



IN BIG LEAGUE

Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas is set to perform at the Global Citizen Prize Awards 2020

LEISURE P2



ANDHRA MYSTERY DISEASE

Lead and nickel content in drinking water and milk caused the mysterious disease in Eluru which killed one

TWO STATES P7



EVEREST TALLER THAN BEFORE

Nepal and China announced the revised height of Mt Everest is 8,848.86 metres, 86 cms more than before

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We need better infrastructure. Easy-to-dig highways, mobile towers which can be jammed effortlessly, roads with speed breakers...

SHORT TAKES

CP to move court for Akash remand

Bhubaneswar: The commissionerate police will soon seek permission from the court to take Akash Pathak, son of suspended IFS officer Abhay Kant Pathak, on remand to probe the allegations of cheating lodged by a city-based travel agency. Commissioner of Police Sudhanshu Sarangi said. Notably, the owner of Sky King, Prabhaskar Choudhury has alleged that Akash impersonating as Managing Director of Tata Motors (passenger division) had booked chartered flight tickets and rooms in star hotels outside the state worth over ₹2.78 crore with forged documents. However, he made payments for ₹2.13 crore but denied to pay the balance ₹65 lakh. He also allegedly threatened Choudhury when he demanded the above amount.

Ambani to roll out 5G in H2 of 2021

New Delhi: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani Tuesday hinted at rolling out 5G telecom services in the second half of 2021 and said policy steps are needed to accelerate the early rollout of ultra-high-speed 5G services that are affordable and available everywhere. Ambani, whose Jio has captured the No.1 spot offering free voice calling and data at dirt-cheap rates, also pitched for developing hardware manufacturing in India, saying the nation cannot rely on imports in such a critical area. 5G is the 5th generation mobile network that enables connecting virtually everyone and everything together including machines, objects, and devices. India, he said, is today among the best digitally connected nations in the world. "In order to maintain this lead, policy steps are needed to accelerate the early rollout of 5G, and to make it affordable and available everywhere," he said. "I assure you that Jio will pioneer the 5G Revolution in India in the second half of 2021." Jio's 5G will be powered by the indigenously-developed network, hardware and technology components. P11

Bandh peaceful in state

Normal life came to a halt as vehicular movement in many routes was disrupted due to blocking of roads by agitators

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The response to the 'Bharat Bandh' called by various farmer outfits, political parties and labour unions against three farm laws brought in by the Centre was total in the state, Tuesday.

The shutdown was peaceful and no untoward incident was reported from any part of the state. Adequate security arrangements were made as a precautionary measure. While essential services including ambulances, medicine shops and vehicles carrying milk were kept out of the purview of the bandh, markets, shopping malls and petrol pumps remained shut at most places. Normal life came to a halt as vehicular movement in many routes was disrupted due to road blocks by the agitators. Train services were affected due to rail roko agitation at many stations.

Various farmers' organisations, Congress, AAP and Left supporters blocked roads and railway tracks to enforce the nationwide shutdown. Train services were affected in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Rourkela, Bhubaneswar and Balasore as activists held sit-ins on railway tracks at these places. Government offices remained closed. Essential services remained functional. Employees were seen reaching banks and private offices early in the morning. In the capital, movement of vehicles was disrupted as the bandh supporters blocked roads by burning tyres at different places. Hundreds of vehicles, mostly trucks, were stranded near Satsang Vihar as Congress workers and Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Mahasangha workers blocked both sides of the highway.

While a large number of passengers were seen stranded at Baramunda bus terminus, many trucks and buses were



An otherwise busy Unit-II market in Bhubaneswar wears a deserted look during the countrywide strike called by various farmer unions to protest the new farm laws, Tuesday

stranded on the highway near Jaydev Square. Movements of auto-rickshaws and taxis were also hit. Vehicular movement was hit in Cuttack, Balasore, Bhadrak, Sundargarh, Bhawanipatna, Berhampur, Sambalpur, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Khurda and Puri.

Activists of the Nabanirman Krushak Sanghathan (NKS) staged demonstrations in Jagatsinghpur and Hansapal. The Centre, through these new laws, is going to remove the Mandi and MSP systems which cannot be accepted at any cost, said Lingaraj, a farmer leader.

Thanking people of the state for making the bandh successful, state Congress president Niranjan Patnaik said, "The pressure of corporate on Modi government is higher than that of farmers. That's why they have passed three black bills in the Parliament. Not only will farmers suffer and consumers will also suffer with the implementation of the laws." Dubbing the new farm laws as "anti-farmer", CPI leader Narayan Reddy said they should be repealed to safeguard the interests of farmers. More P8

NO REPEAL OF NEW FARM LAWS: SHAH

NEW DELHI: A late evening meeting of farmers with Union Home Minister Amit Shah at National Agriculture Science Centre here Tuesday remained inconclusive. During the two-hour marathon session, Shah refused to repeal the three controversial farm laws. The home minister, however, told farmers that the government would give them a written proposal regarding the amendments in laws Wednesday. After the meeting, All India Kisan Sabha General Secretary Hanan Mollah said farmers stick to their demand of complete repeal of the three laws. He also said that the farmer leaders would hold a meeting at Singhu border at 12 pm to discuss about the government's proposal and take a final decision. It is to be mentioned here that the farmers have been protesting for 13 days at borders of Delhi. The government has already held five rounds of meetings with farmer leaders but the crisis has not been resolved yet.

No need for green clearance for NH projects, rules SC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 8: The Centre is not required to obtain "prior environmental or forest clearance" under the laws before declaring a stretch as national highway (NH) and expressing its intention to acquire the land for building, maintenance or operating such roads, the Supreme Court held Tuesday.

This significant observation was made by the top court in its judgement upholding the notification for acquisition of land for the ₹10,000-crore Chennai-Salem eight-lane green corridor project. A bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar, BR Gavai and Krishna Murari dealt with relevant provisions of the National Highways Act, 1956, the National Highways Rules, 1957 and the National Highway Authority of India Act, 1988 while examining the Madras High Court's decision that a prior environmental clearance was needed for the project.

The High Court verdict April 8, 2019 had held as "illegal and bad in law" the notifications issued under Section 3A(1) of the National Highways Act for acquisition of specified lands for construction of the new highway which was part of the larger 'Bharatmala Pariyojana-Phase 15' project.

Justice Khanwilkar, in the 140-judgement, said: "There is nothing in the 1956 Act, which impels the Centre to obtain prior environmental clearance before exercise of that power and in issuing notification under Section 2(2), much less Section 3A expressing its intention to acquire the designated land. The environmental or forest clearance, however, is to be obtained by the executing agency in terms of this notification before commencing the work, it said.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

Nod for use of Covaxin sought

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 8: Bharat Biotech has applied to the drug controller for emergency use authorisation for Covaxin, one of the two indigenous Covid vaccines being developed in India.

Covaxin is being indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research. The firm is conducting phase-3 clinical trial of its vaccine at around 25 places.

The Hyderabad-based firm, while applying for the phase-3 trial, had stated that the vaccine was well-tolerated in all dose groups and no serious adverse events have been reported. The most common adverse event was transient pain at the injection site, a source said.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) had October 23 granted permission to the firm for conducting phase-3 clinical trial of Covaxin after assessing the safety and immunogenicity data of phase 1 and 2 trials. An expert com-

mittee of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) will meet Wednesday to review applications of Pfizer, Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech seeking emergency use authorisation for their COVID-19 vaccine candidates. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had expressed hope that a COVID-19 vaccine may be ready in a few weeks.

That evening, the Indian arm of US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer had sought approval for its vaccine from the central drug regulator, after the firm secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.

The Serum Institute sought the nod for the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, Covishield, on December 6. "DCGI has already started processing the applications. The subject expert committee on COVID-19 will deliberate on the applications by Pfizer, SII and Bharat Biotech seeking emergency use authorisation for their vaccines on December 9," a source said.

Pari case: Residents bar SIT from entering village



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Dec 8: The special investigation team (SIT) formed to investigate Nayagarh minor girl Pari's death case Tuesday reached Jadupur village in the district but irate villagers cordoned off the area alleging "arbitrary" action by the SIT in the sensational murder case.

The SIT team reached the village to raid the house of a suspect named Manas Nayak (29) in connection with the case. The SIT team, however, couldn't enter the village and had to return empty-

handed amid protests by locals. According to the source, Manas is a daily wage. However, police are suspecting his involvement in Pari's murder case. SIT team had reached at the village to detain and interrogate Manas.

Villagers, however, alleged that the police are trying to hide the real accused of the case by arresting Manas. Raising doubts on the investigation by the SIT, the locals questioned as to how they will manage their households if the residents belonging to Harijan Sahi are picked up by the SIT.

While the murder of the minor girl took place where the upper-class people reside, a political conspiracy is being hatched to trap dalits in the case, Magi Nahak, a protestor, said. "We will not allow the SIT nor the police to enter Harijan Sahi of the village to investigate into the case," Nahak added.

WHITE CLAD



People walk on a snow-covered road after the fresh snowfall at Gulmarg in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, Tuesday

HC REPRIEVE FOR SATISH GAJBHIYE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 8: The High Court Tuesday quashed disciplinary proceedings against IPS officer Satish Gajbhiye in connection with alleged non-payment of reward money announced for anti-Naxal operations during his tenure as Malkangiri SP. A division bench of Justice SK Panigrahi and Justice Sanju Panda pronounced the ruling and paved the way for Gajbhiye to avail promotion and other benefits.

A hardcore Maoist had been arrested May 25, 2007 during Gajbhiye's stint as Malkangiri SP. At least six cops and a few civilians were involved in the operation. A total of ₹3.55 lakh was sanctioned as reward for the policemen and civilian informers. Gajbhiye was told to pay ₹1.55 lakh from the reward money to six cops and the balance to the civilians. It was alleged he did not distribute the award money among cops.

90-yr-old British grandma world's first to get anti-Covid jab

AGENCIES

London, Dec 8: The UK kicked off its biggest-ever vaccine campaign in history Tuesday, as 90-year-old grandmother Margaret Keenan became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech jab against COVID-19.

At 6:31 am GMT early riser Maggie was given the life-saving jab by nurse May Parsons at her local hospital in Coventry to mark what the National Health Service (NHS) has dubbed a "landmark moment" on V-Day or Vaccine Day in the fight against the deadly virus.

"I feel so privileged to be the first person vaccinated against COVID-19, it's the best early birthday present I could wish for because it means I can finally look forward to spending time with my family and friends in the New Year after being on my



LANDMARK MOMENT

Maggie is among the first set of people contacted in advance by NHS based on a pre-determined health risk criteria. People aged 80 and over as well as care home workers will be first to receive the jab this week, along with NHS workers

staff enough who have looked after me tremendously, and my advice to anyone offered the vaccine is to take it - if I can have it at 90 then you can have it too," she said.

"It's a huge honour to be the first person in the country to deliver a COVID-19 jab to a patient, I'm just glad that I'm able to play a part in this historic day," said nurse Parsons. Maggie is among the first set of people contacted in advance by the NHS for the jab based on a pre-determined health risk criteria.

An 87-year-old man and his 83-year-old wife from the north east of England Tuesday became the first Indian-origin couple in the world to get a vaccine against COVID-19. People aged 80 and over as well as care home workers will be first to receive the jab this week, along with NHS workers who are at higher risk among the first to receive the

"life-saving jab".

"Today marks a huge step forward in the UK's fight against coronavirus, as we begin delivering the vaccine to the first patients across the whole country. I am immensely proud of the scientists who developed the vaccine, members of the public who took part in trials, and the NHS who have worked tirelessly to prepare for rollout," said Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

However, the UK prime minister struck a note of caution to say that mass vaccination will take time, and therefore there was a need to remain "clear-eyed" about the challenges that remain.

"As the programme ramps up in the weeks and months ahead, it is as important as ever to keep to the COVID Winter plan - following the rules in your area and remember the basics of hands, face and space," he said.

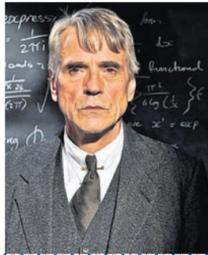
William Shakespeare among 1st recipients

London: One of the first people in the UK to get the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine is called William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare, COVID-19 jabs are being administered at dozens of UK hospital hubs for the first time Tuesday. At the weekend, doses began arriving at UK hospitals from the US, where the vaccine was developed. The first jabs were given at University Hospital in Coventry early Tuesday morning and the second patient to receive the vaccine was 81-year-old William "Bill" Shakespeare. Mr Shakespeare, an inpatient on the hospital's frailty wards, is local to his namesake's county of birth, Warwickshire.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	45608.51	▲ 181.54
NIFTY	13393.00	▲ 37.20
DOLLAR	73.94	▼ ₹0.31
EURO	89.36	▼ ₹0.28
GOLD	₹49,945	▼ ₹1
SILVER	₹65,018	▼ ₹481

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	32.7°C	32.8°C
MIN	17.2°C	16.4°C
Humidity	96%	77%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Fog/mist in morning, later clear sky	



JEREMY IRONS JOINS LADY GAGA IN GUCCI

Actor Jeremy Irons will join singer-actress Lady Gaga in the upcoming Ridley Scott directorial, *Gucci*. The true-crime drama with focus on crime is based on the book 'The House Of Gucci: A Sensational Story Of Murder, Madness, Glamour, And Greed', reports *hollywoodreporter.com*.

ANGELINA'S MESSAGE FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Actress Angelina Jolie has urged women to speak up against domestic abuse, and talk to someone to protect themselves from such abuse. She has also urged people to 'learn about domestic violence', and how trauma affects the health.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com accuracy • reliability • trust FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181

ARIES
Ideas play havoc in your head today. The good thing is that you will execute them well. Here is a word of caution for you: avoid hasty decisions. Experienced people will help you find a firm footing. Ganesh advises you to pay heed to elders' counselling.

TAURUS
Luck is a four-leaf clover in your pocket. You might get the long desired success in education related matters today – a favourable result of a competitive examination, maybe. You will proudly smile at your power of resilience and sense of proportion, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
The day will be dedicated to spending quality time with children, predicts Ganesh. You will be overloaded with household responsibilities and will find it tough to deal with them. However, you will manage to do well and will be satisfied with the outcome. Avoid getting too sentimental if you are a parent; also, you may have to act tough with your kids, suggests Ganesh.

CANCER
Today, it will be all about finding your comfort zone, and spending the day there. You are likely to spend most of the day with your close friends. Your smooth demeanour will help you breeze through all business deals. The opposite sex may find you irresistible.

LEO
Don't expect you'll be handed everything on a silver platter. Especially today, you must put such expectations on the back burner, says Ganesh. Today, you would do better to dig deep into your resources of persistence, as a somewhat less productive day awaits you.

VIRGO
A day to look inside and contemplate. Find peace and prosperity, says Ganesh. Clam up like those oysters and discover the pearl within you. A fine helping hand you shall lend today to those who need it, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh has a feeling that today may not be the best day to undertake any government dealings. Call it red-tapism, or bureaucratic procrastination, but it is highly unlikely that such tasks shall be fruitful today.

SCORPIO
It is about time you learn to deal with frustration in a more healthy manner. The right choice is always the hardest to make. Do not let sentiments sway you into hasty choices because they may feel right, but might also be extremely impractical. There may some strain on your relationship with near and dear ones.

SAGITTARIUS
You will enjoy the magic of the Midas touch today, feels Ganesh. In business, sheer brilliance will help you derive the best possible results in productivity and clinching new contracts. Your approach, in general, will be methodical, disciplined and systematic for most part of the day.

CAPRICORN
Your power of reasoning will be strong today, says Ganesh. Those of you beginning your career will show a disposition to take up a job in television or print media. The spiritual side of you may also come to the fore and make you feel at peace, especially when visiting a holy place.

AQUARIUS
You zoom in on research and development today. Your fabulous work speaks volumes and your commitment pays off. You're keen to play Romeo today, and all your gimmicks and surprises will work wonders! Love on, says Ganesh.

PISCES
You set impeccable standards for yourself, but what keeps your subordinates from grumbling about it is the efforts you make to help them achieve perfection in their endeavours, says Ganesh. You inspire, they aspire.

Priyanka to perform at Global Citizen Prize gala



Los Angeles: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas is set to perform at the Global Citizen Prize Awards this year, to be hosted by singer John Legend. The awards are given as recognition to people working towards ending extreme poverty. The show will also feature performances by Alessia Cara, Carrie Underwood, Common, Gwen Stefani, JoJo and Tori Kelly, besides actor Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, reports *people.com*. Priyanka's hubby Nick Jonas will also perform at the gala. Top prizes to be given out include the Global Citizen of the Year, Global Citizen Prize for World Leader, Global Citizen Prize for Business Leader, Global Citizen Artist of the Year, Cisco Youth Leadership Award and the Global Citizen Country Hero Award. New awards and accolades include Global Citizen Prize for Philanthropy, Global Citizen Prize for Culture & Education, Global Citizen Prize for Activism and the #My2020Hero social media campaign. The award ceremony will stream globally from December 19. **IANS**

'Living in harmony with animals makes us better humans'



Mumbai: Actor John Abraham, who has been named Person of the Year for 2020 by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), says living in harmony with birds and animals makes people better human beings. "I find that living in harmony with birds and animals makes us better human beings," John said. "Caring for them, showing kindness to them and being compassionate towards their nature teach us to be kind and empathetic too. PETA has led this fight for animal rights, the one that they can't voice for themselves, consistently. I support their goals and am very grateful for this special recognition," he added. He dedicated the award to all his 'four limbed friends!' John had earlier sent a letter urging the e-retailer Quikr to stop trading in live animals. Over the years, he has teamed up with PETA India to push for a ban on animal circuses, speak up for Mumbai's dancing monkeys, and star in an ad-campaign urging people not to keep birds in cages. **IANS**

Unpaused explores new beginnings in Covid era

Fresh starts are the only hope for many across the globe in such unprecedented times, says director Tannishtha Chatterjee



Mumbai: Filmmakers Raj and DK, Nikkhil Advani, Tannishtha Chatterjee, Avinash Arun and Nitya Mehra will explore the themes of new beginnings and moving on through five different short films, which have been shot during the ongoing Covid pandemic. The five short films comprise the anthology *Unpaused*, the trailer of which was released Tuesday. **Glitch** Raj and DK have made *Glitch*, starring Gulshan Devaiah and Saiyami Kher. It is about a hypochondriac man who meets a strange girl on a blind date. "Creating The Family Man was a liberating experience for us as content creators, and the assurance of thinking unstrained encouraged us to extend our collaboration with *Glitch*," said Raj and DK. **Apartment** Apartment is directed by Nikkhil Advani, starring Richa Chadha, Sumeet Vyas and Ishwak Singh. It will throw light on how a woman spirals into a maze of self-blame and attempts to end her life when she finds out about her husband's sexual indiscretions. For Advani, Apartment al-

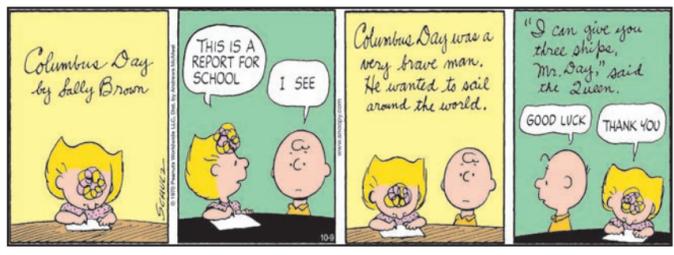
lowed him to "explore complex emotions in a simple way." **Rat-A-Tat** Tannishtha has directed *Rat-A-Tat*, featuring Rinku Rajguru and Lillete Dubey. In the short, the protagonists will be seen confronting loneliness and forming an unlikely friendship during lockdown. Giving an insight into her story, Tannishtha said: "In such unprecedented times, new beginnings are the only hope for many across the world... Shot under lockdown rules it was both exciting and challenging to bring alive the story." **Vishaanu** Avinash Arun has helmed *Vishaanu* with Abhishek Banerjee and Geetika Vidya Ohlyan leading the cast. The story is about a young migrant family who after being thrown out of their rented house during lockdown, decides to illegally sneak into a lavish flat. **Chaand Mubarak** There is also Nitya Mehra's *Chaand Mubarak*, featuring Ratna Pathak Shah and Shardul Bharadwaj. The story is about an affluent middle-aged single woman who is forced to seek help from a young rickshaw driver to run errands during lockdown in Mumbai. "It felt great to be back on set and back on shoot after months of being indoors. I was happy that Amazon said it wasn't just about lockdown, but it was about them wanting us to tell stories that reflected positivity," Nitya Mehra said. The Hindi anthology film will release on Amazon Prime Video December 18. **AGENCIES**

Love working on challenging fictional characters: Shilpa

Mumbai: Actress Shilpa Shinde says the upcoming web series *Paurashpur* touches upon serious issues as patriarchy and gender politics. Set in 16th century India, the show is about the world of *Paurashpur* where actor Annu Kapoor's character, Raja Bhadraratap Singh, rules the misogynistic kingdom. Shilpa, who plays Queen 'Meerawati', challenges the male-

dominated laws where women are objectified. "Besides portraying an ambitious character of a queen, the show touches upon a lot of serious issues like male patriarchy, gender politics and power. I am delighted to be a part of an interesting show shot on such a grand scale," said Shilpa. Actor Milind Soman as the third gender Boris questions the rules of the kingdom and is also the one who starts a revolution. "I like working on interesting and challenging fictional characters, as it allows me to explore a new world every time," said Milind. The show will premiere on December 29 on ALTBalaji and Zee5. **IANS**

PEANUTS



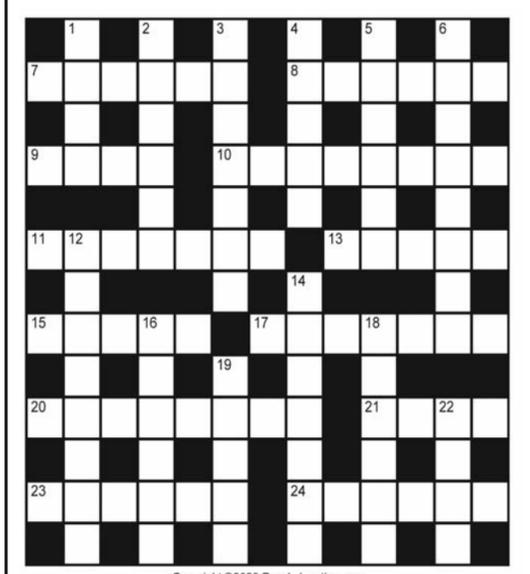
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
7 Periphery
8 Kind of courtyard
9 Early Peruvian
10 Vista
11 God of the sea
13 Gawak
15 Ocean predator
17 Nightspot
20 Taste sensations
21 Broad valley
23 Nail polish
24 Evades
5 Turkey's highest peak
6 Put under water
12 Levels
14 Irish spirit
16 Overhaul
18 Fervour
19 Cunning
22 Empty promises
- Down**
1 Sheepish look
2 Wee one
3 Answer
4 Hot spot

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

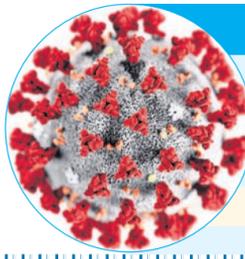
5	0	A	C	D	1	B	4	3	8	7	9	6	2	E
B	9	2	0	6	7	8	C	D	4	E	A	3	5	1
C	3	7	9	A	B	E	1	0	2	6	5	D	8	4
1	E	6	2	4	8	9	5	7	C	3	D	B	0	A
D	8	4	E	3	5	A	6	2	1	0	B	C	9	7
A	6	C	4	1	2	3	D	5	9	8	E	7	B	0
8	4	1	6	E	A	2	7	B	5	D	0	9	3	C
D	0	3	7	9	C	8	A	B	1	6	E	4	5	
9	5	E	8	B	C	4	0	6	7	2	3	A	1	D
3	7	B	8	0	1	9	E	A	4	C	8	6	2	
7	B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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



FOR FARMERS' CAUSE

Members of Sikh community hold a demonstration at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, to protest against the new farm laws



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	6,81,50,029	4,72,16,870	15,55,125
India	97,03,770	91,78,946	1,40,958
Odisha	3,21,913	3,16,970	1,784

State yet to file IA in Polavaram case

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

New Delhi, Dec 8: With the state of Andhra Pradesh announcing that it would complete construction of Indirasagar dam or Polavaram project by December 2021, the fate of a case in this regard pending with the Supreme Court is in limbo as Odisha hasn't proceeded for early listing of the case.

The Supreme Court had last heard the matter in February this year and directed the Odisha government to file a rejoinder affidavit. Since then, the matter has not come up for hearing in the apex court.

Legally, Odisha can file an interlocutory application (IA) in the SC for early listing of Polavaram case as Andhra Pradesh has accelerated the pace of work. However, the state did not file any IA for early listing of the case.

Andhra Pradesh Irrigation Minister P Anil Kumar had November 17 inspected the construction work and stated that his government would complete Polavaram project by December 2021.

Significantly, the major submission of Odisha in the court was that the Polavaram project has been going on without proper backwater impact assessment survey and environment clearance. Advocate



SUBMERGENCE THREAT

Odisha submitted to the SC that Andhra Pradesh had itself admitted that the backwater effect will be 216 feet which will result in huge submergence of areas in Odisha

The Supreme Court had last heard the matter in February this year and directed the Odisha government to file a rejoinder affidavit

Shravan Kumar, appearing for one of the petitioners in the case, said that huge area of Odisha and Chhattisgarh will submerge after operation of Polavaram dam. He said that without proper backwater effect study, it is unclear as to how many tribals in Odisha will lose

Since then, the matter has not come up for hearing in the apex court

Legally, Odisha can file an interlocutory application (IA) in the SC for early listing of Polavaram case as Andhra Pradesh has accelerated the pace of work

their land and homes. Earlier, Odisha had apprised the SC that Andhra Pradesh has changed the scope of the project from 36 lakh cusecs to 50 lakh cusecs of water which will have more impact on Odisha.

Odisha had submitted to the court that the construction of big

embankments will result in backwater flooding causing submergence of huge area in the state.

According to Justice Bachawat tribunal award, the level of backwater effect in the state should not be more than 174 feet. However, Odisha submitted that Andhra Pradesh had itself admitted that the backwater effect will be 216 feet which will result in huge submergence of areas in Odisha.

Odisha had also sought details pertaining to backwater effect in the state to conduct public hearing.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) had written to Andhra Pradesh in January 2009 directing it to get a fresh environment clearance but the latter didn't obtain that. The MoEF in February 2011 gave stop work order to Polavaram project. But later in April 2013, the MoEF kept stopwork order in abeyance for a period of six months which has been continuing year after year.

It is to be mentioned here that Odisha had in 2007 filed an original suite in the Supreme Court against the Andhra Pradesh government's decision to build multipurpose Polavaram project on Godavari River citing that the project will lead to submergence of huge area in the state and many tribal people will lose their home and hearth.

Millet Mission gets NITI pat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant appreciated Odisha Millet Mission for its work to promote cultivation of millets and its consumption. "My Congratulations to @MilletsOdisha for the path breaking work it is doing to revive millets in farms & on plates. They have low glycemic index, high in dietary fibre, high in calcium & iron & gluten free. Millets now being used for curd rice, khichdi, pakodas, kheer & payasam," Kant tweeted. The Millet Mission was launched in March 2018 to promote large-scale production of millets in tribal pockets and its consumption in the state.

14 places record below 15 ° C

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Cold wave situation continues to grip interior pockets of the state as mercury fell below 15 degrees Celsius at 14 places in the state, Tuesday.

As per a weather bulletin issued by Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre, lowest temperature of 8 degrees Celsius was recorded at Phulbani while it was 8.2 degrees at Sonepur, 10.2 degrees at Bhawanipatna and 10.8 degrees at Koraput.

Similarly, the minimum temperature at Angul was 12 degrees, Sundargarh, Boudh & Malkangiri 13.5 degrees each, Jharsuguda 13.7 degrees, Keonjhar & Talcher 13.8 degrees each, Bolangir 14 degrees, Titlagarh 14.5 degrees and Sambalpur 14.8 degrees.

Phulbani records the lowest temperature of 8 degrees Celsius

Baripada recorded a minimum temperature of 15 degrees Celsius, while the night temperature at Cuttack and Bhubaneswar was 16.4 degrees at 17.4 degrees, respectively.

There will not be any large change in minimum temperature in the districts of Odisha during next 4/5 days, the Met centre said.

However, shallow to moderate fog is very likely to occur at one or two places of Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Boudh, Sonepur, Koraput and Nabarangpur districts early Thursday morning, it said.

Stricter rules for storage, transport of ammonium nitrate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The state government will tighten rules for storage and movement of ammonium nitrate.

The Transport and Commerce department has directed the Transport Commissioner in this regard. The action came following a communication from Union Home Ministry, which says, "The matter does not pertain to narcotics section or Narcotics Control Bureau and is related to preventing disaster due to ammonium nitrate explosion. The ammonium nitrate is an explosive material. Therefore, it is requested to take appropriate action on this matter."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Ekamrakshetra in City to be made beggar-free soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) have started initiating the process to make 'Ekamrakshetra', the abode of Lord Lingaraj and heritage hub of the Temple City, beggar-free on priority basis.

The move is part of the beautification and developmental work of the state government's Ekamrakshetra Amenities and Monumental Revival Action (EKAMRA) Plan. Efforts are on to rehabilitate the beggars/despite roaming around the temple by providing livelihood support and bring them to the mainstream under 'Sahaya' scheme of the state government. The BMC has started survey in Old Town area to identify beggars and homeless people. The civic body will help the beggars who want to return to their homes, and those who don't wish to return will be rehabilitated in shelter homes. The administration has deployed non-government organisations (NGOs) and government officials in identifying beggars and shifting



To make the land acquisition process hassle-free for elderly and senior citizens, the BMC officials are reaching their doorsteps

them to shelter homes.

Meanwhile, about 90 per cent of land acquisition work has been completed for the Ekamrakshetra Heritage Project. The remaining will be completed by end of this month under the Ekamra Kshetra Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, said a BMC official, who is nodal officer for Land Acquisition. Meanwhile, the land acquisition process and pre-construction work on the 60-ft alternate road starting from Sanitarium Chhakh to Lingaraj temple has started. The development of alternate road will help pedestrians and devotees reach the temple smoothly.

To make the land acquisition process hassle-free for elderly and senior citizens, the BMC officials are reaching their doorsteps to com-

plete the paper work considering their healthcare need and limitations during this pandemic time.

"We are very pleased and satisfied the way BMC has helped us in finalising the paperwork and making the agreement for land acquisition," said Priyabrata Mahapatra, who is giving 38 decimal of plot near Bindusagar lake for construction of the alternate road. The City administration has requested traders and business establishments in the Ekamrakshetra to replace the signage by uniform heritage, interpretative, directional signage in the area.

Heritage signage should be designed in such a way that it would respect the age, architecture, and scale of historic building as well as the historic nature of the overall streetscape.

BANDH EFFECTS IN TWIN CITIES



1 Activists of various trade unions take out a rally at PMG Square in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, to support the countrywide strike called by several farmers' unions to oppose the new farm laws

2 Police detain a protester at Madhupatna Square in Cuttack

3 The strike leaves vehicles stranded on the NH-16 near Jaydev Vihar Square in the Capital City

4 Passengers at Baramunda bus stand in Bhubaneswar bear the brunt of Bharat Bandh



PICS: MANORANJAN, BIKASH & RAJKISHORE

School infra poor in villages: Study

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Poor school infrastructure in rural Odisha is a key factor for plummeting enrolment numbers in government schools, a survey suggests.

Critical gaps in school infrastructure need a major overhaul to sustain public education in the state as the majority of those schools do not comply with the RTE norms. A state-level study report on the 'Status of school infrastructure in Odisha' by CSOs including Atmashakti Trust, Odisha Shramajeebee Mancha and Mahila Shramajeebee Mancha, Odisha revealed as much.

Schools were closed for the last 7 months due to pandemic-induced lockdowns. With the state government giving the green light for reopening of the schools, it was an opportunity to check the ground realities of government schools of the state.

Conducted between July and October, the study covered over 9,693 government schools, covering 1,225 GPs of 80 blocks across 17



34% OF SCHOOLS IN THE SURVEYED DISTRICTS DID NOT HAVE DRINKING WATER FACILITIES AND CHILDREN OFTEN GO OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL PREMISES TO COLLECT DRINKING WATER

DIRE STRAITS

Many schools still lack a functional kitchen safe which is vital for storing, cooking and serving of cooked food

The study reveals that 31% of the schools in surveyed districts of the state lack a functional toilet facility

districts of the state, where there is a large chunk of tribal and Dalit populations.

The RTE Act states that each school should have at least one classroom for every teacher, office cum-store-cum-head teacher's room, separate usable toilets for girls and boys, safe and adequate drinking water facility, a kitchen in the school where the mid-day meal can be cooked, playground and arrangements for securing the school building by boundary wall or fencing.

But a read between the lines re-

veals a huge dearth in school infrastructure despite 10 years having passed since RTE's commencement. The study report reveals that 58% of the surveyed schools did not have a boundary wall. Whereas the Nuapada district has stood well with 78% of its schools have a boundary wall, 88% of schools from Gajapati district do not have a boundary wall.

The NGO study reveals that presently, 87% of government schools in the state did not have a playground. While urban slums of

Bhubaneswar have the highest percentage of its schools with a playground (70%), which is also abysmally low despite being in the capital city, shockingly 2% of schools in Boudh district had a playground by the end of September this year.

As a fall-out, an astounding 54% of schools did not have an electricity connection even though Odisha has claimed to have achieved 100 per cent rural electrification under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) from April 2018.

Whereas 77% of schools in Nuapada have an electricity connection, the rate was pegged at as low as 15% of schools in Nabarangapur district. However, the state government report reveals that 35,769 schools have no electricity till 2018-19 financial year, which is a worrying fact.

After the Cyclone Fani inflicted severe damage on school buildings across 14 districts in the state, they needed immediate repair. The study report reveals that 75% of government school buildings need either minor or major repair.

PRATHAMASTAMI AT SRIMANDIR



The idol of goddess Laxmi at Sriramandir's Lion's Gate in Puri being adorned with new clothes on the occasion of Prathamastami, Tuesday

₹170 crore black money unearthed by I-T raids

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: Raids conducted by the Income Tax (I-T) department against an Odisha-based group involved in manufacturing and trading of steel products has led to the detection of about ₹170 crore black income and presence of bogus directors who are actually gullible daily wage earners, the CBDT said Tuesday.

The group which has premises in and around Rourkela was searched December 3 by the department.

"The group entities were booking bogus purchases of around ₹170 crore for two financial years in the name of 17 bogus entities," the Central Board of Direct Taxes said in a statement.

The I-T department did not identify the entity raided, but said all the 17 entities have 'confessed' in their statements that they were unaware of any such business concerns registered in their names.

State registers six more Covid deaths

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: State reported 349 new Covid-19 cases Tuesday, taking the tally to 3,21,913, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Meanwhile, six more deaths raised the state's toll to 1,784, said the official.

Of the new cases, 198 were reported from different quarantine centres.

Sundargarh district recorded the highest 46 new cases, followed by Khurda (44) and Angul (26).

While two deaths were reported from the Puri district, one patient each died in Jharsuguda, Khurda, Sambalpur and Sundargarh.

The state has altogether tested 62.14 lakh samples for Covid-19, including 32,184 Monday, said the H&FW department official.

Odisha's positivity rate is 5.18 per cent, as per data released by the Health department.

Meanwhile, another 523 Covid pa-



SUNDARGARH RECORDED THE HIGHEST 46 NEW CASES, FOLLOWED BY KHURDA (44) AND ANGUL (26)

WHILE TWO DEATHS WERE REPORTED FROM THE PURI, ONE PATIENT EACH DIED IN JHARSUGUDA, KHURDA, SAMBALPUR AND SUNDARGARH

tients recovered in Odisha, taking the total recovered cases in the coastal state 3,16,970.

The recovered cases include 55 from Bolangir, 52 from Mayurbhanj, 51 from Khurda, 47 from Sundargarh and 45 from Cuttack.

Plan on Vitamin C laced rice decried

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Several civil society organisations have now opposed the state government's proposed plan of providing Vitamin C laced rice in Malkangiri under fortification plan.

The bodies have now demanded that the Chief Minister roll back the plan. Organisations from the state as well as other parts of the country have now written to the CM on the issue. They include Right to Food Campaign (RTFC), National Alliance of People's Movements, Desi Bihan Surakhya Mancha

(Odisha) and others.

"They have pointed out that it is a whimsical decision leading to wasteful use of people's taxes during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. PDS rice is enough for only 10 days and in the rest of the days, people use other rice. People also grow and eat millets and under the NFSA, the government has committed to provide millets under PDS," a statement from the bodies said.

It also added, "The government is providing Vitamin C for only 10 days. Also it is forcing tribal people to change their agro-cultural food habits. But more importantly, cooked

rice will lose more than 75% of the Vitamin C added to the rice as Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin lost in boiling and further in draining of water from cooked rice. The decision will only benefit companies engaged in artificial Vitamin-C enrichment."

Civil society members have now demanded that fresh vegetables rich in the particular vitamin should be distributed under the PDS system instead. They have demanded promoting mixed cropping practices and diversifying natural dietary practice among the tribal communities.

"The letter notes with concern that it would be a travesty of food justice and mockery of food security if artificially laced Vitamin C rice would be introduced to the people of Malkangiri under the pretext of "eradicating malnutrition". If the Government of Odisha is truly committed to eradicating malnutrition, it would be more socially and ecologically just to support the PDS beneficiaries access Vitamin C and calcium nutrition through creating a support system around naturally grown crops in the adivasi region," the statement from the bodies said.

STATE CABINET TO MEET TODAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: The state Cabinet is scheduled to hold a crucial meeting under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at 6.45pm Wednesday. In view of Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting will be held through videoconferencing.

Though the details of the agenda are yet to be known, the Cabinet is likely to take some important decisions related Health department and infrastructure projects.

Lady duped of ₹5 lakh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Cyber crooks duped a woman in city of around Rs 5 lakh on the pretext of sending costly gifts for her from outside the country. She has lodged a complaint in this regard with the Laxmisagar police.

According to sources, the victim received a friend request from a person identified as Silas Ferdic allegedly from London in the UK last year. She accepted his friend request and started chatting with the person. Subsequently, the fraudster informed her that he had sent a parcel and gift through courier. Later, the accused told the lady that the courier has been received

at Delhi Airport, June 6, 2019. Later, another member of the racket identified as Priya, a staff of Customs department, called her and asked to deposit of ₹15,000 as courier charges which she deposited on the same day.

She again called up the victim and told that the sender has sent illegal items like foreign currency and gold through the parcel. She told the victim that 55,000 as penalty to release the parcel.

The lady aide of the fraudster asked the victim to deposit ₹1.5 lakh and ₹2.8 lakh to convert British pound into INR and other tax. The victim in the process deposited around ₹5 lakh into various banks accounts given of the the crooks.

Brown sugar worth ₹17L seized; 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barang, Dec 8: Cuttack division Excise sleuths Tuesday claimed to have arrested two persons after recovering around 165 gram of brown sugar from their possession here.

Acting on a tipoff, a nine-member team of the sleuths arrested Prasant Behera of Belagachhia under Barang police limits and Santosh Behera of Padasahi under Nandankanan police limits while the duo was on way to Cuttack with the contraband worth ₹17 lakh, said a source. "They used to target youths, mostly college goers, to dispose of the contraband. A two-wheeler has also been recovered from their posse son," an official said.



Members of IMA and OMSA demonstrate near Puri district headquarters hospital to press for fulfilment of their demands, Tuesday

CLASSIFIED SALE

Sale of Office Furniture, Electronic Items, Air Conditioners and Computers to be held on 10th & 11th December 2020 at World Vision India Office, Flat # 280, Bhoi Nagar, Behind Sahid Nagar Police Station, Bhubaneswar - 751022. Contact Number: 7978717151, 8895124899, 9556924899.

Youth held for stalking minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The commissionerate police Tuesday arrested a youth on the allegations of stalking a minor girl and making objectionable gestures at her in Lingaraj area here.

The accused has been identified as Subash Kabu, 28, who is a resident of Sisupalgarh area under Dhauli police limits.

According to sources, the accused used to follow the victim on her way to a college under Lingaraj police limits. He also followed the minor wherever she went during the last couple of months.

The accused used to follow the victim on her way to a college under Lingaraj police limits

Some locals spotted him following the minor and making obscene gestures at her. Upon getting informed, her father lodged a complaint with the Lingaraj police in this regard.

The accused was Tuesday arrested by Lingaraj police by registering a case under various sections of IPC and POCSO Act.

'Law won't stop early marriage, empowerment will'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: School of Women Studies, Utkal University in collaboration with Oxfam India organised a youth festival titled 'Empowerment Not Age' under its campaign 'Bano Nayi Soch' at here Tuesday.

"The festival aims to sensitise young people about the issues of early marriage and empowerment of young girls. It aims to create conversations and help young people voice against old social systems that promote gender inequality and oppress women and girls," said Akshaya Kumar Biswal, Regional Manager, Oxfam India.

'Bano Nayi Soch' is a campaign by Oxfam India to end violence against women and girls. The campaign calls on men and women to help change social practices that discriminate against women and lead to violence, Biswal added.

"Recently, the central government informed that it is considering raising the minimum legal age of marriage for young women from 18 to 21, ostensibly to delay the age of motherhood, improve nutritional levels among young mothers and decrease maternal mortality rates," he further said.



RAISING AWARENESS

The central government recently stated that it is considering raising the minimum legal age of marriage for young women from 18 to 21

This is to delay the age of motherhood, improve nutritional levels among young mothers and decrease maternal mortality rates

The 'Bano Nayi Soch' campaign takes a hard look at ground realities and evidence-backed research in order to examine whether a legal intervention is the best route to delay the age of marriage

The campaign takes a hard look at ground realities and evidence-backed research in order to examine whether a legal intervention is the best route to delay the age of marriage in young women.

"The evidence clearly demonstrates that a focus on improving young women's lives through better education, employment opportunities, safety from violence, and

increased agency all directly contribute to delaying marriage. We know that if women have the opportunity to complete their education and earn money, they are less likely to be viewed as financial burdens that need to be married off at an early age," he explained.

Rukmini Panda, program officer, Gender Justice, Oxfam India, said, "Educated girls have more

power to negotiate their marriages with their families. We also know that early marriage in India is the result of several deep-rooted social norms, such as the belief that early marriage will save a woman from sexual violence, assure a lower dowry, prevent elopement and will protect her honour. While there is no evidence to back these claims, these deep-rooted norms are unlikely to shift because of a legal amendment."

"Consequently, the families of 56% of women in India who will likely get married under the age of 21 as per existing evidence, most of whom belong to poor and marginalised communities, will be turned into criminals overnight with the introduction of this law," she added.

"We demand that the government should focus on creating positive incentives for young women and their families to delay marriage, instead of criminalising them through this law," she said.

Utkal University's first women Vice Chancellor Sabita Acharya said, "We will make sure that the varsity and all its affiliated colleges provide violence-free and discrimination-free environment to the students."

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Hopes begin to sprout in migrant workers

SCORES OF MIGRANTS ARE AVERSE TO THE IDEA OF ANNUAL MIGRATION; RATHER PREFER STAYING WITH THEIR FAMILIES

DEBI MOHANTY

Keonjhar/Jajpur, Dec 8: Chunmun Malik, 36, cannot forget the first few days following the announcement of the national lockdown due to Covid-19. With her husband Nakul Malik, 40, a migrant worker, away in Hyderabad and the pandemic beginning to wreck havoc across the country, Chunmun, alone in her mud and bamboo house in Purusottampur village under Lalitagiri panchayat of Mahanga block in Cuttack district, kept praying God to end the terrible time, soon. "It was the worst period of my life, I can't describe how difficult it was," reminisces Chunmun.

chicken items I prepared. The owner was happy with me, he is a very nice person," tells Nakul. Chunmun recalls her few visits to Hyderabad. According to Nakul, things were going well, before the pandemic. The restaurant's business came to a grinding halt post lockdown and as a result, salaries of the forty staffs including Nakul were stopped. The owner though had made provision of ration for the employees.

However, one day, Nakul's neighbour, died of coronavirus. Scared, Nakul left the rented accommodation and took shelter with his other colleagues in the restaurant, itself.

The severity of infection and news of rising deaths terrified, Chunmun. "We interacted three four times a day through mobile," she says. Each time, she would advise her husband to stay calm and return home as soon as train services resumed.

Finally, after days of long wait, Nakul was lucky as he managed to reach home by a special train "The moment I reached home, the fears that gripped my mind, were almost over. We don't need anything other than a square meal a day and a roof over us," intones Nakul as Chunmun nods her head in agreement.

Interestingly, Covid has not changed only Nakul's annual routine. Scores of other migrant workers like him are now averse to the idea of annual migration. They aim to stay with their family members, devote their time and energies and earn well by growing and selling, mushroom.

Like Kaibalya Dandapat, 29,



Nakul Malik (L) and Chunmun Malik

Nabhatna Naik, 23, of Jhatiasahi under Kundala panchayat of Saharapada block of Keonjhar district. Hundreds of others migrant workers in the adjoining villages, who also left home for distant cities, are not willing to step out for a job, either.

A senior citizen in Kundala informs that the reason of annual migration in this region is lack of employment avenues post paddy harvest. Those who are lucky get to work regularly, but the wage is far too less. "But, after the pandemic, not many are ready to go out. I think it's a good change," he believes.

The pandemic has created a sense of fear and insecurity apprehension as well as skepticism, forcing them for a change in career options. "Life and family are the most precious things. Why should we risk both?" they ask. Also, they are not sure, whether their employers would absorb them, after these, life changing, past nine months.

Incidentally, just weeks after

ing to 1800 youths- men and women in three districts (Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and coastal Jajpur), is setting up a spawn unit to ensure supply of better quality seeds to the farmers. It's already begun real time mentoring and handholding to the growers, through Whatsapp.

"It's a tiny attempt to minimize distress migration; it's not easy to stop the process, entirely," says Program Manager, CYSD, Niladri Sahu. "The objective of the initiative is to create alternative livelihood option for the migrant workers. I am sure, once they succeed, others will be attracted to it."

Kaibalya, Nabhatna and the other youths, say their families are yet to get over the traumatic images of migrant workers in the first three-four months of the pandemic. "Covid has created a lot of doubts, full of 'ifs' and 'buts' in their mind. Sir," puts, Nabhatna, who couldn't complete his intermediate degree due to family's condition.

Citing a few trainees of the locality who have already begun selling their produce, Kaibalya says, in the first month, they have earned Rs15,000-20,000. "It's quite an amount," he thinks. By his own admission, Kaibalya earned ₹14000 a month and saved almost half the amount. It's almost the same with the rest.

"Mushroom has a big market here. The biggest advantage is that it fetches returns in just over a couple of weeks," the youths maintain, excitedly. They are confident before the end of the year, they would market the mushroom and make some money. Which, they intend to spend during the Makar Sankranti festival in January. With mushroom, their hopes, too, have begun to sprout. After a long time, though.

Timber mafia killing rural forest in Angul

Smugglers have fell over 780 trees in the forest during the last three months



POST NEWS NETWORK

Boinda, Dec 8: Mindless tree felling for timber smuggling at Charkhaman rural forest under Handapa forest range in Angul district has pushed the rural forest to the verge of extinction, a report said.

The timber smugglers have so far cut down over 780 trees in the forest during the last three months. The forest has been grown for over last 30 years, villagers lament.

The matter came to fore after the villagers of Charkhaman visited the district Collector in Angul and lodged a complaint with the Collector demanding security and protection to the rural forest to check smuggling, Monday.

The villagers alleged that the forest will soon become a thing of the past if proper security and protection were not provided to safeguard the green cover. Smugglers are threatening to kill the villagers if they try to prevent them from cutting down trees, it was alleged.

The villagers claimed that the forest came into existence from 1990 when the villagers started planting saplings that was provided to them by the Forest department. The area soon turned into a dense forest due

to regular and proper care of the villagers. The timber smugglers sensing a goldmine hidden in the trees have now set their eyes on the forest for smuggling.

The villagers alleged that timber smugglers are carrying out such illegal act in connivance with some lower rank officials of the Forest department.

They are regularly cutting down timber trees like mohua, mahogany, sal, Indian Kino (piasal) and teak trees with impunity with the help of machines and transporting the logs in vehicles for smuggling. Villagers claimed that the smugglers have cut down over 780 trees from August to November, this year.

On being informed, ACF Sadhana Swain conducted a probe by visiting the spot and arrested four persons in this connection. However, that has failed to deter the timber smugglers as they have become active again after lying low for a brief period.

When contacted, Handapa ranger Chaitanya Behera admitted that some locals are involved in the timber smuggling. "A probe is underway to find out the people involved in the act and very soon a raid will take place."

JOB REGULARISATION



Berhampur: Nurses engaged at MKCG Medical Covid Hospital in Berhampur continued their protests for the second day near the office of the superintendent, Tuesday. They are demanding regularisation of their jobs. Over 280 nurses were appointed in the Covid hospital on a temporary basis. Some of them have been shifted to Tata-High Tech Covid Hospital at Shitalpalli. A recruitment advertisement was out for 6,432 nurse posts in various hospitals and in the Health department. There are 250 nurse posts in the MKCG Medical College and Hospital. They demanded that they should be directly recruited into the 250 posts

OP PHOTO

Ganjam targets 2L workdays daily

COLLECTOR VIJAY AMRUTA KULANGE REVIEWS PROGRESS OF VARIOUS DEVELOPMENTAL WORKS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Dec 8: Thousands of migrant labourers have returned to Ganjam from other states during the pandemic-induced lockdown. As allegations galore about lack of job scope and work in some parts, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has laid stress on ensuring them work and creation of more labour days. The district administration has been on its toes to make provision for the migrants. The administration has set a target of providing two lakh workdays daily.

Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange reviewed progress of various developmental works in the blocks at a meeting, Monday. The Collector observed that the official become proactive in ensuring work to the migrant workers. He directed officials to provide job cards to 500 or more people in each panchayat by



Covid has become less intense. There should be efforts to provide job cards to people through 'melas'. ...BDOs should go on field visits to see if works are being done properly

VIJAY AMRUTA KULANGE I
COLLECTOR, GANJAM

January, 2020. "Covid has become less intense. There should be efforts to provide job cards to people through 'melas'. Around two lakh workdays should be created every day while BDOs should go on field visits to see if works are being done properly. Officials of all the lines departments should become proactive," he noted.

He also added that FIRs should be filed against beneficiaries or groups who have not started their work even after receiving funds. It was learnt that a target has

been set to create 2,92,74,750 workdays in the district while 1,37,46,936 workdays have been created till December 6, which is only 47 per cent of the target. The administration has also set a target to engage 15,000 workers in 503 panchayats. By Sunday, 1,00,493 labourers have got scope of labourers.

Under 'Mo Upakari Bagicha Yojana', more and more people are being encouraged to cultivate vegetables. Till date, 1,10,000 beneficiaries have been included in the scheme. Besides, a target has been set to provide work to 1,001 beneficiaries in cultivating cattle fodder (grass cultivation) in 1,100 acres.

Of them, 347 beneficiaries have been provided scope of jobs in the cultivation of grass in 219.9 acres.

The Collector also reviewed works related to Forest department, soil conservation, and horticulture.

The Collector has directed officials to take up creating nurseries, fruit plantation, coconut plantations, creation of water bodies and promotion of mushroom cultivation. He directed the officials to make documentation of these works.

Here, you have to climb trees if you need cellular network

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, Dec 8: People in mining areas like Jurudi, Jajanga, Jaribahal and Bamebari under Joda block of Keonjhar have been suffering a lot as telephone service of the BSNL has gone for a toss. Thousands of people are deprived of communication through cell phones. Life has come to a stop, locals lamented.



students have been badly affected for over a month.

Students like Sima Subhadarshini Kar, Pihu Mohanty, Mamata Patra and

Anjali Das lamented that Internet has failed in their areas due to a paralysed tower. Our studies are getting affected, they said.

A BSNL tower set up at Joda has thin signals in some of these areas. People have to climb trees or hills with their cell phones to receive signals when they have to make urgent communication.

BSNL, Joda SDO, Nabakishra Sethi said that after mines lease of Essel company was over, the latter has snapped electricity supply to the tower. "The BSNL has set up a generator there and runs it from 10 am till 4 pm. We have applied to the electricity distributor company concerned for power supply," he added.

Irregularities alleged in ₹107-cr water project

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kodinga, Dec 8: A mega drinking water project is being set up in Kosamguda block of Nabarangpur district at a cost of ₹107.07 crore. The project aims at providing drinking water to thousands of people in 15 panchayats.

But people alleged that the contractor doing this work is botching it up, raising doubts about its durability. They accused the contractor of paying no heed to the instruction of the administration. This has caused a lot of resentment among people. The project is funded under a scheme of the Centre. JMC and GVPR

companies have taken contract of laying pipes at Badadamba, Badagumuda, Balanga, Binjili, BM Semla, Elori, Kosagumuda, Mahidhanua, Ukiapalli, Santoshapur and Taragan. GVR is constructing an overhead water tank at Mo deigan panchayat. Locals alleged that the company has not set up information plaque about the cost of the project. Pipelines are supposed to be laid about five feet below underground, but three-ft deep pits are dug up, it was alleged. Construction work of the mega drinking water project is being carried out at 15 places, but the RWSS is not monitoring it, locals alleged.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that Sri Laxmidhar Jena, S/o Late Gobardhan Jena, Jhanjirimangala, Balisahi, P.O. - Telenga Bazar, Purigat, Cuttack has sworn an affidavit on 13.10.2020 before the Notary Public, Cuttack and has reported to IIC, Purigat Police Station, Cuttack regarding loss of three documents relating to Plot No.459 in Cuttack City Unit No.35, Jhanjirimangala (1) Original ROR No.657/385, (2) Original Regd. Relinquishment Deed No. 10391701757 dtd. 26.04.2017 executed by Pratyus Bal and others in favour of Saswati Bal and (3) Original Regd. Power of Attorney No.40391803420 dt.04.06.2018. Sri Laxmidhar Jena of the above address has applied for a housing loan to the LIC Housing Finance Ltd., Cuttack by offering mortgage of the said property document.

All concerned therefore having any claim over the property purchased under the said document i.e. (1) Original ROR No.657/385, (2) Original Regd. Relinquishment Deed No. 10391701757 dtd. 26.04.2017 executed by Pratyus Bal and others in favour of Saswati Bal and (3) Original Regd. Power of Attorney No.40391803420 dt.04.06.2018 are required to file their claim with the undersigned within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it will be presumed that the property having link with the said document is free from encumbrances and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as mortgager and the Company as the mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15 (Fifteen) days of publication of this notice.

Cuttack
Dt.9.12.2020

Uma Kanta Mishra (Advocate)
Mob-9348588426
LIC Housing Finance Ltd.
Cuttack Area Office, BDO Complex,
Jeevan Jyoti Building, Link Road,
Cuttack-753012

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Bid Identification No 18 of 2020 - 21
Ph. 06842-253314 eerwss_plb @ nic.in

No. O-670-
1. Name of the Work :- Execution of different Rural Piped water supply schemes in the district of Kandhamal. (Refer DTCN available in the website - tendersorissa.gov.in). 2. Total No of work :- 17 Nos.
3. Estimated Cost :- Rs. 52.03 lakh to Rs.83.75 lakh. 4. Eligible Class of Contractor :- B & A.
5. Period of Completion :- 06 months (Refer DTCN available in the website tendersorissa.gov.in)
6. Other Details :-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Date and time for opening of technical bid
		From	To	
Executive Engineer, RWSS Division, Phulbani	18 of 2020-21	Dt.11.12.2020 at 10.00 hrs.	Dt.21.12.2020 upto 17.00 hrs.	Dt.22.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in
Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded in website only.

Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Phulbani
OIPR-25006/11/0005/2021

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT	
(Under Regulation 32 and 33 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016)	
RELEVANT PARTICULARS	
1 Name of the corporate debtor	Maadurga Thermal Power Company Limited December 15, 2008
2 Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	Registrar of Companies - Cuttack
3 Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated/registered	U40102OR2008PLC010501
4 Corporate identity number/limited liability identification number of corporate debtor	Registered Office: CADD Centre Building, 2nd Floor, Press Chhak, Madhupata, Cuttack, Orissa-753010. Plant Location: Banchua, Tangi, Cuttack-754022, Orissa June 25, 2019
5 Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor	Name: Pankaj Dhanuka Registered Address with IIB: FE 328, Sector 3, Salt Lake City, Kolkata, West Bengal, 700106 Registered Email Address: pankajdhanuka@gmail.com Telephone: +91 98300 18128 Registration No.: IIB/PA-001/IP-P01205/2018-2019/19111 Communication Address: Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, 13th Floor, Building - Omega, Bengal Intelligent Park, Block - EP & GP, Sector - V, Salt Lake City, West Bengal 700091 Communication Email Address: inmtcpil@deloitte.com
6 Liquidation commencement date of the corporate debtor	Auction Start Date & Time: December 24, 2020 @ 11:00 a.m. Auction End Date & Time: December 24, 2020 @ 04:30 p.m.
7 Name, address, email address, telephone number and the registration number of the Liquidator	The detailed terms and conditions of the auction process are set out in the process document, which can be obtained by the bidders by sending an email request at inmtcpil@deloitte.com
8 Date of E-Auction	December 22, 2020
9 Manner of Obtaining the Process Document	Acquisition of the Corporate Debtor as a going concern
10 Last Date of Obtaining the Process Document	As set out in the process document to be issued by the liquidator of the Corporate Debtor.
11 Subject Matter of Auction Process	The mode of sale is open e-auction, where bidders can view other competitive bids from other bidders during the open window. The acquisition of the Corporate Debtor as a going concern shall be on an 'as is where is' basis, without any representation, warranty or indemnity by the Corporate Debtor or the liquidator.
12 Manner of Submitting Bid	The reserve price for the purpose of conducting this e-auction of the Corporate Debtor as a going concern is determined at INR 60 Crores.
13 Mode of Sale	Bidder(s) shall be required to submit an Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of INR 50 lakhs in order to Bid for acquisition of the Corporate Debtor as a going concern.
14 Reserve Price	
15 Earnest Money Deposit requirement	

Note: Nothing contained herein shall constitute a binding offer or a commitment to sell the Corporate Debtor as a going concern or any of its assets. Bidders must note that the aforementioned auction process is being conducted in accordance with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 ("Code") and the relevant regulations thereunder. In the event, if any assets of the Corporate Debtor are realised by existing charge holders in terms of Section 52 of the Code read together with the applicable regulations, the same shall be excluded from the ambit of the auction process being conducted by the liquidator, as and when such an option is exercised by the relevant charge holder. The liquidator reserves the right to amend and/or annul this invitation including any timelines or the process thereof, without giving any reason, at any time and in any respect. Any such amendment in the invitation, including the aforementioned timeline, shall be notified on the website of the Corporate Debtor www.mtcpil.in

For Maadurga Thermal Power Company Limited
Sd/- Pankaj Dhanuka
Insolvency Professional - Regn. No.: IIB/PA-001/IP-P01205/2018-2019/19111
Registered Address: FE 328, Sector 3, Salt Lake City, Kolkata, West Bengal, 700106
Registered E-mail: pankajdhanuka@gmail.com
Communication Address: Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, 13th Floor, Building - Omega, Bengal Intelligent Park, Block - EP & GP, Sector - V, Salt Lake City, West Bengal 700091
Date: December 9, 2020
Place: Kolkata
Communication E-mail: inmtcpil@deloitte.com

FOCUS DEMOCRACY

WHITHER RIGHT TO PROTEST



Governments are repurposing existing laws to limit protests and detain participants. In India, police have arrested protesters under sedition and anti-terrorism laws, while officials in Hong Kong have cracked down on protests by deploying public-order laws (ostensibly to prevent spread of COVID-19). Other countries, including Algeria, Angola, Lebanon, and Thailand, have also used anti-COVID measures to harass, intimidate, and jail protesters

Africa – operate non-stop telephone hotlines for those who intend to protest peacefully, providing information and advice on legal frameworks. When protesters are arrested, these groups connect them with lawyers who work to ensure that they are granted bail and, if necessary, defend them (often pro bono) at their trials.

Other groups specialise in legal challenges to official policies and practices that infringe on the right to protest. In Uganda, for example, a five-year litigation effort spearheaded by four civil-society organisations led to a major victory in March, with the Constitutional Court striking down part of a law allowing Ugandan police to prevent or stop public gatherings arbitrarily. In September, Colombian civil-society groups won a sweeping judgment in the country's Supreme Court that called for police reform and a gag order preventing public officials from openly demonising peaceful protesters.

Ultimately, though, the best protection for protest movements and those who defend them is the opportunity for participants to be part of something larger than themselves. "Solidarity is the engine that keeps us going," says Mutasa.

Everyone – not only lawyers and NGOs – can play a part in upholding the right to peaceful protest. Doctors and nurses can provide emergency first aid. Teachers can educate their students about the right to peaceful protest and why it matters. Telecom operators can disregard government orders to shut down the Internet during protests. Media professionals and citizen journalists can provide a powerful counter-narrative to those seeking to demonise protesters. And as individuals, we can all take to the streets or voice our dissent online.

Without such solidarity, the right to protest is always vulnerable. And where that right is not upheld, few other rights are safe.

The writer is Senior Program Officer at the Open Society Foundations' Human Rights Initiative.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Autocratic leaders often seek new ways to undermine the right to protest, because they know protesting can be an extraordinarily powerful force for political and social change. Over the past decade, protests have toppled autocrats, forced governments and corporations to recognise the climate emergency, given a voice to workers suffering under unfair economic systems, and urged reforms to address police brutality and structural racism.

As Peter Mutasa – president of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, which has protested this year for better working conditions – has observed, protests are often the "only countervailing power and force" to repressive governments and the only way for marginalised people to gain access to public services. And even in contexts where they have not yet achieved their goals, protests have shaken entrenched power structures.

In Belarus, for example, peaceful protests led by women (with the active involvement of broad sections of Belarusian society, including artists and trade unionists) have continued since August's rigged presidential election. In Thailand, protesters' ongoing demonstrations for democratic reforms have highlighted a crucial debate about the monarchy's constitutional role, which until recently was off-limits for public discussion. And protests in the wake of George Floyd's murder in May made structural racism a central issue in the US presidential election campaign.

But governments are employing ever more sophisticated and aggressive tactics to curtail people's ability to protest. This fundamental right is often threatened in four main ways.

First, governments are repurposing existing laws to limit protests and detain participants. In India, police have arrested protesters under sedition and anti-terrorism laws, while officials in Hong Kong have cracked down on protests by deploying public-order laws (ostensibly to prevent the spread of COVID-19). Other coun-

tries, including Algeria, Angola, Lebanon, and Thailand, have also used emergency anti-COVID measures to harass, intimidate, and jail protesters. Such arrests and crackdowns occur despite the recognition of the right to peaceful assembly in many of these countries' constitutions, as well as international law.

Second, some governments – most recently in Belarus and Nigeria – have tried to quash protests violently. These governments not only disperse and detain protesters, but also torture and even kill them.

Third, governments have curtailed protesters' ability to organise by ordering repeated Internet shutdowns. The #KeepItOn coalition, convened by the digital-rights group Access Now, recorded at least 65 Internet shutdowns during protests in 2019, including in Sudan, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Algeria, India, and Indonesia. The

Belarusian government has also repeatedly shut down the Internet during this year's protests.

Fourth, governments, non-state actors, and some media organisations have demonised and stigmatised protesters. US President Donald Trump, for example, has called peaceful protesters rioters, looters, thugs, and anarchists.

Another way to delegitimise protesters is to cast doubt on their motives by referring to them, without evidence, as 'paid protesters,' or by characterising pro-democracy demonstrators as 'anti-national' and environmental activists as 'anti-development.' Such narratives aim to diminish public support for protesters and justify government crackdowns.

Despite the threats posed by such tactics, there is hope. A growing number of individuals and organisations worldwide are working to safeguard the right to protest. Some groups – for example, the Right2Protest coalition in South



Sharan Srinivas

WITHOUT SOLIDARITY, THE RIGHT TO PROTEST IS ALWAYS VULNERABLE. AND WHERE THAT RIGHT IS NOT UPHELD, FEW OTHER RIGHTS ARE SAFE

IN JEST THIS

Great teachers deserve to be recognised

I was happy to hear that Ranjitsinh Disale, a primary school teacher in Maharashtra, has been awarded the 2020 Global Teacher Prize. The prize, sponsored by the Varkey Foundation in partnership with UNESCO, comes with enough money to change a teacher's life: Rs 7.4 crore (\$1 million). With that kind of money, Disale can employ another teacher to do all his work, while he lounges under an umbrella on Baga Beach, Goa.

But Disale would never do that, because he's dedicated to his profession and eager to help others, as shown by his generosity upon receiving the prize. In his winning speech, he pledged to share half the prize with his fellow finalists. The other nine finalists will each receive Rs 41 lakh (\$55,000) each. This was the first time in the prize's six-year history that the winner had made such a gesture, even without drinking any celebratory champagne.

Disale, 32, who teaches at Zilla Parishad Primary School in the village of Paritewadi, Solapur district, Maharashtra, deserves not just the Global Teacher Prize, but also the Global Generosity Prize. "If I share the prize money with the rest



Ranjitsinh Disale is indeed a special teacher. I hope his parents are proud of him and have no regrets that their son didn't go into medicine, engineering or any of the countless other professions considered more prestigious than teaching

of the (finalist) teachers, they will get a chance to continue their work... and we can reach out and lighten the lives of as many students as we can," he said. One of his students immediately sent him an email: "Sir, if you want to lighten our lives, please lighten our homework."

Actually, his students probably appreciate all the work he puts in to ensure that they learn at their own pace and don't struggle. He has not only translated textbooks into their mother tongues, he has put unique QR codes in the books that allow students to access audio poems, video lectures, stories and assignments using cellphones. Most importantly, he has adjusted the content to reflect each student's abilities. Disale is indeed a special teacher. I hope his parents are

proud of him and have no regrets that their son didn't go into medicine, engineering or any of the countless other professions considered more prestigious than teaching. His father, Mahadev, might be having some interesting conversations with his friends.

Mahadev: "Do you remember when you said that your son was more ambitious than my son?"

Friend: "Yes, because my son wanted to become a doctor. Yours just wanted to become a teacher."

Mahadev: "Mine just won the Global Teacher Prize. What did yours win?"

Friend: "My son hasn't won any prizes, but he is doing very well. He has a lot of patients." Mahadev: "My son is doing well too. He has a lot of patience."

Friend: "My son treats cancer. Does your son do any treating?" Mahadev: "Yes, my son treats illiteracy." If dedicated doctors never win any prizes, it doesn't bother me, partly because they are generally paid handsomely, and also receive a lot of respect and gratitude. Teachers do receive gratitude and respect, but if a doctor's pay is handsome, a teacher's pay refuses to look in the mirror.

The Varkey Foundation deserves credit for creating the Global Teacher Prize and recognising the importance of education in lifting people out of poverty, as well as the unsung heroes that work tirelessly in classrooms. Every school has a few teachers that deserve a "Teacher of Year Award," but few schools have programmes to recognise these outstanding teachers. They don't even get the day off on World Teachers' Day.

Even a few cakes to share with their students would be nice. If local bakeries are willing to provide these cakes for free, we'll name the awards after them, such as the "Bhubaneswar Bakery Best Teacher Award." Hopefully the bakers in Solapur district, Maharashtra, have sent a few goodies to the Global Teacher of the Year.

Goodwill gesture

Sir, In a real goodwill gesture the Indian authorities repatriated two girls from the PoK region who inadvertently crossed the border. The siblings were seen off with gifts by senior Indian administration and army officials and handed over to the Pakistani authorities. The goodwill gesture from the Indian authorities, especially at a time when there is fierce conflict between the armies and tension prevails on either side, is worth mentioning and goes to prove that we have always welcomed and are for peace and friendship.

M Pradyu, KANNUR (KERALA)

Kamal Lochan Dash, JAJPUR



Melvin Durai

TEACHERS DO RECEIVE GRATITUDE AND RESPECT, BUT IF A DOCTOR'S PAY IS HANDSOME, A TEACHER'S PAY REFUSES TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR

WISDOM CORNER

- Love, work, and knowledge are the wellsprings of our lives, they should also govern it. **WILHELM REICH**
- The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinions. **LEONARDO DA VINCI**
- The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance. **ALAN WATTS**

WORDSWORTH

Wait
Once upon a time, a wait was a watchman, a word derived from an Old Northern French word that's related to modern German wachen, to be awake (watch, wait and wake are all linked etymologically). Early senses of the verb included lying in wait for an enemy, observing carefully and being watchful. Watchmen in British towns in medieval times sounded the watch three or four times a night on trumpets, shawms or pipes as a way to show they were alert and to deter thieves. The term seems to have been transferred to musicians at the end of the thirteenth century. The waits were a group of wind musicians kept at public expense by a town or city. They played on ceremonial or festive occasions and also paraded the streets to entertain the public, sometimes at night or in the early morning as a continuing association with watch calls. Waits were not just for Christmas at this time. From the latter part of the eighteenth century, the practice of waits being employed by a municipality have slowly died out, though they were finally despatched as an accidental by-product of Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, which forced towns to publish accounts and demonstrate that they had taken steps to cut out unnecessary expenditure. The name was transferred to self-appointed musicians and singers who perambulated streets playing and singing carols and other appropriate music at Christmas in hope of reward. In many places, especially rural areas, those who went by the name walked house to house in daylight or evening, as carol singers do now, but others maintained the old tradition of going their rounds at night. They were considered an abominable nuisance by many, who complained about the discordant nocturnal noises that became one of the perils of Christmas.

CORRECTION

In the article headlined "Bitter battle ahead" published in Page-6 of Orissa POST on 7 December, 2020 it was inadvertently written that Andhra Pradesh was the first linguistic State in India. In fact, Odisha was the first linguistic State in India formed on 1 April, 1936. On the internet many sites originating in India have erroneously mentioned Andhra Pradesh as the first language-based State. It may be noted that there was no State named Andhra Pradesh pre Independence.

-Editor

Celebrities & politics

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Heavy metal content in water caused mystery disease

Lead and nickel content in drinking water and milk was primarily established as the root cause of the mysterious disease in Eluru city, which so far claimed one life and left over 500 people sick

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Eluru (AP), Dec 8: Lead and nickel content in drinking water and milk was primarily established as the root cause of the mysterious disease in Eluru city of Andhra Pradesh, which so far claimed one life and left over 500 people sick.

Based on the preliminary findings of the expert teams from AIIMS

and other state and central institutions, health officials presented a report to Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy here Tuesday.

A CMO release said lead and nickel were found to be the causative agents for the mysterious disease, citing a report prepared by the AIIMS experts. The disease saw people suddenly falling unconscious after suffering from fits and nausea since Saturday night.

The symptoms, according to GGH doctors, included a bout of epilepsy for 3-5 minutes, memory loss for a few minutes, anxiety, vomiting, headache and back pain.

"More tests are being conducted by Indian Institute of Chemical Technology and other institutes and the results are expected soon. The Chief Minister directed the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation on the heavy metal content in the patients' bodies and constantly monitor the treatment



CM YS Jaganmohan Reddy visits the sick people at a hospital.

process," the CMO release added. According to the health authorities here, of the 505 persons infected, over 370 had recovered and another 120 were being treated in the hospital.

Another 19 people were sent for better medicare to government hospitals in Vijayawada and Guntur.

Apart from experts deployed by the World Health Organisation, a three-member team drafted by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare arrived in Eluru Tuesday and went round the affected areas to collect samples.

Deputy Chief Minister (Health) AKK Srinivas said the affected people were recovering well and there was no need to panic. "Full details as to what triggered the mysterious disease will be known only after the central agencies submit their reports. Primarily, lead has been found to be the cause of the outbreak," he said.

A special sanitation drive was undertaken in Eluru city and also in the adjoining rural pockets and Denduluru from where the cases were reported. Srinivas, who represents Eluru, went round the localities Tuesday and inspected the overhead drinking water reservoirs and supervised the sanitation drive.

Gauhati HC stays clearance for drilling inside national park



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, Dec 8: The division bench of the Gauhati High Court Monday stayed the Centre's permission to government-owned Oil India Ltd (OIL) to drill seven wells inside a famous national park in eastern Assam, officials said.

The Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, where the OIL proposed to drill for its ambitious hydrocarbon projects is adjacent to Baghjan well (in Tinsukia district), where after nearly six months a blowout well was successfully 'killed' and the 160-day-long fire there was doused completely November 15.

The PIL was earlier filed against the Centre's approval to OIL for drilling inside the forest and national park, a biodiversity hotspot, by amending existing norms like public hearing under the draft Environment Impact Assessment Notification 2020.

The PIL also argued that if the OIL is allowed to undertake the drilling then similar situations like Baghjan's gas well leakage can take place there too, thereby threatening the adjoining environment and human habitations

ECO DAMAGING

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Meghalaya to reopen for tourists from Dec 21

In 2019, over 1.2 million domestic and international tourists had visited the state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, Dec 8: Meghalaya will be open to tourists from December 21 for the first since the COVID-19 pandemic made its way into the country earlier this year, Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said Tuesday.

Travellers, however, will have to adhere to a host of guidelines and health protocols to visit the 'Land of Clouds', he said.

"#Meghalaya reopens its #Tourism from 21st December, 2020... The Home of Clouds looks forward to welcoming you," Sangma said on Twitter.

A Tourism Department official said registration would be made mandatory through a dedicated app of Meghalaya Tourism, along with standard operating procedures (SOPs) put in place to en-

sure the safety of everyone. Visitors will have to upload their photo identity on the app and provide the complete tour itinerary besides showing proof of confirmed booking, the official said.

Upon successful registration, tourists will receive an e-invite which will have to be produced at the entry checkpoint together with a COVID-19 negative certificate not more than 72 hours old.

The state government has also set up a Facilitation Centre at Umting in Ri Bhoi district, where those visiting the state are to mandatorily check in, he said.

Meghalaya Rural Tourism Forum Chairperson Alan West welcomed the decision, and urged visitors to strictly follow COVID-19 protocols.

In 2019, over 1.2 million domestic and international tourists had visited the state.



Andhra lays out plan to introduce 10 lakh electric vehicles by 2024

THE SOUTHERN STATE PLANS TO ATTRACT AN INVESTMENT OF ₹30,000 CRORE AND CREATE 60,000 JOBS IN THE ELECTRIC VEHICLES MANUFACTURING SECTOR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, Dec 8: Andhra Pradesh plans to attract an investment of ₹30,000 crore and create 60,000 jobs in the electric vehicles (EVs) manufacturing sector, even as the state government laid out a plan to introduce 10 lakh EVs by 2024.

The state said it planned to develop a holistic research and development ecosystem, together with manufacturing units, to propel EV growth in AP.

The state government presented its plans on EVs at a high-level (virtual) meeting convened by Niti Aayog Tuesday.

A Centre for Advanced Automotive Research, in collaboration with organisations like ISRO, IISER and IITs, to foster advance research in chemical, mechanical, electrical and electronics engineering will soon be set up to drive the new EV policy.

A Centre for Advancement of Smart Mobility has also been proposed in a 100-acre site (location yet to be identified) with a test track for all new EVs and autonomous vehicles.

All the 11,000-odd buses of the public sector AP State Road Transport Corporation will be converted into EVs by the year 2029.



AP Transport Principal Secretary MT Krishna Babu, Industries Director JVN Subrahmanyam and senior officials represented the state at the meeting attended by Niti Aayog CEO Amitab Kant, Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Secretary A Giridhar and other top officials.

The state government told Niti Aayog that it planned to phase out fossil fuel-based vehicles in the top four cities (Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Tirupati and Guntur) by 2024 and all cities by 2030.

Plans were also afoot to install one lakh (EV) charging stations by 2024.

The New and Renewable Energy Development Corporation of AP has entered into a memorandum of understanding with NTPC and EESL for development of charging infrastructure across the state, the officials told Niti Aayog.

They requested that the Centre extend support in development of charging stations at prominent locations on National Highways.

They also sought financial support from the Centre for retrofitting EV kits to two and three-wheelers.

The AP government also sought the Centres financial support to set up swapping stations in the state. A top official, who attended the meeting, said all government vehicles in the state would be converted to EV by 2024.

The state currently has a fleet of 9,001 battery electric vehicles (two-wheelers), 16,826 CNG and 971 BEV (three-wheelers), 8,208 BEV and 4,535 CNG (four-wheelers) and 313 CNG-run buses.

Bharat Bandh call evokes partial response in northeast



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati/Agartala, Dec 8: The 'Bharat Bandh' called Tuesday by the farmer unions over the contentious farm laws enacted by the Central government, evoked partial response in the northeastern states.

Banking operations across the northeastern region were partially hit as a section of bank employees joined the countrywide shutdown while another section joined their duties.

According to the officials, train and flight services in most northeastern states remained unaffected by the nationwide strike.

An official of the Northeast Frontier Railways (NFR) said in Guwahati the train services were unaffected in its jurisdictions though some picketers in a few places tried to halt the plying of passenger trains, but the security forces dispersed them.

The NFR operates fully and partially in six of the eight north-

eastern states, excluding Meghalaya and Sikkim, and in seven districts of West Bengal and five districts of north Bihar. In Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled Assam, markets, shops and business establishments were open in some places and closed in many parts, especially in the semi-urban and rural areas.

There were very few passenger vehicles on the roads. But many government offices functioned almost normally and schools and other educational institutions also remained open, though with very less attendance.

Trade union leader Biswajit Ghatak told the media in Guwahati that the 'Bharat Bandh' is total and spontaneous in most parts of Assam.

"In the morning, some shops and markets were opened, but as the day progressed, the business establishments closed in support of the strike," Ghatak claimed.

In another BJP ruled state Tripura, shops and markets were closed in some places, but were

open in some sub-divisions, including capital city Agartala with fewer shoppers.

The number of private and passenger vehicles was less in operation.

All India Kisan Sabha leader and former parliamentarian Narayan Kar claimed that the 'Bharat Bandh' evoked a massive response everywhere as the shops and markets were closed and most passenger and private vehicles went off the roads.

BJP spokesman Nabendu Bhattacharjee said the people outright rejected the shutdown everywhere.

The nationwide shutdown evoked very little response in other northeastern states, including Meghalaya and the BJP-ruled Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

Different parties, including the Congress and Left parties have extended their support to the farmers, who are agitating for repealing the new farm laws.

Filtered water elusive in West Godavari

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kalla (AP), Dec 8: At a time when people are pointing fingers at the quality of drinking water in Eluru and its vicinity, amid other things, as the culprit for giving rise to the mysterious illness rattling West Godavari district headquarters, it is pertinent to understand the decades long struggles numerous villages in this district are going through, bereft of filtered drinking water.

Located on the west side of the Godavari river in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, West Godavari is a lush green rice bowl, whose agriculture is nurtured by the irrigation system laid by legendary British engineer Sir Arthur Cotton more than a century ago.

Blessed by the Godavari river, major part of the district has abundant supply of water all through the year, barring the summer season.

"Though we have plenty of water, we do not have filtered drinking water. The water supplied by the panchayati tank is not fit for drinking and this has been the case for more than three decades now," Vantabathina Prakash, a resident of Kalla village, told IANS.

This village is not alone, as there are several like this. Two more adjacent villages like Kalla, Seesali and Doddanapudi, have the same problem. Achanta, Undrajavaram and several other villages have no respite from this scourge as government after government and the panchayati officials turned a blind eye to their plight.

"For nearly two decades, many people in these villages have got used to buying drinking water or travelling to neighbouring villages to fetch water which is better than what their village panchayati tanks supply," said Talluri Raj Kumar, a



For nearly two decades, many people in these villages have got used to buying drinking water or travelling to neighbouring villages to fetch water which is better than what their village panchayati tanks supply

TALLURI RAJ KUMAR

villager.

Moved by the lack of potable water, a few generous NGOs such as Vegesna Foundation, Nandi and others have set up water filtration centres, selling 20 litres at a subsidised price of Rs 10.

However, a few enterprising individuals have also found a business opportunity in this problem to diversify into selling ground water after filtering it.

Just like the panchayati water, ground water in these villages is not potable as it is salty.

Further aggravating the drinking water issues in this geography, aquaculture and prawn processing and export companies have come as a severe bane.

Transforming centuries old agricultural practices such as growing paddy, many farmers have turned towards cultivating fish and prawn for better returns than farming and selling rice.

After converting swathes of paddy fields into fish and prawn ponds, many farmers are releasing the water from the ponds laden with months long feed, medicines and chemicals into the irrigation canals.

"This is a very serious problem as this water will contaminate the entire irrigation network of canals which supply water for paddy cultivation. Some are earning higher profits through aquaculture but some are also giving up paddy cultivation," highlighted Kumar.

Tuesday, Palakollu MLA Nimmala Ramanaidu tabulated all the expenses being incurred to cultivate one acre of paddy field nowadays to arrive at a figure of Rs 48,000.

Across West and East Godavari districts, there are several prawn processing, packing and exporting companies which openly dispose their industrial waste.

For instance, a small stretch of land by the Bhimavaram and

Gudivada main road reeks with unbearable stench between Seesali and Jakkaram villages after crossing one such company.

The contaminants from the company flow into a 'bodhe' (a small canal), leading to the devastation of ecosystem there, killing coconut trees and totally polluting a bigger water body on the right side of the road. These companies deliberately dispose of their untreated waste, with hardly any regulation to restrain them as government officials seldom pay attention.

According to people from these villages, unavailability of filtered drinking water is an utter shame as they cannot believe that Godavari villages are going through this crisis because of government apathy.

Will the officials and the government wake up after the Eluru crisis? We have to wait and watch as muddy water continues to be supplied in these areas.



Coordination between educational institutions and the industry is necessary to help educated youth not only become self-employed but also create employment opportunities for others
KALRAJ MISHRA | RAJASTHAN GOVERNOR

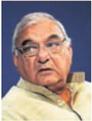
PM WISHES PARKASH SINGH BADAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday spoke to Shiromani Akali Dal patriarch Parkash Singh Badal, who has been severely critical of the Centre over the contentious farm sector laws, and extended best wishes to him on his 93rd birthday



of the day quote

The Centre should withdraw these farm laws and it is time for the government to act



BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA | FORMER HARYANA CM

It wants to loot farmers again with the farm laws... these laws will cause injustice to farmers



NAWAB MALIK | NCP SPOKESPERSON

In its 2019 election manifesto, the Congress had said it would bring changes in the APMC Act if voted to power and give farmers the freedom to sell their produce outside these markets. Now, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi brings in these reforms, why is the Congress opposing it?



VIJAY RUPANI | GUJARAT CM

Bandh peaceful, life hit in some states



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Chandigarh, Dec 8: Farmers took the national centrestage Tuesday as their call for a 'Bharat Bandh' to push for a repeal of the new agril laws disrupted life in myriad ways with shops closed, transport affected and protesters squatting on roads and train tracks in several places, though many states remained largely unaffected.

As analysts, politicians and others assessed how effective the 'bandh' had been, Swaraj India leader Yogendra Yadav claimed it was observed in around 10,000 places in 25 states. Emergency services were exempted and banks, too, continued operations as the pan-India shutdown, backed by most opposition parties and trade unions, rolled out noisily but peacefully with its impact felt in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, the epicentre of the snowballing protests, as well as in states such as Maharashtra and Bihar.

In several parts of the country, including in BJP-ruled Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, life continued unimpeded. In other places, the pandemic appeared to recede into the background. Security was stepped up, restive crowds demonstrated in some places and the numbers swelled at Delhi's border points.

From the Rajasthan capital Jaipur, where 'mandis' were closed but shops open, there were reports

of clashes between workers of the state's ruling Congress and the BJP. In Delhi, where most main markets were open, tension spiralled with the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) alleging that Delhi Police had put Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal under house arrest.

City police denied the claim but the party stuck to its guns and said the move was a response to Kejriwal meeting protesting farmers at the Singhu border. All India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hannan Mollah described the shutdown as a show of strength by the farmers. "We are standing by our demand that we want a complete repeal of the three laws and will not accept any cosmetic changes... If our demands are not met, we are ready to take our agitation to the next level," Mollah said. Opposition parties are expected to meet Kovind Wednesday evening to raise their concerns about the three farm laws. All major parties in Punjab — the ruling Congress, AAP and the Shiromani Akali Dal — extended their support. Over 50,000 government employees took mass casual leave in support of farmers, said Punjab Civil Secretariat Staff Association president Sukhchain Khaira.

In neighbouring BJP-JJP ruled Haryana, the opposition Congress and the Indian National Lok Dal backed the call.

SC to hear Maha Governor's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: The Supreme Court Tuesday agreed to hear a plea of Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari against issuance of a show cause notice by the Uttarakhand High Court on a petition seeking contempt proceedings against him for his alleged failure to pay rent for a government bungalow allocated to him as ex chief minister of the state.

A bench of justices R F Nariman, K M Joseph and Krishna Murari issued notice to the Uttarakhand government and tagged the matter along with the pending petitions on the issue. The counsel appearing for the state government accepted the notice.

October 26, the top court had stayed contempt proceedings initiated against Union minister Ramesh Pokhriyal for alleged non-compliance of the Uttarakhand High Court's last year order on payment of rent by former chief ministers of the state for occupying government accommodation.

Koshyari, who sought stay of the high court order, contended in his



plea that he is the sitting Governor of Maharashtra and referred to Article 361 of the Constitution which provides protection to President and Governors from invoking any such proceedings. The plea said the amount of market rent has been arrived at without any rational and is highly exorbitant for residential premises in Dehradun and have not been ascertained without affording an opportunity to hear him.

The petition challenging the high court order has been filed through advocates Ardhendu Mauli Prasad and Pravesh Thakur. The

Uttarakhand High Court had May 3 last year ordered former chief ministers of the state to pay market rent for the entire period they occupy government accommodation since demitting office.

The high court had declared all government orders from 2001 providing housing and other facilities to former chief ministers in the state as illegal and unconstitutional.

The high court had directed that all amount due and payable towards amenities such as electricity, water, petrol, oil, and lubricants provided by the state to the former chief ministers shall be computed by the state government within four months from the date of receipt of the copy of the order.

It had also said that the amount shall be intimated to the former chief ministers, who shall within six months from the date of such intimation, pay the said amount to the state government. The high court had passed the order on a plea by a Dehradun-based NGO. The NGO had filed a plea in the high court alleging non-compliance of the order.

Number of Haj applicants declines

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 8: The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has clearly affected the Haj pilgrimage, as there were only 3,200 applicants from Uttar Pradesh to travel in 2021, compared to last year's 29,000.

The window for online and offline applications opened on November 7 and the last date for depositing the form is December 10. Officials have said that the pandemic was one of the main reasons for a lesser number of Haj applications this year.

Not even a single woman has applied under the category of 'without mehram' (only women group). Under the category, women can apply in the groups of three. The Haj Committee of India has reserved 500 seats for such women.

With nothing final on the number of pilgrims to be allowed by Saudi Arabia, the quota of states has not been decided as yet. No one knows how many pilgrims would be visiting Mecca and Medina from Uttar Pradesh next year.

However, the Secretary State Haj Committee, Rahul Gupta, said: "We want to send the maximum number of pilgrims for Haj but some things are not in our hands. We cannot comment on the quota of Uttar Pradesh because we are still awaiting directives about the numbers." He admitted that Covid was having a major effect on Haj pilgrims and the number of boarding points for Haj in Uttar Pradesh has already been reduced. There will be no Haj flight from Varanasi this year. Boarding points for the pilgrimage all over the country have been reduced from 21 to 10.

90% beds vacant in Telangana's Covid hospitals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 8: More than 90 per cent beds in government-run hospitals treating Covid-19 patients in Telangana remain vacant as the number of infected people continued to decline, officials said.

Of the 8,561 beds available in 61 government hospitals treating Covid-19 patients, 7,803 beds were vacant as on Tuesday. Only 758 people were undergoing treatment in these hospitals. Similarly in 220 private hospitals treating Covid-19 patients, only 1,304 beds were occupied. Of the 8,470 beds, 7,166 were vacant.

The state has 7,696 active Covid cases and of them 5,634 were in home or institutional quarantine. The state on Tuesday reported 682 new Covid cases during the last 24 hours, taking the tally to 2,74,540. Three more persons died due to the virus, taking the death toll to 1,477.

The fatality rate stands at 0.53 per cent as against the national average of 1.5 per cent. According to the Director of Public Health and Family Welfare, 44.96 per cent of the deaths were due to Covid-19 while the remaining 55.04 per cent were due to comorbidities.

Telangana's Covid-19 recoveries continued to outnumber the daily count of new infections as the recovery rate jumped to 96.65 per cent. As many as 761 people recovered from the virus during the last 24 hours. Greater Hyderabad reported 119 new cases. Medchal Malkajiri district has the second highest number at 64, followed by Rangareddy 47, Warangal Urban 41, Khammam 38, Nalgonda 31 and Karimnagar 30.

SHORT TAKES

Navy sailor found dead

Panaji: A 33-year-old Navy sailor was found dead at a construction site in a residential area near INS Hansa naval base in South Goa, an official statement said Tuesday. The deceased has been identified as Rajesh Kumar Kushwaha. "The body was found in the vicinity of a building under construction in the naval residential area. Goa Police is investigating the matter with the assistance of naval authorities," the statement added.

3 killed in UP

Hardoi (UP): Three persons were killed and five others sustained serious injuries when the car in which they were travelling, rammed into a stationary truck in Shahabad area in Hardoi district. The accident took place late on Monday night. All the passengers in the car were returning from Lucknow to Shahjahanpur after attending a wedding.

Man booked

Thane: A case has been registered against a man from Bhiwandi in Thane district of Maharashtra for allegedly preparing a fake birth certificate of his daughter for school admission, a civic official said Tuesday. The incident came to light when the accused, Nazir Hussain Momin, submitted an application with the Bhiwandi Nizampur Municipal Corporation (BNMC) seeking a birth certificate of his daughter.

Tigress kills boy

Shahdol (MP): A 12-year-old boy was allegedly mauled to death by a tigress at a village in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district, an official said Tuesday. The big cat attacked the victim who had stepped outside to relieve himself in Bochro village, located next to the buffer zone of Sanjay Gandhi National Park, on Monday evening, Shahdol's chief conservator of forest P K Verma said.

Cop injured

Panaji: A police constable attached to the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) was injured in a stunt grenade explosion during a mock drill at Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) near here Tuesday, an official said. ATS commando Jaidev Sawant was injured after a stunt grenade went off at the newly-constructed super speciality block of the GMCH in the morning hours, a police spokesperson said.

BENGAL CID TO PROBE BJP WORKER'S DEATH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 8: The Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government Tuesday asked the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to investigate the death of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker in Siliguri.

A statement issued by the state police said: "There was a mala fide intention to create violence by the use of firearms. CID West Bengal has been asked to investigate."

Ulen Roy, 50, a resident of Jalpaiguri's Gajoldoba area, died due to pellet injuries during a protest march on Monday. The police said the deceased received pellet injuries from a shotgun fired from close range by a person standing near the deceased in the protest programme.

"This is unprecedented. Bringing armed persons in protest programmes and inciting them to fire is unheard off," it said.

Earlier, the state police said on Monday evening that serious acts of violence were committed by the supporters of a political party during their protest. They resorted



A statement issued by the state police said: "There was a mala fide intention to create violence by the use of firearms. CID West Bengal has been asked to investigate"

Ulen Roy, 50, a resident of Jalpaiguri's Gajoldoba area, died due to pellet injuries during a protest march Monday

to arson, brick-battling, firing and vandalism of government property, said the police. It had issued a statement saying that police showed restraint and didn't do a lathi charge or used firearms. Only water cannons and tear gas were used to disperse the violent crowd. However, the death of a

person has been reported. The body is being sent for post-mortem. The actual cause of the death will be known only after the post-mortem examination. "Truth will come out and strong action will be taken against all those who planned and executed the heinous crime," police said.



People walk on a snow-covered road after fresh snowfall near Atal Tunnel at Rohtang in Lahaul-Spiti district, Tuesday

WINTER WALK

NOVEL TECHNIQUE

Researchers develop method to harvest water from air

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati have developed novel materials that can efficiently harvest water from humid air.

The research has also been published in the reputed international journal of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

"With increasing water scarcity throughout the world, there have been attempts to collect and conserve water through non-traditional means. Scientists have turned to nature to design ways of water harvesting. "For example, in regions of the world with naturally scanty rainfall, plants and insects have devised ingenious strategies to pull and collect water right out of the air. Mimicking this, scientists worldwide are trying to build technologies that can pull out water from thin air, both literally and figuratively," Uttam

Manna, Associate Professor at IIT Guwahati's Centre of Nanotechnology said.

"The concept of hydrophobicity can be understood by looking at the lotus leaf. The lotus leaf is water repellent because there is a layer of trapped air between the leaf surface and the water droplet, which causes the droplet to slide off the leaf," Manna added.

According to the team, the researchers have used the concept of chemically patterned SLIPS for the first time, to effectively harvest water from moist air.

"We have produced a highly efficient water harvesting interface where the fog collecting rate is really high. The researchers have also compared the performance of their pitcher-plant inspired materials to other bio-inspired ideas and have found theirs to be superior in terms of efficiency of water harvesting," Manna said.



Human-leopard conflicts surge in Maharashtra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aurangabad, Dec 8: The number of people killed in attacks by leopards in Maharashtra more than tripled to 27 in the year 2020 compared to eight such incidents recorded in 2019, a senior Forest department official has said.

At the same time, the number of deaths of leopards also rose compared to the last year, he said. A total of 172 leopards have died in the state so far this year due to various reasons. This figure stood at 110 last year, the official said. The rise in deaths of humans as

well as leopards indicates growing incidents of conflicts between wild animals and humans. "A total of 27 people have been killed in attacks by leopards in various parts of Maharashtra till December 3 this year.

"At 12, Nashik district in northern Maharashtra accounts for the highest number of deaths of people in attacks by leopards, followed by Marathwada region which reported seven deaths. Remaining deaths were reported from other parts of Maharashtra," the official said.

When asked about the reasons for the rise in the number of deaths of

WORRYING TREND



leopards, he said some of them were killed in road accidents, while some drowned in wells. He said some leopards died due to natural

causes while others were killed by poachers. When contacted, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest Nitin Kakodkar said the population of leopards in the state has gone up exponentially. "We don't have the exact figures as many leopards are found in sugarcane fields and other areas which are under cultivation," he said. He said the Maharashtra State Board of Wildlife (MSBW) has decided to form a group to study the causes and circumstances surrounding deaths of leopards and people. MSBW member Yadav Tarte Patil, who is based in Amravati, has suggested various measures to

curb instances of conflicts between humans and leopards.

"At this moment, the state has no plan ready for conservation of leopards but we have a plan for tigers. Herbivorous animals and water should be made available to leopards in their habitats," he said. Tarte Patil said leopards living outside forest areas should also be included in conservation efforts and their habitat should be managed systematically. "To save leopards from unnatural deaths, farmers should be encouraged to cover wells in fields and other small water bodies," he added.

of the day quote

Congress workers and office bearers are being arrested all over Uttar Pradesh today for supporting the farmers. Farmers sitting in the bitter cold are fighting to save MSP. Congress workers are with the farmers till the end

For the sake of our land we will fight on and they will have to deal with us

Modi ji, stop stealing from farmers. All fellow citizens know that today is Bharat Bandh. Make our food growers' struggle successful by fully supporting it

SHORT TAKES

NIA arrests arms trafficker

New Delhi: The NIA has arrested an alleged arms trafficker from Bihar's Gaya district in connection with the theft of weapon parts from Jabalpur's Central Ordnance Depot, an official said Tuesday. Rajeev Ranjan Singh, a resident of Gaya, was arrested Monday, he said. The case pertains to the recovery of three AK series weapons in Bihar's Munger from the house of an accused, Rizwana Begum, the NIA spokesperson said. The NIA has already arrested and chargesheeted 13 accused in the case.

18 held for sex trade

Noida (UP): Eighteen people, including seven women, have been arrested for alleged involvement in illegal sex trade in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida, police said Tuesday. The racket was busted after the local police raided a spa centre located at the Jagat Farm market Monday evening, according to officials. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Greater Noida, Rajesh Kumar Singh said the raid was conducted by officials from the local Beta 2 police station.

TMC worker shot dead

Kalyani (WB): Unidentified gunmen shot dead a Trinamool Congress worker at Gayeshpur in Nadia district, police said Tuesday. Bappa Sarkar was fired upon in a field at Sukanta Nagar locality of Gayeshpur Monday night. Local people took him to a hospital where he was declared "brought dead", a police officer said. It was not clear why the 40-year-old man, who owns a tea stall, had gone to the field.

30cr Indians to be vaccinated first

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 8: The government has marked 30 crore Indians for the large-scale immunisation of Covid-19 vaccine after it gets the necessary approval, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare informed in a press briefing Tuesday.

The ministry said that the national expert group on vaccine administration has recommended 30 crore Indians to receive the vaccine shots first. The figures include 1 crore healthcare workers, 2 crore frontline workers and 27 crore general population falling in priority groups set by the expert group.

"One crore healthcare providers and workers in the healthcare settings, both government and private, 2 crore personnel from state and Central police departments, armed forces, home guard and civil defence organisations, including disaster management volunteers and municipal workers, and 27 crore persons above the age of 50 years and people below 50 years with associated comorbidities are recommended by the national expert group on vaccine administration to be vaccinated on priority," said Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan. Bhushan said that the Centre is



FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

carrying preparatory activities for the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccine in collaboration with all the states and Union Territories.

"The governments at the Centre and states and Uts have started preparing the line-listing of prioritised population groups for vaccination, augmentation of cold-chain infrastructure for storage of vaccine vials, and roping additional vaccinators for smooth execution of Covid-19 immunisation," he added.

Bhushan also informed that the present cold-chain system to store the vaccines consists of 85,634 equip-

I had proposed that illegal (coal) factories be legalised by the Centre and the state jointly, so that people get employment. The Union government, however, did not respond

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

SNOWFALL IN HIGHER REACHES OF VALLEY

The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg and other higher reaches of Kashmir received snowfall for the second day Tuesday, while the plains were lashed by rains, the MET Office said



HONEY ADULTERATION

CSE rebuts Chinese company's claim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) Tuesday rebutted the Chinese company Wuhu Deli Foods's statement which denied having knowledge that their transaction had to do anything with adulterating honey with sugar syrup.

In a statement, China-based Wuhu Deli has categorically denied that it knew the said syrups being solicited by the CSE investigators to bypass the tests to prove the authenticity of honey in India. Its statement also mentions that the company believed the transaction had only to do with syrup, and nothing to do with honey.

The CSE, in a statement, rebutted the claim, and said it is a fact that Wuhu Deli sent it a shipment of samples that contained syrup with the intention of helping it to bypass the honey testing protocols in India. "It is a fact that Wuhu Deli sent us a shipment of samples that contained syrup with the intention of helping us to bypass the honey testing protocols in India. It is unfortunate that because CSE



is not a food importer; it did not have requisite clearances to import food products and had to cancel the shipment from Wuhu Deli. If we manage to get possession of this shipment, we will be happy to get its contents tested," the CSE said.

Wuhu Deli was one of the companies that were contacted by investigators from CSE posing as a fictitious honey trading firm trying to find out if Chinese sugar and rice syrup could be brought into India and mixed with Indian honey, and whether this syrup-spiked honey would pass the Indian testing standards.

CSE said that its investigators wrote to Wuhu Deli seeking syrups that could bypass the honey specifications as mandated by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Army chief Naravane leaves for UAE, Saudi



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane Tuesday left on a six-day tour of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, in a first-ever visit by a head of the Indian Army to the two strategically important Gulf countries.

The visit by the Army chief is seen as a reflection of India's growing strategic ties with the two countries and is expected to further open up new avenues for cooperation in the defence and security sphere.

Gen Naravane's visit comes in the midst of fast-paced developments in the Gulf region including normalisation of Israel's relations with several Arab countries as well as situation arising out of the assassination of Iran's top nuclear weapons scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh.

The Army chief's first destination will be the United Arab Emirates where he will meet senior military officials and discuss avenues for enhancing bilateral defence cooperation. "General MM Naravane, the Chief of Army Staff has proceeded on a visit to the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from December 9 to 14," the Army said in a statement.

"During the visit, he will be meeting his counterparts and senior military leadership of these countries. The visit is historic in the sense that it will be the first time an Indian Army Chief is visiting the UAE and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," it said. According to the official schedule, the Army Chief will visit Saudi Arabia from December 13 to 14.

The Army chief is also scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia's National Defence University and address the students and faculty at the institution. Gen Naravane's visit to the Gulf region comes days after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's trips to Bahrain and the UAE.

In the last few years, India's ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE have witnessed a major upswing. In a significant move, India and Saudi Arabia last year decided to establish a strategic partnership council to further ramp up their cooperation in strategically key areas. It is learnt that Saudi Arabia is keen to collaborate with India on joint production of defence equipment.

Last month, the Army Chief travelled to Nepal on a three-day visit that had significant diplomatic overtone.

PM Modi speaks to Qatar's Amir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani Tuesday vowed to boost bilateral cooperation in the fields of investment flows and energy security, and decided to create a special task-force to further facilitate investments by the Gulf country into India.

In a telephonic conversation, Modi conveyed his felicitations to the Qatar Amir for the forthcoming National Day of Qatar, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

While thanking Prime Minister Modi for the greetings, the Amir appreciated the enthusiasm with which the Indian community in Qatar participates in the National Day celebrations.

"Had a very pleasant conversation with my good friend @TamimBinHamad. Conveyed greetings for Qatar's forthcoming National Day. Qatar is a vital pillar of India's energy security and a valued source of FDI.

CROCODILE ENTERS UP VILLAGE, CAUSES PANIC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, Dec 8: A five-foot-long crocodile, which wandered into a village in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras, was rescued in a late-night operation by Wildlife SOS and the Forest Department, and released into a nearby water body, officials said Tuesday.

The crocodile was spotted resting in a bajra field near the Nagla Tara Singh village by farmers Monday evening, stirring panic amongst the local residents. The Forest Department was immediately alerted about the incident and contacted the Wildlife SOS team asking for their expert assistance in carrying out the rescue



operation. A three-member team from the NGO drove nearly 100 km to reach the location in Sikandrara area of Hathras. In the meantime, a crowd had gathered around the field to catch a glimpse of the crocodile. After ensuring that the onlookers were at

a safe distance from the agitated reptile, a team of forest officers and Wildlife SOS rescuers who were geared with the necessary equipment, safely carried out the rescue operation. The crocodile was deemed fit and later released in Hazara Canal located in Etah.

Kartick Satyanarayan of Wildlife SOS said: "When dealing with big, powerful animals like crocodiles, our rescuers have to exercise extreme caution to avoid any mishaps. It is essential that we remain sensitive to the presence of wild animals and learn to co-exist. We are happy to assist the Forest Department and the state government in mitigating man-animal conflict situations."

NO BUSINESS



A street vendor carrying his rickshaw cart shop during a nationwide strike called by agitating farmers to press for repeal of the Centre's farm laws, in Mumbai

Delhi air quality turning 'severe' again

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 8: Despite negligible stubble burning, there seems to be no respite from the pollution in the national capital as the air quality index inched closer to the "severe" category Tuesday afternoon.

The city's air quality index stood at 392 micrograms per cubic meter, which is in the "very poor" category. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), 18 out of 36 pollution monitoring station in Delhi showed severe air quality index reading. Jahangirpuri has the most noxious air at 439.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences has advised sensitive groups to avoid all physical activity outdoor and move activities indoors. If asthmatic, then keep relief medicine handy, it emphasised. The System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), a central government agency, said that dominating factors influencing air quality are making a swift transformation from biomass to intense winter cooled stagnation conditions, lowering of boundary layer height and fog formation.

"Surface winds are likely to be picking up slightly and the AQI is forecast to be in the very poor category for the next two days. AQI is likely to improve and stay in the middle-end of the very poor category on 11th December," the forecasting agency stated. The contribution of stubble burning to the pollution crisis is also negligible at one per cent, according to the SAFAR.

Vijayashanti's homecoming a shot in the arm for BJP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 8: With veteran actress and former MP M. Vijayashanti's return to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after 15 years, the party has received a shot in the arm in Telangana.

Vijayashanti quit the Congress to formally join the BJP and the move came at a time when the saffron party is upbeat over its impressive performance in the elections to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC).

Increasing its strength in the 150-member municipal body to 48 from a mere four, it emerged as the main opposition to the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS).

This surge came close on the



heels of BJP's victory in the by-elections to the Dubbak Assembly seat.

Now Vijayashanti's return is likely to give further boost to the

party in Telangana. The development may help the party to attract some key leaders not only from the Congress, but also from the TRS.

The actor-turned-politician, who

joined the BJP a day after meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah, said only the BJP can provide an alternative to the TRS. She exuded confidence that the BJP will come to power in the state in 2023.

Vijayashanti, who was heading campaign committee of Congress, said she was ready for any role that may be assigned to her by the BJP leadership. She recalled that she began her political journey in 1998 by joining BJP. She said for some reasons she left the party in 2005.

Political analysts say BJP may use the actor for an aggressive campaign against TRS ahead of 2023 polls. The BJP may also try to woo senior leaders of Congress party who are losing hopes of revival of party's fortunes and also the TRS leaders

who may be unhappy with the party leadership.

Popular as 'Lady Amitabh' for her action roles in Telugu films, Vijayashanti had joined the BJP in 1997 and served as general secretary of the party's women's wing. Riding on her popularity, BJP had named her as the party candidate for Kadapa Lok Sabha seat after reports that Congress leader Sonia Gandhi will be contesting from there. She withdrew from the race after Sonia Gandhi filed her nomination from Bellary. Vijayashanti quit the BJP in 2005 to float a separate outfit, Talli Telangana, to fight for separate statehood for Telangana. She later merged Talli Telangana with TRS and was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Medak

constituency in 2009.

There was some drama on the eve of the 2009 elections. Vijayashanti had threatened to quit TRS after she was named party candidate from Mahabunagar. TRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao, who wanted to contest from Medak, conceded her demand at the last minute. In August 2013, a few months before the formation of Telangana state, TRS suspended Vijayashanti for anti-party activities.

The TRS politburo cracked the whip as she was planning to switch loyalties to the Congress for deciding to grant statehood to Telangana. She had stayed away from TRS activities for few months because of differences with Chandrasekhar Rao.



It testified to the fact that CPEC's contribution to strengthen Pakistan's economic landscape has been real and substantial

SOHAIL MAHMOOD | PAKISTANI FOREIGN SECRETARY

AUSTRALIA TO MAKE FACEBOOK, GOOGLE PAY FOR CONTENT

Australia finalised plans Tuesday to make Facebook Inc and Google pay its media outlets for news content, a world-first move aimed at protecting independent journalism that has been strongly opposed by the Internet giants



of the day quote

China and India have been in communication through diplomatic and military channels on the border issue and we are working for further de-escalation of the border situation

HUA CHUNYING | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON



New York state has been well-prepared against the Covid-19 pandemic and is expected to carry out its plan in a smooth way in its ongoing battle with the health crisis

ANTHONY FAUCI | TOP US INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERT



The situation is more complicated than the last wave as infections scattered across Hong Kong and a number of clusters were involved

CARRIE LAM | HONG KONG CHIEF EXECUTIVE



SHORT TAKES

Romanian PM resigns

Bucharest: Romanian Prime Minister Ludovic Orban has announced his resignation after his ruling National Liberal Party (PNL) failed to secure majority of the votes in the recently-held parliamentary elections. President Klaus Iohannis accepted Orban's resignation late Monday night and appointed Defence Minister Nicolae Ciuca as interim Prime Minister, reports Xinhua news agency. Orban's resignation is generally seen as clearing the way for his party to negotiate a future ruling alliance with other political parties.

US OKs Taiwan arms sale

Washington: The Trump administration has approved a new major arms sale to Taiwan. The move is sure to draw a firm rebuke from China, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province. The State Department Monday said it had approved a \$280 million sale to Taiwan of advanced military communications equipment. The department said it had approved the communications sale to "help improve the security of the recipient and assist in maintaining political stability, military balance, economic and progress in the region."

Journalist killed in Pakistan

Peshawar: A local journalist was killed by two unknown gunmen at his home in northwest Pakistan, police said. The assailants, riding a bike, barged into the house of Qais Javed in Madina Colony in Dera Ismail Khan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The attackers escaped after the incident, police said. Javed was shot in his belly and succumbed while on way to hospital. He was associated with a private TV Channel for ten years as a cameraman and was running his own web channel.

Kuwait's Emir appoints new PM

Kuwait City: Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Tuesday appointed Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as the Kingdom's new Prime Minister, state media reported. The Emir also assigned him to form a government and provide a list of names for approval; Xinhua news agency quoted the state media report as saying,

Taller than before, Mt Everest stands at 8,848.86 metres



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu/Beijing, Dec 8: Nepal and China Tuesday jointly announced that the revised height of the world's highest peak Mount Everest was 8,848.86 metres, about 86 cms more than the previous measurement done by India in 1954. The Nepal government decided to measure the exact height of the mountain amid debates that there might have been a change in it due to various reasons, including the devastating earthquake of 2015. The new height of Mt Everest, the

world's highest peak, is 8,848.86 metres. China and Nepal jointly announced on Tuesday, China's state-run Xinhua news agency said in a brief report. Nepal recalculates the height of Mount Everest at 8848.86 metres, the country's Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali announced in Kathmandu. The new height is 86 cms more than the previous measurement. According to the measurement done in 1954 by Survey of India, the height of Mount Everest is 8,848 metres. According to China's past mea-

urement, the height of Mount Everest is 8844.43 metres which were four metres less than Nepal's calculations. Earlier, the media reports said Chinese surveyors have conducted six rounds of scaled measurement and scientific research on Mount Everest and released the height of the peak twice in 1975 and 2005, which were 8,848.13 metres and 8,844.43 metres respectively. In Tibetan language, Mount Everest is known as Mount Qomolangma. China and Nepal settled their

border dispute in 1961 with the boundary line passing through the summit of Mount Everest. Mount Everest is located in the collision and compression zone between the edges of the Indian plate and the Eurasian plate, where crustal movement is very active. "Accurately measuring the height of Mount Qomolangma is helpful to the study of the elevation changes of the Himalayas and Qinghai-Tibet Plateau," Gao Dengyi, an atmospheric physicist with the Chinese Academy of Sciences told the Chinese state media earlier.

WHO against mandatory Covid vaccination

The WHO said it would be down to individual countries as to how they want to conduct their vaccination campaigns against the coronavirus pandemic

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Geneva, Dec 8: The World Health Organization said Monday that persuading people on the merits of a Covid-19 vaccine would be far better than trying to make the jabs mandatory. The WHO said it would be down to individual countries as to how they want to conduct their vaccination campaigns against the coronavirus pandemic. But the UN health agency insisted making it mandatory to get immunised against the disease would be the wrong road to take. "I don't think that mandates are the direction to go in here, especially for these vaccines," Kate O'Brien, director of the WHO's immunisation department, told a virtual news conference. "It is a much better position to actually encourage and facilitate the



vaccination without those kinds of requirements". "I don't think we envision any countries creating a mandate for vaccination," O'Brien said there may be certain professions in which being vaccinated might be required or

highly recommended, such as respiratory technicians and intensive care medics in hospitals, for the safety of both the staff and the patients. But WHO experts admitted there was a battle to be fought to convince the general public to take the

vaccines as they become available. The organisation's emergencies director Michael Ryan said people needed to ask themselves what they were willing to do in order to protect themselves and those around them. "The vaccine story is a good news story. It is the victory of human endeavour; potentially, over a microbial adversary," he said. "We need to convince people and we need to persuade." As for making vaccines mandatory, he said: "I think all of us who work in public health would rather avoid that as a means for getting people vaccinated". "We are much better served to present people with the data and the benefits and let people make up their own minds. There are certain circumstances... where I would believe that the only responsible thing would be to be vaccinated," he added.

US lawmakers back Indian farmers' protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 8: Several US lawmakers and eminent members of the Sikh community in America have voiced their support for farmers agitating in India against the new farm laws and urged that they be allowed to protest peacefully. Thousands of farmers have been protesting on various borders of Delhi since November 26, seeking repealing of three farm laws enacted in September. Dubbing these laws as "anti-farmer", these farmers claim that the newly enacted legislations would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations. "I stand in solidarity with the Punjabi farmers in India protesting for their livelihoods and protection from misguided, manipulative government regulations," Congressman Doug LaMalfa said Monday. "Punjabi farmers must be al-



lowed to protest peacefully against their government without fear of violence," said the Republican lawmaker who represents California's first Congressional district. India has called the remarks by foreign leaders and politicians on protests by farmers as "ill-informed" and "unwarranted" as the matter pertained to the internal affairs of a democratic country. "India is the world's largest democracy - they owe it to their citizens to allow peaceful protest. I encourage these folks and PM (Narendra) Modi to have peaceful, productive discussions," Democratic Congressman Josh Harder said.

Rtd General Lloyd Austin to be first Black Pentagon chief

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Dec 8: Lloyd Austin, who led US troops into Baghdad in 2003 and rose to head the US Central Command, has been chosen by President-elect Joe Biden to be the first African-American Secretary of Defense. A veteran of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the retired four-star army General, 67, beat out the favorite for the job, former Under-Secretary of Defense Michele Flournoy, amid pressure on Biden to nominate more minorities for positions in his Cabinet. CNN, Politico and the New York Times cited unnamed sources familiar with the decision, after Biden said earlier Monday that he had made his choice and would announce it Friday. Austin would require Senate confirmation to take up the post.



He spent four decades in the army, graduating from the West Point Military Academy and following a career with a wide range of assignments, from leading platoons to running logistics groups and overseeing recruiting, to senior Pentagon jobs. In March 2003 he was the assistant division commander of the 3rd Infantry Division when it marched on Kuwait into Baghdad in the US invasion of Iraq. From late 2003 to 2005, he was in Afghanistan commanding the Combined Joint Task Force 180, the principle US-led operation seeking to stabilize the security situation in the country. In 2010 he was made commanding general of US forces in Iraq, and two years later became the commander of the Central Command, in charge of all Pentagon operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Austin retired from the military in 2016, and joined the board of directors of Raytheon Technologies, one of the Pentagon's largest contractors.

Essential workers win TIME's 2020 'Person of the Year' poll

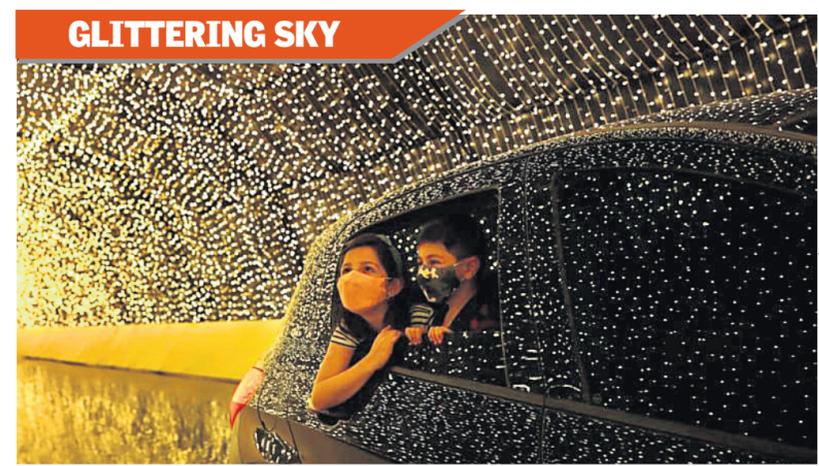


PHOTO: TIME magazine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Dec 8: Essential workers - the nurses, doctors, delivery people, grocery-store employees and others who risked their lives on the frontlines during the Covid-19 pandemic this year to provide critical services to the people - have won TIME's 2020 Person of the Year Reader Poll. "TIME said "these heroes" won with 6.5 per cent of the more than 8 million votes cast in this year's poll that had asked readers to select the person or group of people who had the greatest influence on 2020. "Essential workers beat out some 80 other candidates, including famed figures like (US) President Donald Trump, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Pope Francis, for the readers' top pick," TIME said. It added that this year's reader poll results also high-

lighted several other figures and groups who stood out during an unprecedented and grueling year. Director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Anthony Fauci, who "emerged as a trusted figure amid Covid-19 misinformation", came in at second spot with 5 per cent of the votes. "Fauci has been on the receiving end of President (Donald) Trump's public wrath as he raised the alarm about the US failure to contain the virus, and continues to be one of the most authoritative voices in the country on combating Covid-19," TIME said. Coming in at third place were firefighters with 4.3 per cent of the votes. "Having repeatedly risked their lives to battle historic wildfires all over the world this year, from Australia to the Western United States," TIME said. The Black Lives Matter activists who "led and inspired global demonstrations against systemic racism and police brutality" after the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, followed in next in the reader poll with 4 per cent of the votes.



Children look at lights from inside their family car as they visit Lumina Fest, a drive-through Christmas light festival in Sao Paulo, Brazil

UK PM rushes to Brussels to save post-Brexit deal talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 8: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will fly to Brussels this week for crunch talks to try and break the deadlock with the European Union (EU) over a post-Brexit trade agreement ahead of the December 31 deadline. The clock is ticking for the end of the Brexit transition period and unless the UK and EU are able to thrash out and ratify a deal by the end of this month, Britain will have left the 27-member economic

bloc January 1, 2021, with the prospect of tariffs on goods as both sides trade on World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms. "I'm always hopeful, but I've got to be honest, the situation at the moment is very tricky," Johnson told the BBC. But he added that he remained optimistic and hopes for "the power of sweet reason". "We will see where we get to in the course of the next two days, but I think the UK government's position is that we are willing to engage at any level, political or otherwise, we are willing to try anything. But there are just limits beyond which no sensible, independent government or country could go and people have got to understand that," he said. Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen issued a joint statement Monday night after their respective Chief Negotiators, Michel Barnier and Lord David Frost, failed to overcome the final hurdles in three key areas of divergence.

Does Trump have power to pardon himself?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP HAS DECLARED THAT HE HAS "ABSOLUTE POWER" TO ISSUE A PARDON TO HIMSELF

ASSOCIATED PRESS

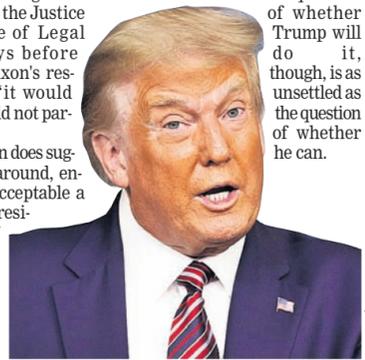
Washington, Dec 8: President Donald Trump has declared that he has "absolute power" to issue a pardon to himself. Yet the law is much murkier than his confidence suggests. No President has attempted to pardon himself while in office, so if Trump tries to do so in the next six weeks, he will be venturing into legally untested territory without clear guidance from the Constitution or from judges. Legal experts are divided on an inherently ambiguous question that was left vague by the Founding Fathers and has never had to be definitively resolved in court. "It's impossible to anticipate every factual scenario that could

come up under a legal provision. This is why we have the courts," said University of Baltimore law professor Kimberly Wehle. Talk of a potential pardon comes with Trump facing a swirl of investigations as he prepares to leave office, including New York State inquiries into whether he misled tax authorities, banks or business partners. In favour of a self-pardon is the broad power the Constitution affords a President when it comes to absolving federal crimes - both charged and not-yet charged - and the absence of any law or language that explicitly prohibits such an act. But some scholars say a self-pardon collides with other provisions of the Constitution or even fundamental principles of law. The

Constitution's text - affording the president "power to grant reprieves and pardons for offences against the United States, except in cases of impeachment" - can be read to suggest that the Founding Fathers envisioned some sort of limitations on a president's pardon power. It could also mean the power is to be used on someone else, not yourself. "You could say, implicit in the definition of a pardon or implicit in the notion of granting a pardon - because the Constitution uses the word 'grant' - is that it's two separate people," said Brian Kalt, a constitutional law professor at Michigan State University. "You can't grant something to yourself. You can't pardon yourself." It would also seem to run afoul of the fundamental principle that

no one - in this case, a president issuing himself a pardon - may serve as a judge in his own case. That was the reasoning cited in a 1974 opinion from the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, dated days before President Richard Nixon's resignation, that said "it would seem" a president could not pardon himself. But that same opinion does suggest a potential workaround, envisioning as legally acceptable a scenario in which a president declares himself temporarily unfit for office under the Constitution's 25th Amendment and transfers power to the vice president, who could

then issue a pardon. The president could then either resign or resume his duties, the opinion said. The question of whether Trump will do it, though, is as unsettled as the question of whether he can.



business



Mobile technology has helped provide benefits worth billions of dollars to millions. It is also with the help of mobile technology that we will embark on one of the world's largest Covid-19 vaccination drive

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

TRADE UNAFFECTED BY 'BANDH'

India-Bangladesh trade along the northeastern states Tuesday remained unaffected by the 'Bharat Bandh' called by the farmers' unions over the contentious farm laws enacted by the Central government, officials said



of the day quote

This facility (lubricant blending) provides a strategic opportunity for Gulf to invest further in the marine segment and grow its market share in marine lubricants and other services. It will also provide a regional hub to accelerate our business development plans in SE Asia within the automotive sector



SANJAY HINDUA | CHAIRMAN OF GULF OIL LUBRICANTS INDIA

From a national perspective, what is important is that India today has embarked on a journey where it is creating its own technologies in 5G and who knows by the time 6G comes, we could be a significant player in the technology arena for communications



AJAY KUMAR | DEFENCE SECRETARY

The onus of making the country self-reliant in manufacturing lies with the industry and not with the government which can at best act as a facilitator



PAWAN GOENKA | MD AND CEO, MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA

SHORT TAKES

'NBFCs' loan collections improves

Mumbai: Non-bank lenders have witnessed a good rise in loan collection efficiencies in the September quarter after the reverses in the first three months of the fiscal, a ratings agency said Tuesday. The build-up in provisions will help non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) against incremental uncertainties, Icria said in a report, adding that such bodies are carrying about 50% higher provisions at 3.1% of the AUM as against 2% in the year-ago period.

'Eyeing 25% growth in 2021'

Mumbai: Marsh India Insurance Brokers is hopeful of growing over 25% in 2021 to clock ₹7,500 crore premium sales on the back of recent acquisition of rival firm JLT Insurance Brokers, a top company official has said. The local arm of the New York-based brokerage, which is the world's largest, has sold over 3 million health policies alone in the country in 17 years. Marsh India, which entered the country in 2003, is the largest insurance brokerage with 5,800 corporate clients.

JSW Steel output grows 3% in Nov

New Delhi: JSW Steel Tuesday reported a 3% growth in its crude steel production to 13.32 lakh tonnes (LT) for November 2020. The company's output stood at 12.90 LT in the corresponding month last year, the steelmaker said in a statement. During the month under review, there was a 6% growth in the production of flat-rolled products at 9.61 LT compared to 9.09 LT in November 2019.

ADB approves \$500mn loan

New Delhi: Multilateral lending agency Asian Development Bank (ADB) Tuesday said it has approved a \$500 million loan to construct new metro rail lines in Bangalore. The Bengaluru Metro Rail Project will establish two new metro rail corridors to augment an efficient and safe transportation system. The project will construct two new metro lines, mostly elevated, with a total length of 56 kilometres along Outer Ring Road and National Highway 44 between Central Silk Board and Kempegowda International Airport, ADB said in a statement.

Festive season sequentially lifts Nov auto retail sales

The festive period saw good traction in the current pandemic hit world as overall degrowth of (-) 4.74% was much less than expected

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 8: The festive season boosted India's automobile retail sales by 29.32% in November on a sequential basis, industry data showed Tuesday. However, sales remained in the red on a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis. The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) data showed that vehicle registration in November rose to 18,27,990 units from 14,13,549 units sold in October.

Nevertheless, on a y-o-y basis, November retail sales declined by 19.29% to 18,27,990 units from 22,64,947 units off-take during the like month of last year.

"Automobile industry has seen one of the best recovery rates since



unlocking began as November continues to see positive momentum by growing 29.32% on M-o-M basis," FADA President Vinkesh Gulati said. "On Yo-Y basis, the negative slide

continues with a degrowth of (-) 19.29%."

According to Gulati, the 42-days festive period saw good traction in the current pandemic hit world as

overall degrowth of (-) 4.74% was much less than expected.

"While registrations during Navratri were tepid, people came out in good numbers to purchase their dream vehicles during the Dhanteras-Diwali period," Gulati said.

"Tractor segment continued to gallop ahead. The fear of pandemic leading to safer means of travel for the entire family saw good sales in passenger vehicles as it grew in double digits at 13.6%." On a yearly comparison, passenger vehicles retail sales rose by 4.17% to 2,91,001 units from 2,79,365 units off-take during the like month of last year.

Similarly, tractor sales grew by 4.47% to 49,313 units from 45,462 units sold during November 2019. In contrast, commercial vehicle

sales decreased by (-) 31.22% to 50,113 units from 72,863 units sold during the corresponding month of last year. Likewise, two-wheeler sales de-grew by 21.40% to 14,13,378 units from 17,98,201 units sold during November 2019.

In its near outlook, FADA said: "With festive season now over, heavy rains in certain parts of the country leading to crop damage and pent-up demand almost negligible, demand revival now solely depends on exciting year end schemes. If the supply chain issues in PV segment is controlled, we may see continued growth in December."

"FADA once again cautions 2W OEMs and dealers to keep a check on vehicle inventory as post festivals, demand may remain subdued."

GOVT AIMS TO RAISE MSMEs' CONTRIBUTION TO GDP TO 50%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Dec 8: Describing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) as backbone of Indian economy, Union Minister of Road Transport Nitin Gadkari Tuesday said the government's aim is to increase the sector's contribution to the GDP to 50% from the existing 30%.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the three-day TIB Global Summit (TGS) being held virtually, Gadkari said the MSME sector currently constitutes 48% of total exports from India and the government aims to take it to 60% in future.



backbone of the country," he said. "Now we have decided to make this 30% contribution to GDP to 40% and 48% of the exports con-

tributing industrialists to invest in India, the union minister said that the country currently has an excellent network of roads, abundantly available power and water and reformed labour and other administrative laws.

He said his ministry was planning to take up 22 new green highway road projects across the country.

According to him, though there is an impact of COVID-19 globally, the Indian industry may get some opportunities out of it.

Lauding the achievements of the Indian automobile industry, Gadkari said the sector witnesses ₹4.5 lakh crore turnover annually and the country can become a global hub for automobile manufacturing. He said currently research is going on to use hydrogen fuel cells as an alternative source of energy for automobiles.

A total of 30% of the GDP in economy is contributed by the MSMEs. Out of our total exports, 48% is also from MSMEs. At the same time, up till now MSMEs have created 11 crore jobs. And that is one of the reasons why MSME is the backbone of the country



NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

"MSME is the backbone of Indian economy. A total 30% of the GDP in Indian economy is contributed by the MSME. Out of our total exports, 48% is also from MSME. At the same time up till now MSME created 11 crore jobs. And that is one of the reasons why MSME is the

tribution to 60%. And we want to create five crore jobs, he added.

Gadkari said currently village industries such as handlooms, handicrafts, Khadi Gram Udyog are generating ₹80 thousand crore revenues which needs to be taken up to ₹five lakh crore in the next few years.

FB adds carts to WhatsApp to make shopping easier

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 8: WhatsApp Tuesday said it is adding 'carts' feature to make it easier for businesses to conduct transactions through the platform. Last month, the Facebook-owned company had started rolling out a shopping button on its app to make it easier for people to discover a business' catalog to get information about the goods and services offered by the firm.

"WhatsApp is fast becoming a store counter to discuss products and coordinate sales. Catalogs have allowed people to quickly see what's available and helped businesses organise their chats around particular items. With more and more

shopping happening through chats, we want to make buying and selling even easier," WhatsApp said in a blog post on Tuesday.

WhatsApp said the 'Catalogs' feature has allowed buyers to quickly see what's available while helping businesses organise their chats around particular items.

"Starting today, we're excited to bring carts to WhatsApp. Carts are great when messaging businesses that typically sell multiple items at once, like a local restaurant or clothing store... This will make it simpler for businesses to keep track of order inquiries, manage requests from customers and close sales," the blog said.

As infections rise, ECB to unleash another stimulus

AGENCIES

Frankfurt, Dec 8: The European Central Bank (ECB) is expected to prepare for another blast of stimulus Thursday to help businesses bridge the gap until the economy recovers from the pandemic - and to support governments that are ramping up spending to cushion the blow as the winter wave of the virus worsens.

The bank could add a half-trillion euros or more to its existing bond purchases. That means the central bank will vacuum up much of the new debt being issued by hard-pressed governments, lowering the



risk of a new eurozone debt crisis.

If the pandemic purchases are expanded as expected, and combined with a previous bond purchase program amounting to 20 billion euros (\$24 billion) per month, the ECB "will continue to absorb a very large part of gross debt issuance from euro area states," wrote

Frederik Ducrozet and Nadia Gharbi at Pictet Wealth Management.

Bond purchases drive down borrowing costs in the bond market, where governments get their financing, and thus takes some of the financial pressure off governments that otherwise might restrict their spending at the worst possible time. Analysts Chiara Cremonesi and Francesco Maria Di Bella at UniCredit bank say that the ECB will remain "extremely active" in the bond market: "Indeed, we expect the ECB to purchase an amount similar to the entire new net issuance in 2021."

Ambani hints at 5G rollout in second half of 2021

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 8: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani Tuesday hinted at rolling out 5G telecom services in the second half of 2021 and said policy steps are needed to accelerate the early rollout of ultra-high-speed 5G services that are affordable and available everywhere.

Ambani, whose four-year-old telecom venture Jio has captured the No.1 spot offering free voice calling and data at dirt-cheap rates, also pitched for developing hardware manufacturing in India, saying the nation cannot rely on imports in such a critical area.

5G is the 5th generation mobile network that enables connecting virtually everyone and everything together including machines, objects, and devices.



India, he said, is today among the best digitally connected nations in the world.

"In order to maintain this lead, policy steps are needed to accelerate the early rollout of 5G, and to make it affordable and available everywhere," he said. "I assure you that Jio will pioneer the 5G

Jio and other service providers such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea offer 4G services. The country however also has a 2G network that supports only voice calling and text messaging.

"As many as 300 million mobile subscribers in India are still trapped in the 2G era. Urgent policy steps are needed to ensure that these underprivileged people have an affordable smartphone so that they too can benefit from direct benefit transfer into their bank accounts, and actively participate in the digital economy," he said.

India has over a billion phone users. His company offers low-priced smartphones that allow internet access.

Revolution in India in the second half of 2021." Jio's 5G will be powered by the indigenous-developed network, hardware and technology components. "Jio's 5G service will be a testimony to your inspiring vision of AtmaNirbhar Bharat."

'India to be 5G ready in next 3 yrs'

NEW DELHI: Bharti Enterprises Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal Tuesday said that India will be ready to reap complete benefits of 5G technology in the next two to three years. Speaking at inaugural session of the India Mobile Congress (IMC), he said that over the period 5G will become a norm for telecom connectivity across the country.

"I think in two or three years India will be ready to receive the benefit of all the investments that the globe would have made on to the 5G standard and the 5G ecosystem," he said. He noted that in the next few

years, prices of the equipment will come down and the devices also would be readily available.

"We may not have been able to achieve many of the things that we are seeing today for several more years but the force multiplier effect of the pandemic has been in some sense a boon for the digitalization of our country," the Bharti Enterprises Chairman said.

Speaking on Bharti Airtel's foray into several new spheres including enterprises and broadband, Mittal said that the company is looking forward to be a part of the BharatNet project.

AUSTRALIA WIN FINAL MATCH, ONLY TO END UP LOSING T20Is; WHITE BALL SERIES GET A DÉJÀ VU-LIKE FINISH



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Dec 8: It was like a déjà vu-like finish to the white ball series. The only difference was two different winners. In the ODI series, Australia won the first two matches before losing the final match to seal series 2-1. In the T20Is, it was India who had the same fate like what the Aussies had in the ODIs.

While India won the shortest format 2-1, it was overall an even result for the two teams which won three white-ball games each. Tuesday's loss ended the visitors' 10-match winning streak in the format.

Australian bowlers held their nerves to come up trumps against the genius of Virat Kohli, stalling an Indian clean-sweep with a 12-run victory in the third and final T20 International here Tuesday.

Kohli got as many as four reprieves and cashed in well enough to smash his way to 85 off 61 balls but India could only reach as far as 174/7 in their pursuit of 187 in 20 overs.

It was a slash drive off Andrew Tye in the penultimate over which was plucked inches off the ground by Daniel Sams, who compensated for a forgettable day with the ball.

An over before that Hardik Pandya's swagger was checked by Adam Zampa (1/21). Zampa's leg-break turned enough to force the 'Baroda Bomber' to hit one against the turn and be caught at short third-man.

Pandya was deservedly adjudged player of the series for his heroics



Mitchell Swepson is congratulated by keeper Matthew Wade after a wicket

with the bat. Once Pandya was gone, there was too much pressure on Kohli and this was one rare occasion when he failed to take the team home.

While he hit four fours and three sixes, Kohli did lead a charmed life as Steve Smith missed a dolly at deep mid-wicket fence when he gave Maxwell the charge.

Then Sean Abbott failed to get his hands on a tough return catch while another slipped through Tye's palms. During the fag end, Matthew Wade missed an easy stumping.

The Indian captain scored his third half century of the tour and

an effortless six off Abbott after the completion of the milestone gave much-needed relief to the Indian dug-out. This was after man of the match Mitchell Swepson's (3/23) innocuous leg-breaks reduced them to 100/4.

Swepson would be the first to admit that he was lucky to dismiss Shikhar Dhawan with a half-tracker and ever-unreliable Sanju Samson (10) with a low full-toss. The only wicket-taking delivery he bowled was the one that got Shreyas Iyer out for a first-ball duck.

While Pandya initially took time, Kohli decided to take matters in his own hands as he first deposited Sams into the mid-wicket stands and then guided a rising delivery behind square. Zampa dismissing Pandya turned out to be the turning point.

Earlier, Wade's second consecutive half century was well-complemented by Maxwell's blazing strokeplay as Australia posted a competitive 186/5 after being put into bat. Maxwell got into the act during the last six overs and added a third-wicket stand of 90 runs in 8.4 overs with Wade.

India's bowling heroes were Washington Sundar (2/34) and Thangarasu Natarajan (1/33). Natarajan, despite a few boundaries conceded in the final over, was pretty impressive.

The Australian innings largely dominated by Wade's power-hitting after Sundar got rid of Aaron Finch (0) very cheaply. Wade was the dom-

SCORECARD				
AUSTRALIA INNINGS	R	B	4s	6s
Matthew Wade lbw b Thakur	80	53	7	2
Aaron Finch c Pandya b Sundar	0	2	0	0
Steve Smith b Sundar	24	23	1	0
Glenn Maxwell b Natarajan	54	36	3	3
Moises Henriques not out	5	2	1	0
D'Arcy Short run out	7	3	1	0
Daniel Sams not out	4	2	1	0
EXTRAS: 12 (LB-1, W-10, NB-1);	Total: 186/5 (20 Overs)			
Fall: 14/1 (Finch), 79/2 (Smith), 169/3 (Wade), 175/4 (Maxwell), 182/5 (Short).				
Bowler: Deepak Chahar 4-0-34-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-34-2, T Natarajan 4-0-33-1, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-41-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-43-1.				
INDIA INNINGS	R	B	4s	6s
KL Rahul c Smith b Maxwell	0	2	0	0
Shikhar Dhawan c Sams b Swepson	28	21	3	0
Virat Kohli c Sams b Tye	85	61	4	3
Sanju Samson c Smith b Swepson	10	9	0	0
Shreyas Iyer lbw b Swepson	0	1	0	0
Hardik Pandya c Finch b Zampa	20	13	1	2
Washington Sundar c Tye b Abbott	7	6	1	0
Shardul Thakur not out	17	7	0	2
Deepak Chahar not out	0	0	0	0
Extras: 7 (B-1, W-6);	Total: 174/7 (20 Overs)			
Fall: 0/1 (Rahul), 74/2 (Dhawan), 97/3 (Samson), 100/4 (Iyer), 144/5 (Pandya), 151/6 (Kohli), 164/7 (Sundar).				
Bowler: Glenn Maxwell 3-0-20-1, Sean Abbott 4-0-49-1, Daniel Sams 2-0-29-0, Andrew Tye 4-0-31-1, Mitchell Swepson 4-0-23-3, Adam Zampa 3-0-21-1.				

inant partner during the 65-run stand with a scratchy Steve Smith (24) but played the second fiddle once Maxwell got his touch back.

For Maxwell, the 15th over by Chahal was the one that changed the course. Once he got the reprieve, he deposited Chahal for a straight six and followed it with another into the mid-wicket stands.

Riding on his luck, he got another life in the 17th over when a mishit was dropped by Deepak Chahar running in from deep point.

Between overs 13th to 18th, Australia racked up 68 runs. In the final two overs Shardul Thakur (1/43) and Natarajan dismissed the two set batsmen and final two overs went for only 18 runs.

Kohli uncertain over playing tour match

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Dec 8: India captain Virat Kohli Tuesday hinted that he might skip the three-day pink-ball warm-up game ahead of the eagerly-awaited Test series against Australia after an intense limited-overs leg of the tour ended with his team winning the T20 series 2-1 here Tuesday.

The tour game against Australia A is due to begin in three days' time and will be India's final tune-up before the opening day-night Test in Adelaide from December 17.

Kohli will lead the team in the opener of the four-match series, after which he will go back to India for the birth of his first child.

"I will wake up tomorrow and see if I can play the tour match. Playing it on and off is not my thing and I like to play the full game. I will talk to our physio and then decide on my participation," Kohli said after the third and final T20I here, which India lost by 12 runs.

Overall, Kohli was pleased with the way his side fought and found ways to win matches from tough situations. "We are finding ways to come back and give the opposition a scare and the series win is a little asterisk for us to finish the 2020 season on a high."

Kohli also thanked the sports-loving Australian crowd for the manner in which it turned up despite the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I feel the crowd was a factor as well, it's always giving you a dimension of motivation. Our crowd pulls us through sometimes, and Australia has got great support too, and we as players feed off the crowd's energy."

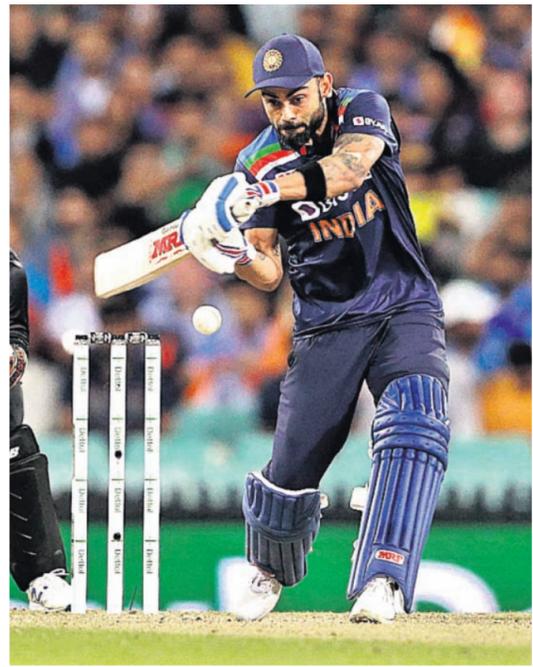
Having won the series, Kohli was looking forward to the Tests and said the current team is stronger than the one that made history by winning its first Test series Down Under two years ago.

"We need to take the same competitive attitude into the Tests, and having played here a few times, we can score runs as well. Once it's time to capitalise and score, we need to do that session by session. I'm sure the current side is stronger than last time," Kohli said.

Australian captain Aaron Finch was delighted to be on the winning side after the reverses in the first two matches.

"It was a great series, and we just happened to be on the wrong end of the first two. It's the first time we've had two leg-spinners (Adam Zampa and Mitchell Swepson) in the side, and they were bold with the short boundaries here, so credit to both of them."

"Swepson bowled the seventh over against Shikhar (Dhawan) and Virat, both destructive in their own ways, but Zampa bowled really well as well. We played some great white-ball cricket over the last 18 months and really proud of the bunch," Finch said.



Warm-up tie: Saha shines, others fail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Dec 8: In the form of a sedate half century, Wriddhiman Saha got himself some invaluable batting practice ahead of the first Test against Australia, but his other famed Indian colleagues failed to bat long as their warm-up game against Australia A concluded in a draw here Tuesday.

Medium pacer Mark Steketee, who returned impressive figures of 5/37, came in the way of what could have been a few sessions of good batting practice on the third and final day for the touring Indians.

Making up for his first-innings nought, Saha top-scored for the visitors with 54 after facing 100 deliveries at the Drummoyne Oval on the third and final day of the tune-up.

Bracing for the first Test, the seasoned Saha found the fence seven times during his stay in the middle. Beginning with a deficit of 59 runs, the Indians declared their second innings at 189 for nine and in reply, the Australians, needing 130 in 15 overs to register an outright victory, reached 52 for one when the stumps were drawn for one last time in the game.

India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane, who is going to lead the team in the absence of Virat Kohli after the first Test, followed up his neat first-innings century with a knock of 28.

Cheteshwar Pujara, who made a solid half century in preparation for the marquee series opener, however, failed to open his account in the second essay.

The young opening duo of Prithvi Shah (19) and Shubman Gill (29) added 37 runs for the first wicket before Cameron Green sent the former back.

Pujara did not last long and was bowled by Michael Nesar, which brought to crease Hanuma Vihari.



Wriddhiman Saha pulls one away during his innings against Australia A, Tuesday

Vihari made 28 before Nesar had him caught by Burns.

For the home team, Green enjoyed a fine all-round outing having

scored a hundred in the first innings which ended at 306 for nine declared.

After his impressive perform-

ance in the first innings, during which he picked up three wickets, pacer Umesh Yadav added another scalp to his name when the Australians went out to bat again.

Australia were overnight 286 for eight with Green batting on 114. In the first session of the final day, Green added another 15 runs before the hosts declared their first innings.

The Indians started on a promising note but soon started losing wickets at regular intervals, with Steketee doing the bulk of the damage.

The Test series starts with the Day-Night game in Adelaide from December 17-21.

BRIEF SCORES: India 247/9d & 189/9d (Wriddhiman Saha 54; Mark Steketee 5/37) Australia 306/9d & 52/1. Match drawn.

Pucovski ruled out of 2nd Tour match

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Dec 8: Potentially in line for a Test debut against India, Australian batsman Will Pucovski suffered a concussion after being struck on the helmet by pacer Kartik Tyagi during the warm-up game against India A here Tuesday and was ruled out of the second tour game starting December 11.

Considered a sure-shot selection for the series-opener, beginning December 17 in Adelaide, with David Warner ruled out owing to an injury, Pucovski was batting on 23 when he was hit on the helmet by a delivery from Tyagi in the 13th over of Australia A's second innings. "Will experienced mild concussion symptoms but was able to leave the field unassisted,"



Will Pucovski (2nd from R) is assisted off the ground at Drummoyne Oval after a blow to the helmet, Tuesday

team doctor John Orchard said in a statement posted by 'cricket.com.au'.

"He was monitored in our medical room and was communicating freely with staff and teammates as well as family over the phone. Will will remain with the Australia A

squad but will not play in the three-day tour match against India at the SCG," he added.

Pucovski was hit on the front of his protective equipment and he fell to his knees, staying there for a few minutes before managing to walk off the field.

The 22-year-old opener was immediately attended to by the medical team even as he dropped the bat and remained on his hands and knees for a few minutes on the pitch. The impact had put a question mark on his availability for the first Test but Cricket Australia confirmed that he was able to walk after being attended by team doctor John Orchard. Tipped to partner opener Joe Burns in the Day/Night first Test at Adelaide Oval, Pucovski has a history of facing concussion problems in his career.

Breakdance gets Olympics status

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lausanne, Dec 8: Breakdancing became an official Olympic sport. The International Olympic Committee's (IOC) pursuit of urban events to lure a younger audience saw street dance battles officially added to the medal events program at the 2024 Paris Games.

Also confirmed for Paris by the IOC executive board were skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing. Those three sports will make their Olympic debuts at the Tokyo Games which were postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic

SET FOR DEBUT IN PARIS 2024

by one year to open July 23, 2021.

However, Paris organizers need time to prepare their project and so the IOC kept to its long-time schedule to confirm the 2024 sports lineup this month even before some are tested in Tokyo.

Breakdancing will be called breaking at the Olympics, as it was in the 1970s by hip-hop pioneers in the United States. It was proposed by Paris organizers almost

two years ago after positive trials at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires.

Breaking passed further stages of approval in 2019 from separate decisions by the IOC board and full membership. In Paris, breaking has been given a prestige downtown venue, joining sport climbing and 3-on-3 basketball at Place de la Concorde.

Surfing will be held far from France - more than 15,000 kilometers (9,000 miles) away in the Pacific Ocean - at the beaches of Tahiti, as the IOC already agreed in March.

Machado saves NEUFC's day



POST NEWS NETWORK

Goa, Dec 8: Bengaluru FC and NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) split the points after playing out a thrilling 2-2 draw at the Fatorda Stadium, here Tuesday.

Gerard Nus' men took an early lead through a fortuitous strike from Luis Machado (fourth minute) but Bengaluru hit back through

Juanan (13th) and substitute Udanta Singh (70th). Just as the Blues looked set for a win, Machado (78th) struck again to ensure his team got a share of the points.

NEUFC got off to the best possible start when they scored in just the fourth minute. Rochharzela cut into the box and unleashed a shot at goal. His strike struck his teammate Machado and Bengaluru goal-

keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu could only look on in despair as the ball looped in.

However, Bengaluru faught back and found the equaliser. A Rahul Bheke throw caused all sorts of chaos in the NEUFC box and it fell to Juanan, whose first-time shot found the net.

Bengaluru had a number of chances to take the lead in the first half. They finally had their lead in the 70th minute and it was some lax defending from the Highlanders that led to it. Sunil Chhetri won a header at the edge of the box and directed it towards the far-post. Dylan Fox should have cleared it but let it roll into the path of the onrushing Udanta, whose shot crept in under goalkeeper Gurmeet's hands. On the touchline, Cuadrat appeared ecstatic.

However, his joy was not to last long as Bengaluru's lead lasted just under eight minutes. Juanan went from hero to villain as his failure to deal with a ball from midfield allowed Machado to slot past Gurpreet and grab the equaliser.