Power Company Limited (TPCL) won the bids for two electricity distribution companies (discoms) in Odisha—the Western Electricity Supply Company of Odisha (WESCO) and the Southern Electricity Supply Utility of Odisha Ltd (SOUTCO).

Tata Power, Friday, received the Letter of Intent (LoI) from the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) for the distribution and retail supply of electricity in state's five circles of WESCO consisting of Rourkela, Burla, Bhawanipatna, Bolangir, Bargarh and six circles of SOUTCO consisting of Ganjam City, Berhampur, Aska, Bhanjannagar, Jeypore and



Rayagada.

As per conditions of Bid Documentation, Tata Power will hold 51% equity with management control and the state-owned GRIDCO will have the remaining 49% equity stake in the company.

The license enables Tata Power to serve the consumers of WESCO and SOUTCO with a geographical spread of more than 47,000 sq km each and will manage a network of more than 1,00,000 circuit km each. The license period for the two distribution utilities shall be 25 years. While WESCO serves close to

2.0 million consumers with annual input energy of 7,520 MUs, SOUTCO serves close to 2.3 million consumers with annual input energy of 3,470 MUs. With WESCO and SOUTCO, with the addition of both the discoms, Tata Power's consumer base will reach 10 million consumers from the present base of 5.7 million across Mumbai, Delhi, Central part of Odisha and Ajmer.

The company will retain all the existing employees of WESCO and SOUTCO and their service conditions shall continue as per their existing policy structure.

Tata Power's CEO & MD Praveer Sinha said, "We are thankful to the Odisha government and OERC for giving us this opportunity. We are committed to provide reliable, affordable and quality power supply along with superior customer service, backed by innovative technology."

'Indian economy is gradually recovering'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 4: India's economy, severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, is gradually recovering, the International Monetary Fund has said. India's economy recovered faster than expected in the September quarter as a pick-up in manufacturing helped GDP clock a lower contraction of 7.5% and held out hopes for further improvement on better consumer demand.

"India has indeed been severely affected by the pandemic but is gradually recovering," IMF chief spokesman Gerry Rice told reporters.

Fiscal, monetary, and financial sector measures announced to date provided much-needed support to the economy, including businesses, agriculture, and vulnerable households, Rice said in response to a question on the IMF's assessment of India's economy during the coronavirus pandemic.

"To further support growth, we believe the Indian authorities should prioritize swift implementation of the existing support programs and may need to consider expanding their scope, as warranted," Rice said.

In her address to the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC), the ministerial-level committee of the IMF, through video conference, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that a V-shaped pattern of recovery is being seen in several high-level indicators.

Fuel supply by Coal India to power sector drops 7%

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 4: The despatch of coal by CIL to the power sector declined 6.6% to 236.97 million tonne (MT) in April-October period of the ongoing fiscal. The state-owned company had supplied 253.76 MT of coal to the power sector in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, according to government data.

The fuel supply by Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCL) to the power sector in the seven-month period dropped to 18.47 MT from 29.82 MT a year ago, it said. In October, the fuel supply by SCL declined to 3.32 MT from 4.19 MT in



the corresponding month of previous fiscal, it said.

However, the despatch of coal by Coal India Ltd (CIL) to the power sector increased 13.5 per cent to 38.50 MT in October from 33.91 MT in the year-ago period, the data said.

The government had imposed

nationwide lockdown on March 25 to contain the spread of COVID-19. Power consumption started declining from March onwards due to fewer economic activities in the country.

The COVID-19 situation affected power consumption for six months in a row from March to August this year. Power consumption on year-on-year basis declined 8.7% in March, 23.2% in April, 14.9 per cent in May, 10.9% in June, 3.7% in July and 1.7% in August.

CIL, one of the major suppliers of the fossil fuel to the power sector, accounts for over 80% of the domestic coal output. It is eyeing one billion tonne of output by 2023-24.

Amway eyes ₹100cr from Herb Nutritions

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 4: Amway India, one of the country's leading FMCG direct selling companies, foresees its traditional herb nutrition category to clock sales of ₹100 crores this year. To accommodate the growing demand for herbal products, Amway is also gearing up to strengthen its local sourcing of herbal extracts in India.

Going by the trend of prioritising holistic nutrition and wellness, the company foresees the nutrition category to grow faster with the current contribution of over 50% to 65% by 2024, which includes a significant contribution from the

herbal nutrition segment.

CEO of Amway India Anshu Budhraja said, "With the growing consumer preference for herbal, Amway ventured into the traditional herb nutrition space with Nutrilite Traditional Herbs Range in 2018, which received a tremendous response.

Presently, comprising of just six products made from native ingredients such as Tulsi, Ashwagandha, Mulethi, and more, the range is expected to reach its ₹100 crore sales mark this year. Going by the market scenario, we expect the traditional herbs range contribution to the overall nutrition category to double from 10% today, to 20% by 2024."

'Hike in contactless transaction limit to further digital drive'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 4: The RBI allowing a higher contactless transaction limit of ₹5,000 against ₹2,000 currently will drive digital payments further in the country and shows the central bank's commitment to promote a less-cash economy, industry players said Friday.

The Reserve Bank at its bi-monthly monetary policy proposed to enhance the contactless card transaction limit from ₹2,000 to ₹5,000 from January 1 to further the adoption of digital payments in a safe and secure manner. "This is a welcome step by the RBI to increase transactions and e-mandate limit. The increased limit will also help to boost the av-

erage value of transaction and push the adoption of digital payments. This step re-affirms the commitment of the country to become a less-cash economy," said Dilip Asbe - MD & CEO, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

The move will also help customers to on-board into BHIM UPI for performing easy and convenient P2P and P2M transactions, Asbe said. The RBI said it will issue operational instructions on this separately. "Enhancing limit of contactless card transactions will drive adoption of digital payments. Consumer convenience and benefits are driving payments behaviour. Contactless payments have gained traction from consumers, issuers and merchants as a fast,



easy and secure way to transact," said Srinji Krish, President, Fiserv Global Services.

He said this technology will continue to improve digital usage as it offers better engagement, improving customer experience and loyalty.

Enhancing limit of contactless card transactions will drive adoption of digital payments. Consumer convenience and benefits are driving payments behaviour. Contactless payments have gained traction from consumers as a fast, easy and secure way to transact

SRINJI KRISH | PRESIDENT, FISERV GLOBAL SERVICES

"Be it a monthly kirana bill, spa service or a course fee, the spectrum of products and service that can be paid through contactless payments will definitely expand with this new move," he said.

At Mswipe, contactless payments have spiralled from 13 per cent of total transactions in January 2020 to 30 per cent of total transactions in November 2020, he added.

Industry body ASSOCHAM President Niranjan Hiranandani welcomed the announcements of increasing the limit for contactless card transactions and making the RTGS system operational round the clock. "The decision to enhance the upper limit on contactless card payments from ₹2,000 to ₹5,000 is progressive and will

increase customer convenience, especially in these pandemic times when social distancing and staying contactless is crucial. This should also further boost digital payments, which would help the overall financial ecosystem," said Naveen Kukreja - CEO & Co-founder, Paisabazaar.Com.

Asbe of NPCI further said that the enhancement in contactless transaction limit will help RuPay cardholders to make secured payments.

Also, this will be a major boost to the users of recently launched UPI AutoPay functionality for the customers to execute their high ticket recurring payments like utility bills, investments, two-wheeler EMIs, consumer durable EMIs etc seamlessly, he said.

INDIA DRAW FIRST BLOOD

'Concussion Sub' Chahal shines as Men in Blue beat Australia in the first T20I by 11 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Canberra, Dec 4: Yuzvendra Chahal turned out to be the perfect concussion substitute after an injured Ravindra Jadeja did his part with the bat as the duo played their roles to perfection in India's impressive 11-run victory over Australia in the first T20I here, Friday.

While Jadeja smashed an unbeaten 44 off 23 balls to propel India to 161/7, his head injury turned out to be a blessing in disguise with India unleashing Chahal (3/25) on an Australian side caught completely off-guard. The hosts could manage only 150/7 in 20 overs.

Credit was also due to the lion-hearted effort from debutant Thangarasu Natarajan (3/30) and off-spinner Washington Sundar (0/16), who bowled well in Powerplay.

ICC match referee David Boon allowed the visitors a 'like for like' replacement, as mandated by the rules, for Jadeja in Chahal even though home team coach Justin Langer looked visibly angry.

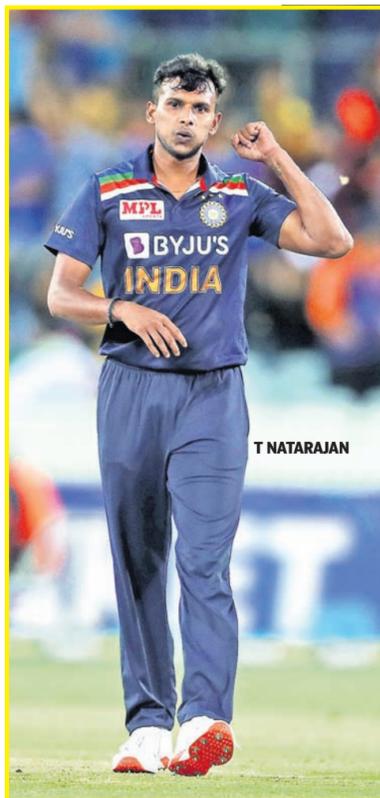
And to make matters worse, Chahal dismissed two form men - Aaron Finch (35) and Steve Smith (12) - in his first two overs to turn the game on its head. At the end of it all, he also scooped the man of the match honours for his superb effort.

The Australians were not prepared for Chahal, who bowled way better in his most preferred format, varying the pace of his deliveries and using the flight to good effect.

Natarajan, whose nerves had eased after a decent ODI debut, was right on the money and got one to straighten catching Glenn Maxwell plumb in-front. If that wasn't enough, Natarajan snuffed out a frustrated D'Arcy Short (34) to make it 113/4 and India didn't have to look back from then on.

Earlier, KL Rahul continued his impressive run in the shortest format with yet another fifty but it took Jadeja's brilliant back-end flourish to take India to a fighting total.

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa (1/20)



T NATARAJAN



YUZVENDRA CHAHAL

and all-rounder Moises Henriques (3/22) were brilliant between overs 11th and 15th, which shifted the momentum in favour of the home team till Jadeja came into play with a 44 not out off 23 balls.

During 11th and 15th over, India scored 22 runs and lost three wickets in Sanju Samson (23), Manish Pandey (2) and Rahul.

However, Jadeja, who suffered from hamstring trouble, launched into Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc in the final two overs that yielded 34 runs taking India to a par-score at the Manuka Oval.

How they reacted...

Virat Kohli says

On concussion substitute: There were no plans of having Yuzi (Chahal) in the game. Jaddu (Jadeja) got a knock on the side of the head and was a bit dizzy and still is. Concussion replacements are strange things, today it worked for us maybe another time he wouldn't have found a like-for-like

On Chahal's performance: He came in and bowled really well. The pitch offered him enough. He showed character to squeeze the opponents. I thought they had a great start. They were cruising. The batters offered us a few wickets. That is T20 cricket for you

On overall show: In Australia, you need to play hard and show intensity till the end. He (Jadeja) batted beautifully in the last game. Natarajan looks like he can improve a lot. (Deepak) Chahal bowled well as well. Chahal got us back in the game. Hardik's catch was a game-changer as well

Aaron Finch says

On match performance: We probably leaked a few too many runs at the end (while bowling) and then (during the chase) in the middle phase struggled to heat boundaries

On his injury: Bit of a hip or glute, we'll wait and see. It progressively got worse throughout the game

Yuzvendra Chahal says

There was no pressure for me when we were batting and then suddenly I got to know I was going to play. I have played so many games so I was mentally fit. I learnt from my ODI mistakes. In ODIs, I flighted the ball a lot but here I just saw the way Zampa bowled, I tried to do the same as well

SCORECARD

INDIA INNINGS	R	B	4s	6s
KL Rahul c Abbott b Henriques	51	40	5	1
Shikhar Dhawan b Starc	1	6	0	0
Virat Kohli c & b Swepson	9	9	1	0
Sanju Samson c Swepson b Henriques	23	15	1	1
Manish Pandey c Hazlewood b Zampa	2	8	0	0
Hardik Pandya c Smith b Henriques	16	15	0	1
Ravindra Jadeja not out	44	23	5	1
Washington Sundar c Abbott b Starc	7	5	1	0
Deepak Chahal not out	0	0	0	0
Extras: 8 (LB-2, W-5, NB-1);				
Total: 161/7 (20 Overs)				
Fall: 1/11 (Dhawan), 2/48 (Kohli), 3/86 (Samson), 4/90 (Pandey), 5/92 (Rahul), 6/114 (Pandya), 7/152 (Sundar).				
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 4-0-34-2, Josh Hazlewood 4-0-39-0, Adam Zampa 4-0-20-1, Sean Abbott 2-0-23-0, Mitchell Swepson 2-0-21-1, Moises Henriques 4-0-22-3.				
AUSTRALIA INNINGS	R	B	4s	6s
D'Arcy Short c Pandya b Natarajan	34	38	3	0
Aaron Finch c Pandya b Chahal	35	26	5	1
Steve Smith c Samson b Chahal	12	9	0	1
Glenn Maxwell lbw b Natarajan	2	3	0	0
Moises Henriques lbw b Chahal	30	20	1	1
Matthew Wade c Kohli b Chahal	7	9	0	0
Sean Abbott not out	12	8	0	1
Mitchell Starc b Natarajan	1	2	0	0
Mitchell Swepson not out	12	5	1	1
Extras: 5 (LB-4, W-1);				
Total: 150/7 (20 Overs)				
Fall: 1/56 (Finch), 2/72 (Smith), 3/75 (Maxwell), 4/113 (Short), 5/122 (Wade), 6/126 (Henriques), 7/127 (Starc).				
Bowling: Deepak Chahal 4-0-29-1, Washington Sundar 4-0-16-0, Mohammed Shami 4-0-46-0, Thangarasu Natarajan 4-0-30-3, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-25-3.				

Jadeja out of remainder of T20I series

CANBERRA: All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja was Friday ruled out of the remaining two T20Is against Australia after he suffered concussion during the first match of the series here, the BCCI said. Right-arm pacer Shardul Thakur was named as Jadeja's replacement.

"He (Jadeja) will not take any further part in the ongoing T20I series. The All-India Senior Selection Committee has added Shardul Thakur to India's T20I squad," the BCCI said in a statement.

The BCCI said Jadeja remains under observation and will be taken for further scans if required based on the assessment Saturday morning.

"Ravindra Jadeja sustained a concussion after being hit on the left side of his forehead in the final over of the first innings of the first T20I against Australia in Canberra 4th December 2020," the BCCI said.



"The diagnosis was confirmed based on a clinical assessment in the dressing room during the innings break by the BCCI Medical Team," it added.

Jadeja was hit on the head by a Mitchell Starc bouncer in the final over of the Indian innings, but before that he was seen limping while running between the wickets.

Williamson knock puts NZ in control



Kane Williamson celebrates after completing his double century, Thursday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hamilton, Dec 4: Captain Kane Williamson (251, 412b, 34x4, 2x6) scored a double century, his third 200-plus score and highest in Tests, before making an assertive declaration at 519/7 Friday on the second day of the first Test against the West Indies.

Williamson waited for all-rounder Kyle Jamieson (51 n o, 64b, 5x4, 2x6) to post his maiden half century before declaring with about 26 overs left in the day's play.

At stumps the West Indies, hit by minor injuries to batsman Darren Bravo and wicketkeeper Shane Dowrich, were 49 without loss.

Openers Kraigg Braithwaite (20 batting) and John Campbell (22 batting) batted doggedly through the late afternoon to ensure the tourists went to stumps without losing a wicket. The second day was dominated by Williamson's superb in-

nings. He batted almost 10-1/2 hours and eclipsed his previous-highest Test score of 242 against Sri Lanka at Wellington in 2015.

Williamson is only the third New Zealander after Brendon McCullum and Stephen Fleming to score three double centuries in Tests.

He resumed Friday at 97 not out and reached his 22nd century from 224 balls. New Zealand's commanding total mounted as he passed 150, then 200 from 369 deliveries.

Williamson had a lucky break on 221 when he was caught behind by stand-in wicketkeeper Shamarr Brooks from Roach's bowling. The dismissal was annulled when the television umpire found Roach had over-stepped.

BRIEF SCORES: New Zealand 519/7d (Kane Williamson 251, Tom Latham 86, Kyle Jamieson 51 n o; Shannon Gabriel 3/89, Kemar Roach 3/114); West Indies 49 for no loss at stumps. Match to continue.

Spurs, Milan reach Europa knockouts

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 4: AC Milan came from two goals down to beat Celtic 4-2 and to qualify for the Europa League's knockout stage, while Tottenham advanced despite giving up a late equaliser.

Gareth Bale scored his first Europa League goal since returning to Tottenham from Real Madrid in the London club's 3-3 draw at Austria's LASK, which was enough to advance from Group J.

Another 12 teams made it through as Braga, Lille, Villarreal, Royal Antwerp, Dinamo Zagreb, Red Star Belgrade, Leverkusen, Slavia Prague, Rangers, Benfica, Granada and PSV Eindhoven all advanced with a game to spare.

Fans returned to a European football game in England for the first time since March when Arsenal hosted Rapid Vienna.

Arsenal haven't won a Premier League game since November 1 but are the last team to keep a perfect record in Europe's second-tier competitions after a 4-1 victory.

Celtic used an early scoring burst to take a 2-0 lead at San Siro but Milan came back almost immediately with two goals in two minutes.

Tom Rogic capitalised on a mistake by Rade Krunic to fire home the opening goal in the seventh minute after Celtic's first attacking move. Seven minutes later, Ousmane Edouard chipped the ball over Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi



Gareth Bale (R) celebrates Spurs' equaliser with his teammates; (bottom) Brahim Diaz reacts after scoring AC Milan's fourth goal against Celtic



Donnarumma to stun the hosts again in front of the watching Zlatan Ibrahimovic in the stands.

Hakan Calhanoglu started Milan's comeback with a perfectly executed free-kick 10 minutes later and the equaliser came shortly after with Samuel Castillejo hitting the roof of the net. Jens Petter Hauge completed Milan's comeback five min-

utes into the second half, leaving three opponents behind before netting Milan's third. The Norwegian set up substitute Brahim Diaz to finish the scoring.

Tottenham needed just a point to advance but went 0-1 down in the first half through Peter Michor's strike from 25 meters (yards). Bale got the equaliser by sending goalkeeper Alexander Schlager the wrong way from the penalty spot and the Premier League leader took the lead after Tanguy Ndombele set up Son Heungmin for the second early in the second half.

In London, Alexandre Lacazette set the tone for Arsenal 10 minutes into the game, unleashing a swerving long-range shot with his right foot that sailed into the net. Pablo Mari rose high to head in the second off a corner kick seven minutes later for his first goal for Arsenal.

Eddie Nketiah made it 3-0 before the interval, finishing a free-flowing move. Goalkeeper Richard Strebinger parried his initial shot but the forward was able to head home the rebound.

Kohya Kitagawa pulled one back for Rapid in the second before Emile Smith Rowe stretched the lead to three again. Ainsley Maitland-Niles was fed by Nicolas Pepe on the left to cross for the substitute to score three minutes after coming on.

It gave the 2,000 fans who were allowed into the Emirates Stadium something to cheer about after poor play in the Premier League.

SA-England ODI postponed after player tests +ve

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Town, Dec 4: The first ODI between South Africa and England was postponed Friday after another player tested positive for the coronavirus in the host team's secure bio-bubble. The game, the first of three ODIs, was postponed to Sunday, the two cricket federations said.

Cricket South Africa and the England and Wales Cricket Board said the decision was made "in the interests of the safety and well-being of both teams, match officials and all involved in the match."

The CEOs of both boards, Kugandrie Govender of CSA and Tom Harrison of the ECB, agreed to the postponement.

The player, who was not named, is the third South African player to test positive during the England tour, which began in mid-November. One player tested positive for the virus before the teams went into the bubble at a Cape town hotel, while a second tested positive in the bubble and before the recent T20I series. England won that series 3-0.

The re-scheduled ODI series will mean that the teams play back-to-back games Sunday and Monday. England's tour finishes with the third ODI Wednesday.

Chhetri helps Bengaluru overcome Chennaiyin test

AGENCIES

Goa, Dec 4: Sunil Chhetri's second half spot-kick was enough for Bengaluru FC (BFC) to pick up their first win of the season in the ISL match against Chennaiyin FC (CFC) at the GMC Stadium, Friday.

In a first half that was devoid of much goalmouth action, Chennaiyin's biggest blow was an injury to Anirudh Thapa. The India international midfielder had to be taken off in the 16th minute, with Edwin Vanspaul replacing him.

Two minutes later, Rafael Crivellaro registered his team's

only shot on target in the first half when he fired a straightforward, first-time effort straight at Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

The game turned into an extremely cagey affair and the midfielder witnessed an intense battle with Vanspaul and Deepak Tangri working hard to keep the likes of Dimas Delgado and Suresh Wangiam in check.

Suresh was a throw-in which Rahul Bheke delivered into the box to cause a bit of concern for the Machans' defence after the 30-minute mark. Cleiton Silva received the throw-in and chipped it into the

box for Juanan whose header was on target but not powerful enough to beat Vishal Kaith.

The teams started the second half with much more energy. Deepak Tangri went close minutes after the restart from a Crivellaro free-kick. The youngster sent a looping header towards goal from the centre of the box but Gurpreet's height allowed him to grab onto the ball.

The deadlock was finally broken by the Blues in the 56th minute. Edwin Vanspaul brought down Silva inside the box and the referee pointed to the spot. Chhetri coolly slotted the ball past Kaith.



BFC's Sunil Chhetri (C) is congratulated by teammates after his goal