



URVASHI'S ASPIRATION

Actress Urvashi Rautela has shared her goals for the upcoming year on social media

LEISURE P2



OWAI SI EYES RAJASTHAN

AIMIM is keeping a strong vigil on 40 seats dominated by Muslims in the state

TWO STATES P7



US AGENCIES HACKED

Hackers got into computers at the US Treasury Dept touching off a govt response involving the National Security Council

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Are you sure you want to order that? You could be punished for anti-party activities. That is protestors' food!

Two cops held for hunting inside Simlipal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 14: In a case of fence eating crops, two policemen were arrested for allegedly hunting barking deer inside Simlipal National Park here, Monday.

The Forest department officials arrested the cops for hunting inside the restricted area of the park. The arrested cops have been identified as Purnachandra Madhei and Hemanta Mohanty, attached to Sahadevkhunta police station as constables.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Forest department officials conducted raids inside the park and caught the cops in action while hunting a female barking deer. The officials also seized a gun and a knife from their possession. In order to check poaching inside the park, five teams have been formed that have been conducting raids. Notably, in September this year, six poachers were arrested while trying to attempt to kill wild animals inside Simlipal National Park.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	46253.46 ↑ 154.45
NIFTY	13558.20 ↑ 44.30
DOLLAR	73.84 ↓ ₹0.20
EURO	89.49 ↑ ₹0.05
GOLD	₹48,954 ↓ ₹370
SILVER	₹63,814 ↑ ₹79

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	30.4°C	31.2°C
TEMP MIN	19.4°C	17.2°C
Humidity	98%	88%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Fog or mist in the morning

Lingaraj ordinance cleared

STATE CABINET OKAYS AN ORDINANCE FOR BETTER MANAGEMENT OF LINGARAJ TEMPLE IN THE CAPITAL CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Keeping the promise made by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the state Cabinet Monday decided to implement new law for better management of Lingaraj temple here, through ordinance route.

While conducting an on-spot review of Ekamra Kshetra heritage project December 2, Naveen had promised temple Sevatys to bring the Lingaraj Temple Act "soon". The Cabinet cleared the ordinance within 12 days of the request from the Sevatys.

Briefing media persons, Finance minister Niranjan Pujari said, "Shri Lingaraj temple has elaborate and exhaustive rituals and Seva-puja like Shri Jagannath temple, Puri. Presently, the management of the Lingaraj temple is governed under the Odisha Hindu Religious Endowment Act, 1951. As the Endowment Commission is looking after management of all temples of Odisha, it is unable to give special attention to the temple. Therefore, it is considered important to enact a special Lingaraj Temple Ordinance for this purpose."

The Shri Lingaraj Temple Ordinance, 2020 aims to provide for vesting of the management of the affairs of temple and its properties including temples situated within its premises, other temples, sacred places and mutts in a Committee for better administration and governance, he said.



"The temple administration will be further empowered and strengthened by this new law to more effectively execute the elaborate rituals and Seva-Puja as well as administration or management of the affairs of the temple."

With this new law, the management of the Lingaraj temple and its properties will be governed by a Committee. An IAS officer will be appointed as administrator to look after day to day affairs of the temple. The ordinance will also empower the Committee to safeguard the properties of the temple.

That apart, the government recently proposed to undertake several developmental works for all-round development of the shrine.

The Cabinet has also approved ten-

TREAT FOR JAJPUR & PURI

■ Tenders for a new medical college at Jajpur and a teaching hospital at Puri also get Cabinet nod

■ The 100-seat and 500-bed medical college at Jajpur will be constructed with a total cost of ₹426.51 crore

■ The 650-bed teaching hospital for new govt medical college at Puri will come up at a cost of ₹224.55 crore

ical college at Jajpur will be constructed with a total cost of ₹426.51 crore.

Similarly, the panel approved tender for construction of 650-bed teaching hospitals for new government medical college at Puri with a cost of ₹224.55 crore. Both the works have been given to Larsen & Toubro Ltd and targeted to complete within three years.

Process begins for reopening places of worship

BHUBANESWAR: After being closed for about nine months due to COVID-19 outbreak, the Odisha government Monday said the process for reopening religious institutions has started, a top official said. Following decline in single-day COVID-19 positive cases, the authorities are now mulling reopening of religious places for devotees, he said. District Collectors have been empowered to take a decision to open the religious places in their respective districts after discussing with stakeholders and putting standard operating procedures (SOPs) in place, Chief Secretary AK Tripathy informed in a tweet.



2 mn CCP agents 'embedded' in big corps across the world

The data was extracted from a server in Shanghai in 2016 by Chinese dissidents, who used it for counterintelligence purposes

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Canberra, Dec 14: Around two million Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members who got secretly embedded in some of the world's biggest companies, banks, media groups, universities and government agencies, have been exposed.

"The Australian" newspaper obtained the leaked database which apart from the names of around two million CCP members, has their party position, birth-date, national ID number and ethnicity.

Among the companies mentioned in the list are manufacturers such as Boeing and Volkswagen, pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer and AstraZeneca, and banks like ANZ and HSBC. As per the documents, around 600 people at HSBC, Standard Chartered banks are CCP members.

"It is believed to be the first leak



of its kind in the world," "The Australian" journalist and "Sky News" host Sharri Markson said. "What's amazing about this database is not just that it exposes people who are members of the Communist Party, and who are now living and working all over the world, from Australia to the US to the UK, but it's amazing because it lifts the lid on how the party operates under President and Chairman Xi Jinping," she added.

Around 79,000 CCP branches have been set up inside western companies where members, if called on, are answerable directly to the Communist Party and President Xi himself, the reports said.

It is also going to embarrass some global companies who appear to have no plan in place to protect their intellectual property from theft, and economic espionage

SHARRI MARKSON | AUSTRALIAN JOURNALIST

GUIDELINES FOR COVID VACCINE DRIVE OUT

COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network system—a digitalised platform—will be used to track enlisted beneficiaries for the vaccination on a real-time basis

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: Vaccinating 100-200 people in each session per day, monitoring them for 30 minutes after administering the shots for any adverse event and allowing only one beneficiary at a time are among the guidelines issued by the Centre for the COVID-19 inoculation drive.

According to the guidelines issued to states recently, the COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network (Co-WIN) system—a digitalised platform—will be used to track enlisted beneficiaries for the vaccination and anti-coronavirus vaccines on a real-time basis. At the vaccination site, only pre-registered beneficiaries will be vaccinated in accordance with the prioritisation, and there will be no provision for on-the-spot registrations.

The states have been asked, as far as possible, to allocate the vaccine from one manufacturer to a district to avoid mixing of different COVID-19 vaccines in the field.

As per the 'COVID-19 Vaccine



Operational Guidelines', all measures should be taken to avoid exposing the vaccine carrier, vaccine vials or ice packs to direct sunlight, the document stated.

Vaccines and diluents should be kept inside the vaccine carrier with the lid closed until a beneficiary comes to the centre for vaccination.

"There may not be vaccine vial monitors (VVM) and Date of Expiry on the label of COVID-19 vaccine, this should not discourage vacci-

nators from using the vaccine. At the end of the session, the vaccine carrier with all ice packs and unopened vaccine vials should be sent back to the distributing cold chain point," the guidelines said.

"The latest electoral roll for Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly election will be used to identify the population aged 50 years or more," the guidelines stated.

Under phase one of the vaccination, it is planned to vaccinate nearly 30 crore population.

Farmer leaders go on day-long hunger strike

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: Leaders of around 32 farmer unions observed a day-long hunger strike at Delhi's Singhu border Monday to protest against the Centre's new farm laws.

The unions claimed that demonstrations were also held at various district headquarters across the country.

The hunger strike began at 8 am and ended at 5 pm even as talks with the government remained inconclusive.

The unions claimed that more people are expected to join the ongoing agitation, which entered the third week.

United Farmers' Front said leaders also observed a two-minute-silence over the alleged deaths of over 20 protesters at Delhi borders in last 18 days.



Was the 1975-Emergency 'unconstitutional'?

SC SEEKS CENTRE'S RESPONSE ON PLEA SEEKING EMERGENCY TO BE DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

AGENCIES

■ Advocate Harish Salve, representing petitioner Veena Sarin, wants a declaration that the Emergency was unconstitutional

■ The top court agrees to examine whether a declaration that Emergency of 1975 was unconstitutional would be feasible or desirable after a passage of 45 years

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Supreme Court Monday agreed to examine a plea by a 94-year-old woman to declare the 1975 Emergency proclamation as unconstitutional and sought a response from the Centre.

Senior advocate Harish Salve, representing petitioner Veena Sarin, submitted before a bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul that his client wants a declaration that the Emergency was unconstitutional.

The bench observed that Emergency was an abuse and something happened, which should not have happened.

Salve said people were under detention for months. "If history is not corrected, then it repeats itself," he added.

Salve submitted that today even war-crime issues are considered and 90



year olds are hauled up for crimes. "In nascent stage of our democracy, rights were suspended for 19 months," said Salve.

Salve said this is a matter of constitutional debate. He added that principles must be laid down so that no

matter how high you are, you will be held accountable.

Justice Kaul replied what will this take us to?

After a detailed hearing into the matter, the top court agreed to examine whether a declaration that

Emergency of 1975 was unconstitutional would be feasible or desirable after a passage of 45 years.

The plea said that the petitioner is aggrieved by the trauma and harassment faced by herself and her family including her deceased husband during the period beginning June 1975 upon the declaration of Emergency.

Citing the order passed by the then President of India under Article 358 and 359 of the Constitution, the plea argued that the freedoms guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution and the rights of citizens to move any court for enforcement of their fundamental rights remained suspended till the withdrawal of Emergency.

The petitioner submitted that her husband and she were compelled to leave the country for fear of being thrown into jail on the whims and wishes of the government authority.

₹6Kcr-worth 7th weekly loan instalment released to states

REASON: TO MEET THE GST COMPENSATION SHORTFALL

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Union government has released seventh weekly instalment of ₹6,000 crore as back-to-back loans to states, including Odisha, to meet the GST compensation shortfall.

According to the Finance ministry, out of ₹6,000 crore, an amount of ₹5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 states and ₹483.40 crore has been released to the three Union Territories (UT) with Legislative Assembly (Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Pondicherry) who are members of the GST Council. The remaining five states Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim do not have a gap in revenue on account of GST implementation.

The Finance ministry said

₹1,746.13 crore has been raised through special window and passed on to Odisha so far to meet GST compensation shortfall. The Union government has also allowed ₹2,858 crore additional borrowings to state of Odisha to meet GST compensation shortfall to help them in mobilising additional financial resources.

Significantly, the Union government had set up a special borrowing window in October this year to meet the estimated shortfall of ₹1.10 lakh crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST. The Finance ministry informed that the borrowings are being done through this window by the Union government on behalf of the states and UTs.

The borrowings have been done in seven rounds.



WONDER WOMAN 1984 IS ABOUT COMPLICATED TRUTH: GAL GADOT

Hollywood star Gal Gadot feels her upcoming superhero film, *Wonder Woman 1984*, is a reflection of many realities, and says it is a story about truth. "This film is about truth, which sounds simple but is, in many ways, very complicated," Gadot said.

NEETU SUPER EXCITED ABOUT HER ACTION-PACKED HOLLYWOOD FILM

Actress Neetu Chandra is thrilled about her upcoming Hollywood film, *Never Back Down: Revolt*. Directed by Kellie Madison, the film is the fourth instalment in the *Never Back Down* franchise. The first film had released in 2008. *Never Back Down: Revolt* also stars Olivia Popica and Diana Hoyos.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com
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ARIES
You experience a sense of freedom today. And in this mood you feel like doing all the things that you loved to do in your childhood. It is a nice time to take your family on an outing, says Ganesha. Given your mood, you may start planning for the future of your loved ones.

TAURUS
Ganesha sees you happily engaged in attending to day to day affairs. The day will turn out to be a hectic one. Do not expect too many time outs or even small breaks. Fortunately you will not be too uncomfortable with your tight schedule and will feel as fresh and easy at ease work as you had been at the beginning of the day.

GEMINI
You will receive unprecedented love and affection from all your friends and family members today. It is a good day to conduct important personal or professional meetings. A lot of joy and happiness awaits, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Ganesha says that this will be a unique and auspicious day for you. You will get clue and hints of this from morning itself. A religious ceremony in the house, and thereby invitation to guests is indicated. The chance of shifting to a new house is indicated. Ganesha expresses his best wishes.

LEO
A fun-filled day awaits you. You will enjoy all the activities that you take up today. At the work-place too a progressive day awaits you. You will be worried about the fruits of your labour, but they are likely to be sweeter than you thought they will be, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Today is a mixed bag of values and pragmatism, says Ganesha, and if there were to be a competition for the most humanitarian person, you would be likely to win hands down. You would do well to make plans to increase your productivity.

LIBRA
Ganesha says today you will wish to spend more time with your beloved instead of your friends. This is a good day to express your innermost feelings and get varied opportunities. This is a good time to propose to your beloved and give them a happy surprise. Ganesha showers you with his blessings always.

SCORPIO
The grey strands on your head is not just a colour, but speaks about your experiences. Your wisdom will make you take appropriate decisions at work. Ganesha warns you to stay away from courtrooms and legal issues, or the trap may leave a deep scar.

SAGITTARIUS
Dressed to kill - this phrase is enough to describe you today, says Ganesha. Decked up from head to toe in chic attire and classy jewellery, you make a bold statement. Like a magnet, you will attract attention at a party. Don't get surprised if your list of admirers becomes longer.

CAPRICORN
Generally, it is difficult for you to maintain a cool head over your shoulders, especially during the stressful times. But, to everyone's surprise, you will display remarkable composure while dealing with challenges today, feels Ganesha. Family life will be smooth and it will enable you to fully concentrate on your career and increasing your efficiency level.

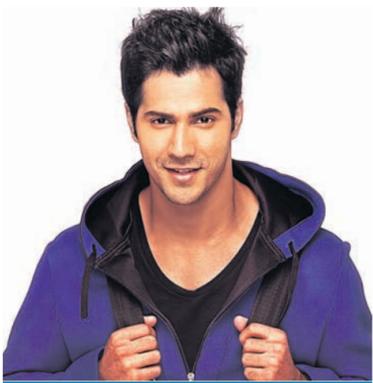
AQUARIUS
Most of the time it is your way or no other way, especially when you charging towards your goal. Today, you will push your limits to achieve what you have desired. You are talented, hard working, creative, and icing on the cake is your luck which is favouring you big time.

PISCES
You are likely to feel a lot of tension and stress today. You will feel down owing to some disagreement with someone or due to some unfathomable reason. Even that special someone will be unable to chase away your blues.

URVASHI reveals her 2021 goals

Mumbai: Actress Urvashi Rautela has announced her goals for the upcoming year on social media, and it is all about self love. Urvashi posted a portrait picture on Instagram, where she is seen smiling at the camera dressed in a saree. "Setting unconditional self-love as one of my 2021 goals" she wrote alongside the image.

She shared another picture in the same outfit and wrote: "Current status: fearlessly unbothered by the opinion of others. How much of your personality are you hiding because of a fear of other people's judgement?" Urvashi recently featured in a music video, *Teri load ve*, sung by Singha, and composed by Tipu Sultan. She is now looking forward to the release of her Telugu film *Black Rose*.



Glimpse on how Varun might look in old age

Mumbai: Actor Varun Dhawan Monday offered fans a glimpse of how he might look when he grows old with a quirky post on social media. Varun shared three photos on his verified Instagram account that show him as a young boy, in his current age, and as an old man with salt and pepper beard and grey hair, a look he created using photo-editing apps. He captioned the collage with a touch of humour: "Life in isolation. Swipe right to see me age," he wrote. The actor was referring to the fact that he recently tested positive for Covid-19 and is currently living in isolation. Varun tested positive while shooting for his upcoming film *Jug Jugg Jeeyo* in Chandigarh.



Neena's idea of perfect date

Mumbai: Actress Neena Gupta says her version of a perfect date is one where she can eat and drink anything she likes. "My idea of a perfect date is) That someone will take me to a very beautiful place for a candle light dinner and we could talk about many things. I should be able to order what I want to eat or drink. That's my ideal perfect date!" Neena said.

The actress also opened up about generation gap, saying she believes that a beginning has to be made by both parties. "Today's parents have been brought up a certain way and it's not very easy to change their mindset. But I think time has come when you have to try and talk to them. You might not succeed but the beginning has to be made," she said.

The actress will be seen having a conversation about dating in Bumble's web show *Dating These Days*. The show will also see stars such as Sanya Malhotra, Kirti Kulhari, Sumukhi Suresh, Sushant Divgikar, and Maanvi Gargoo opening up about various barriers and challenges around dating.

Tips for a Christmas home makeover

It is important to have a red-and-white colour code for furnishings and crockery at homes during this festival, say the experts



A representational image

Festive makeovers of your abode can add a unique charm to your festivities and celebrations. With Christmas around the corner, decorate your home and recreate the Christmas and year-end warmth without breaking the bank. Here are a few tips from the experts to give your home a Christmas makeover.

Themed Furnishings
Christmas decorations become super fun when you place cushions around with sparkles and personalised messages. You can also add red and white color socks filled with candies to your decor. How about adding wind chimes with the soft

sound of jingle bells? Add Sparkle Christmas and glitter go hand in hand. You can get glitter from candleholders, pinecones, swine glasses or using sparkly ribbon as decor elements around the Christmas trees. **Wrap Some Gifts**
Presence of wrapped presents around makes your house feel like Christmas. Simple boxes packed

nicely with an oversized ribbon and plain paper is a classic look for Christmas decorations. **Christmas Colour**
It's super important to play with colour to get festive decor right. Let the colour code be red and white for your furnishings, crockery or little more fun elements spread around to make it an occasion to remember.

Christmas Tree
Right from trimming the branches, to adding the trail of fairy lights around to adding the snow on the tree with gifts packed placed under the tree to topping it up with a bow, Christmas tree decoration is the most important element and can bring that festive vibe to your interiors.

Personalisation
Everyone has different preferences, but Christmas is all about bright colors especially red and white. Some may enjoy glitter and shimmer in their textiles. Depending on what catches your eye, you can match all textiles according to your taste. Colour combinations in the Christmas are the key this season. **Flowers And Fragrances**
Fragrances can be decided depending on the textiles in your room and what helps lift and bring up the mood and flowers can really help amp up the place and add some life to it, giving your home a great makeover for the season.

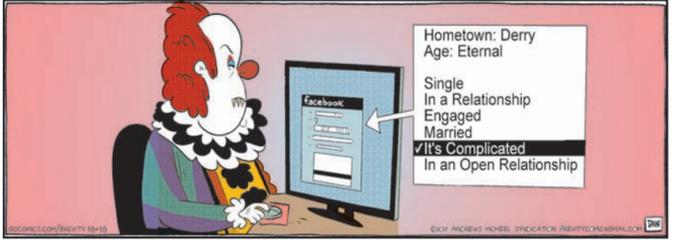
PEANUTS



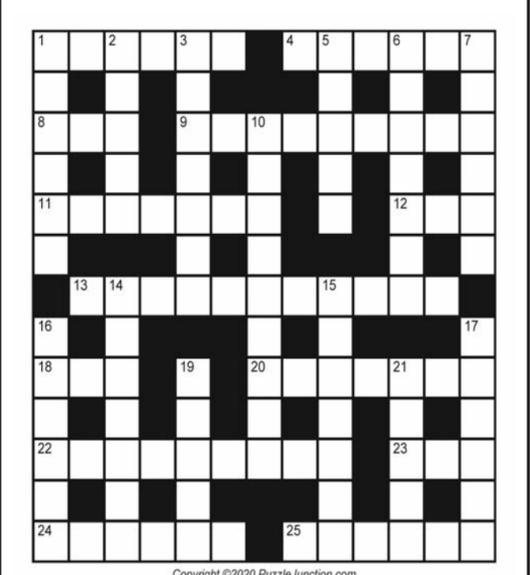
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



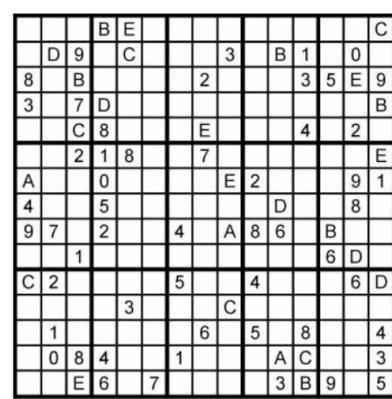
FUN post CROSSWORD



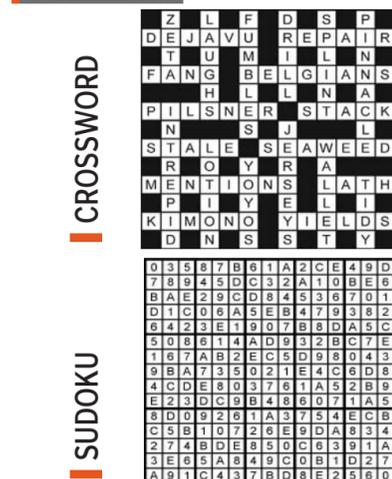
- Across**
1 Echo
4 Scribble
8 Debate position
9 Swellheads
11 Have coming
12 Beast of burden
13 Argentina's capital (6,5)
18 Galley tool
20 God of the sea
- Down**
21 Arranges
23 Chinese brew
24 Wicker material
25 Oceanic bird
- Across**
7 Capital of Zambia
10 Game birds
14 Not prone
15 Stalemate
16 You may find it among thieves
17 Knock off the tracks
19 Kind of ray
21 Gastric woe

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



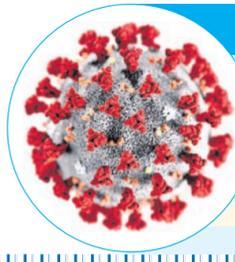
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



LENDING SUPPORT

People under the aegis of 'Naba Nirman Krushak Sangathan' demonstrate near Cuttack Collectorate, Monday, supporting the ongoing farmers' agitation



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	7,28,00,110	5,10,23,169	16,21,650
India	98,85,100	93,88,239	1,43,393
Odisha	3,24,089	3,19,458	1,811

Oppn tears into govt over missing children

OPPOSITION BJP AND CONG STAGED DEMONSTRATIONS OUTSIDE THE OSCPCR OFFICE ALLEGING THE CHAIRPERSON HAS FAILED TO PROTECT THE MISSING CHILDREN INCLUDING 'PARI' AND 'PIHU'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The opposition BJP and Congress activists Monday gheraoed the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) office here over the alleged kidnap and murder of a five-year-old Nayagarh girl 'Pari'.



BJP activists gherao the OSCPCR office in Bhubaneswar, Monday

The members of BJP Mahila Morcha have tried to barge into the office of the OSCPCR and raised slogans against the chairperson alleging she has failed to protect children of Odisha including 'Pari'. They also sought information from the chairperson about other missing children in the state.

"We have come here to seek data regarding the missing 5,000 children in the state. During her visit to Nayagarh, the OSCPCR chairperson Sandhyabati Pradhan had made an attempt to shield minister Arun Sahoo, who is allegedly involved in Pari murder case. On which basis, you termed 'Pari' murder as an act of human sacrifice?"

asked Rashmirekha Das, a protesting BJP activist.

Similarly, Congress members also staged a demonstration outside the office of Commission, demanding justice to the families of Pari and other missing kids.

"Though four months have passed to Pari incident, the police have not arrested any of the accused. The gov-

ernment has done precious little except for suspending the Nayagarh IIC?" Congress leader Bijaylaxmi Sahoo asked.

Former MP and senior Congress leader Pradeep Majhi also questioned the government inaction over the cases of missing children. "I want to ask the government where is 'Pihu', a minor girl of

BJP Mahila Morcha activists tried to barge into the office of the OSCPCR and raised slogans against the chairperson

Jajpur district who was missing for the last four months. Though the body of Pari was recovered, the accused was not arrested so far."

The OSCPCR should investigate all these cases and give justice to the missing children and their families, he said.

Stating that every family in the state is now in a state of shock following series of missing children cases, the Congress leader said,

"They are afraid of allowing their children to go outside. What the police and the government are doing? What is the role of SCPCR in the protection of children?"

CB nabs 4 accused in Infocity rape case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The state Crime Branch (CB) has arrested four persons in connection with the alleged minor girl rape case in Infocity area here during the lockdown.

The CB officials arrested Anirudha Panda from Gop area in Puri and Krushna Chandra Behera from Chandnichowk area in Cuttack. Similarly, two security guards, who were allegedly involved in rape case, were arrested from Kalinga Nagar area in Jajpur and Capital city here late Sunday night.

Earlier, the Orissa High Court, while hearing a PIL in this regard, had expressed displeasure over the snail-paced investigation. Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay has also personally appeared before the HC last month to present the detailed progress of the probe into the rape case.

Meanwhile, OTV managing director Jagi Mangat Panda appeared before the Odisha State

Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCR) in connection with the case. She was summoned by the commission for appearance December 14, 2020.

Panda had been summoned twice by the CB and OSCPCR in the last couple of months. The victim minor's mother was a receptionist at the office of the television channel. Panda had allegedly tried to suppress the incident after victim's mother complained to her.

The victim had also accused one police official of sexually abusing her. However, the Crime Branch is yet to arrest the accused police official, said the television channel's officials.

Meanwhile, DGP Abhay stated that none would be spared if found adequate evidence.

Meanwhile, the four accused were produced in a POCOS court here which heard the bail pleas and posted the pronouncement of the judgement to December 18. The accused were sent to judicial custody.

Relief from cold wave as mercury rises

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: In a relief from cold wave condition, the night temperature increased by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius across the state, Monday. According to Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre, Daringbadi and Phulbani towns, which were witnessing below 10 degrees Celsius for last few days, have recorded a minimum temperature of 12 degrees Celsius each.

The night temperature at Sundargarh and Koraput stood at 13 and 13.2 degrees Celsius respectively. Angul recorded a minimum temperature of 14.8 degrees Celsius while it was above 15 degrees at the remaining places of Odisha.

There will be no significant change in minimum temperature and it will be above normal by 2-3 degrees over the districts of Odisha during next 3-4 days, the Met centre said.

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

Impersonator arrested

Bhubaneswar: Commissionerate Police Monday arrested a person for allegedly trying to extort money pretending himself as an income tax officer. The accused has been identified as Umakanta Rout, 59, a resident of Haladiapada under Biridi police limits in Jagatsinghpur district. According to sources, Rout introduced himself as an I-T official and demanded Rs 10,000 from one Debasish Patnaik, a businessman in order to halt a raid on his firm. Rout reportedly warned of dire consequences if Patnaik failed to comply with his instructions. Patnaik later lodged a complaint with Kharavel Nagar police in this regard. Police Monday arrested Rout after registering a case (167/20) under relevant sections of IPC. Rout is also involved in five other cases of cheating.

Rally over RTI activist's death

Bhubaneswar: Right to Information (RTI) activists from across the state under the banner Odisha Sochana Adhikar Abhiyan, Monday, took out a rally here demanding the arrest of people responsible for the alleged killing of RTI activist Ranjan Kumar Das of Kendrapara in February. The activists demanded that the government should probe the role of an influential political leader in the murder of the activist. The police had a scuffle with the activists who were trying gherao Naveen Niwas, the Chief Minister's residence here.



Welcoming Lingaraj Temple ordinance

Devotees lit earthen lamps near Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar, Monday, welcoming the state Cabinet's approval for the much-awaited ordinance for better management of the affairs of the 11th century shrine

OP PHOTO

SC notice to state, Centre over mining in dense forests

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Supreme Court, Monday, issued notice to the Union government, Odisha and other states in a public interest litigation (PIL) filed against mining in densely forested and eco-sensitive zones of the country.

A three-judge bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice SA

joint study of Ministry of Environment and Forests and Ministry of Coal.

The petitioner also submitted that in 10 coal blocks of Odisha listed for auction, only one block Phulhari East and West had been classified as 'NOGO' area. He alleged that Odisha has not red-flagged this auction yet as most of its 'NOGO' blocks have not been in-

Under scanner

The petitioner contended that the Centre has auctioned several coal blocks situated in densely forested areas while many blocks situated in less forested areas are lying in abundance



The petitioner pleaded the court to quash auction of 14 coal blocks situated in dense forests which were classified as 'NOGO' by a joint study of Ministry of Environment and Forests and Ministry of Coal. Activist Sudeip Shrivastava sought framing of guidelines to deal with forest clearance proposals for coal mining in densely forested areas

BMC's thrust on online complaint redressal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Owing to the outbreak of Covid-19 and strict social distancing norms, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to redress grievances online.

The civic authority's grievance cell running from its office premises had been a popular mode of intimating various complaints. Even though BMC had launched an online portal - Bhubaneswar One - in 2018, it got lesser attention owing to lack of technologi-



The civic body has decided to fully transform 'Bhubaneswar One' into a proper grievance addressing platform

cal awareness.

"We have decided to fully transform 'Bhubaneswar One' into a proper grievance addressing platform. The decision was taken after

the Covid-induced lockdowns and social distancing norms discouraged people to visit the office premises for their resolution of their issues. We will also be educating

people about the application and website," said a senior BMC official.

As per the data provided by the BMC, earlier the application used to receive 80 complaints on a daily basis. From the day of its launch, the app had received about 18,900 complaints out of which 16,200 had been resolved. While most of the complaints were related to street lighting, others include sanitation, sewage and stray cattle.

"Most of the issues such as stray cattle and lighting were resolved immediately. Other complaints such as lifting of garbage and littering

were either taken cognizance instantly or in a day or two. The online platform works in coordination with different departments to view complaints and designate work to field workers so that they get resolved without delay," the officer added.

Moreover, the figures also suggested that all complaints related to sewerage have been resolved till date. It can be mentioned that the civic authority has recently received an ISO certification for sewerage management and was the only second country in world to do so.

Bobde also issued notice to Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and West Bengal in the PIL filed by activist Sudeip Shrivastava.

The petitioner contended that the Centre has auctioned several coal blocks situated in densely forested areas while many blocks situated in less forested areas are lying in abundance.

The petitioner pleaded the court to quash auction of 14 coal blocks situated in dense forests which were classified as 'NOGO' by a

cluded. The petitioner further sought framing of guidelines to deal with forest clearance proposals for coal mining in densely forested areas. He said such clearance could be considered unless all the other available deposits of the said mineral were exhausted.

He sought a direction to the Union government to classify each mineral deposit in terms of their environmental forest value and allow mining only in those mineral deposits where the damage to environment would be the least.

Panigrahi seeks HC nod to meet lawyer in jail



Akash Pathak has finally confessed during interrogation that he was never an employee of TATA Motors

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Arrested Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi Monday moved the Orissa High Court seeking permission to meet his lawyer in the jail. The jailed MLA's lawyer Monday filed a writ petition before the HC in this regard.

Panigrahi was arrested by the Crime Branch sleuths for allegedly collecting money on behalf of Akash Pathak, son of suspended Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer Abhay Kant Pathak, from various job seekers. Akash, impersonating the managing director of TATA Motors, duped several youths from Gopalpur area on the pretext of providing them jobs in the automobile major.

Meanwhile, sources in the Crime Branch revealed that Akash has finally confessed during interrogation that he was never an employee of TATA Motors. The sleuths Monday got him examined by crime psycho analysts. Akash has also moved court seeking bail.

Akash's personal assistant David Peter also reportedly revealed many important details regarding the corrupt practices of the former.

Notably, officials of three premier investigating agencies, Enforcement Directorate, Vigilance department and Crime Branch, have been investigating the transaction of huge amount of money through the bank accounts of the Pathaks and Panigrahi. The lavish lifestyle of the father-son duo shocked the sleuths.

ENERGY CONSERVATION WEEK

ECoR to have fully electrified routes by March

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: East Coast Railway (ECoR) observed Energy Conservation Week from December 8 to 14 during which it was revealed that the railway zone would become fully electrified by March next year.

A rally was organised in all three divisions to spread awareness about energy conservation. A webinar was also organised to mark the energy conservation week.

ECoR has 96.6 per cent of electrified track out of 2,708-km routes and the remaining 105-km routes are targeted for completion in 2020-21. With this, ECoR will become a completely electrified zone by March 2021.

With addition of 1,140km electrified routes in last five years under the ECoR, 71.75 per cent goods and 80.80 per cent passenger traffic is being hauled by electric traction. This has resulted in bringing down consumption of diesel oil, reduction in direct emission and saving in haulage cost. Once the remaining sections and terminals are electri-



fied, entire traffic will be on electric traction.

Provision of solar photovoltaic plants on railway premises will reduce dependency on fossil fuel-based electricity and help reduce emission of carbon dioxide and other harmful gases.

Thus, ECoR is focusing on solar energy for long-term energy secu-

ity and ecological security by reducing carbon emission. ECoR has planned commissioning of solar plants on rooftops of various buildings, workshops, hospitals, railway stations totaling 13.5 MWp to substitute 20 per cent energy, for which work is in progress.

Further, ECoR has identified 476 acres of land for installing 'land-

ZERO CARBON EMISSION TARGET

ECoR has 96.6 per cent of electrified track out of 2,708-km routes and the remaining 105-km routes are targeted for completion in 2020-21

With addition of 1,140km electrified routes in last five years under the ECoR, 71.75 per cent goods and 80.80 per cent passenger traffic is being hauled by electric traction

ECOR WILL HAVE 100MW OF INSTALLED SOLAR POWER LEADING TO REDUCTION OF CARBON EMISSION BY 96,000 TONNE PER ANNUM

an initiative to replace the existing fluorescent based system with energy efficient LED lights in office building, railway stations, workshops and sheds, residential colonies and others on a mission mode.

With the provision of LED lights, altogether 2.4 MW of connected load has been reduced. The provision of LED lights has resulted in reduction in annual energy consumption by 10.4 million units and reduction in emission of carbon dioxide by 8,500 tonne per annum.

During 2019-20, 38 pairs of trains have been converted into head on generation (HOG) system to substitute the diesel which was used for generating electric energy for meeting passenger amenity such as lighting, ventilation and air conditioning in the railway coaches.

The HOG conversion of racks has resulted in estimated saving of 7,800 kilo litres of diesel, amounting to Rs 48 crore per annum.

In addition, ECoR has initiated a number of energy conservation programs to reduce energy consumption by reducing wastage.

NANDANKANAN TO WELCOME MORE ANIMALS

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: A team of Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZN) has left for Kamla Nehru Prani Sangrahalaya in Indore to bring nine animals to the zoo here. The exercise is part of an animal exchange programme under which more animals will be added to the wildlife habitat of NZN. According to sources, a six-member team headed by veterinarian Debdukt Mohapatra has headed for Indore Zoo.

Nandankanan officials will bring two Asian lions, three gharials (two males and one female), as many Indian grey wolves (two males and one female) and one female Indian fox

The Nandankanan officials will bring two Asian lions, three gharials (two males and one female), as many Indian grey wolves (two males and one female) and one female Indian fox. The authorities have decided to bring the animals in exchange of one melanistic tiger and a white tiger from the Nandankanan zoo. A team of officials from Indore Zoo will visit Odisha later to take two tigers from NZN under animal exchange plan.

NZP BANS VEHICLES IN PREMISES, LOCALS SLAM MOVE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barang, Dec 14: In order to curb pollution at Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) here, zoo authorities have decided to ban movement of vehicles on its premises. This, however, did not go down well with Raghunathpur and Daruthenga villagers as they now have to travel at least three more kilometres to reach their place. Ritu Routray, former sarpanch of Daruthenga gram panchayat, talked about the contributions of the village towards Nandankanan while decrying the decision. "The zoo authorities have certainly forgotten our [Daruthenga villagers] sacrifices

for Nandankanan. How can they restrict us from using the zoo road on vehicles? Your [NZP] vehicles won't add to the pollution, but our vehicles will! We urge the zoo authorities to discuss the matter with the duo village as it will help maintain a healthy relation," Routray added. Daruthenga resident Tapan Kumar Baliarsingh, condemned the decision. "Our forefathers have given land for Nandankanan. Besides, we, as locals, have been extending all kinds of cooperation to NZP authorities for smooth functioning of the zoo. The decision to ban movement of vehicles is unacceptable," the young lawyer



pointed out. Raghunathpur samiti member Jhuna Rout, too, claimed their 'unmatched contribution' towards the nature's paradise. "Our villagers always work towards upholding the integrity of Nandankanan by facilitating a sense a security to

the visitors and tourists as well. Locals of both the villages have been using the zoo route to commute for decades now as it was a shortcut road between the two villages," said Rout, who is also chairperson of Nari Jagarana Mancha—an outfit for women—while urging the zoo authorities to revisit the decision. Young lawyer and a resident of Raghunathpur Suresh Chandra Rout warned to take the issue to the streets. "If situation warrants, we'll definitely oppose the decision," Rout said. According to NZP deputy director Bimal Prasanna Acharya, Nandankanan is a world-class zoo.

Movement of motor vehicles through the zoo has been adding to the pollution which in turn is harmful for the zoo inmates. "Hence, we've decided to ban movement of vehicles on the zoo premises," said Acharya. About the commuting woes that the Raghunathpur and Daruthenga locals would certainly face owing to the ban, the senior Forest official said, "There's an alternative road, though a bit lengthy. We seek active cooperation from the locals, especially from the duo village, for the noble initiative as it would go a long way in reducing the pollution and creating a liveable tomorrow," Acharya said.

Norms for merger of schools revised

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The state government has revised the norms for merger of government schools having poor enrolment in scheduled area and backward KBK (Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi) region. The School and Mass Education department Monday issued a corrigendum revising its earlier notification issued for consolidation of elementary and secondary schools having poor enrolment. Now, schools having less than 15 students instead of 20 as decided earlier in the KBK and scheduled areas will be merged with nearby schools. "Government elementary and secondary schools having enrolment less than or equal to 15 in schedules and KBK areas and less than or equal to 20 in other areas to be consolidated with nearby schools irrespective of distance,"



Elementary and secondary schools having enrolment less than or equal to 15 in scheduled and KBK areas to be consolidated with nearby schools

read the fresh order. The school merger issue rocked the state Assembly during the winter session held recently Opposition leaders had demanded immediate rollback of the decision. Later, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash had assured the House to revise the norms. The merger of schools planned in accordance with law and guidelines of Niti Aayog. Besides, the

new National Education Policy 2020 is also having similar provision. The state government had identified 14,382 schools having below 40 students. However, after scrutiny at district and state-level, the number comes down to 7772, of which 6,048 schools have student strength of less than 20. Now, the government will conduct fresh survey to identify schools for the merger plan.

ON A FAST



ANMs sit on an indefinite hunger strike at PMG Square in Bhubaneswar, Monday, demanding regular employment

STATE'S COVID-19 FATALITIES AT 1,811

ODISHA REGISTERS 332 NEW CORONAVIRUS CASES IN 24 HOURS, TAKING THE CASELOAD TO 3,24,089

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: State Monday registered 332 new Covid-19 cases, which raised Odisha's caseload to 3,24,089, while four fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 1,811, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said. Of the 332 new cases, 189 were reported from various quarantine centres and the rest detected during contact tracing, said the official. Sundargarh recorded the highest number of new cases at 51, followed by Angul at 35 and Khurda at 29. Three districts—Boudh, Kandhamal and Malkangiri—did not record any new case since Sunday. Taking to Twitter, the H&FW department said, "Regret to inform about the demise of four Covid pos-



itive patients while under treatment in hospitals." One each died in Khurda, Dhenkanal, Ganjam and Jharsuguda districts, the official pointed out. As many as 53 Covid-19 patients have died due to comorbidities. The state's positiv-

ity rate now stands at 5.06 per cent. Over 64 lakh samples have been examined so far, including 30,891 Sunday, the official further added. Meanwhile, another 389 Covid patients recovered in Odisha, taking the total recoveries to 3,19,458.

IN NUMBERS
Sundargarh recorded the highest number of new cases at 51, followed by Angul at 35 and Khurda at 29
One each died in Khurda, Dhenkanal, Ganjam and Jharsuguda
Over 64 lakh samples have been examined so far including 30,891 Sunday
Odisha's positivity rate now stands at 5.06 per cent

The recovered cases include 42 from Sundargarh, 39 from Khurda, 35 from Cuttack, 28 from Mayurbhanj, 24 from Angul, 21 from Bargarh and 18 from Bolangir. Similarly, 18 from Kalahandi, 18 from Keonjhar, 17 from Kendrapara, 17 from Nuapada, 14 from Puri and 10 persons from Bhadrak have recovered, the H&FW department tweeted.

Petrol, diesel prices static

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Oil marketing companies (OMCs) kept petrol and diesel prices unchanged at ₹84.35 and ₹80.48 respectively here Monday. Oil marketing companies continued to hold back any change in the retail price of petrol and diesel continuing with their wait and watch stance that has kept the prices of the two auto fuels static for the past seven days. Accordingly, there was no change in the retail price of auto fuels Monday with the price of petrol remaining at ₹83.71 a litre and diesel ₹73.87 a litre. Across the country as well the price of the two petroleum products remained unchanged. OMCs have gone on a pause mode at a time when the news of successful coronavirus and expectations of big pick up in demand had kept crude on the boil with prices



breaching \$50 a barrel mark. Crude, however, has remained static for the past few days reducing any pressure on upward revision in the fuel prices. Petrol price was very close to breaching the all time high level of ₹84 a litre (reached on October 4, 2018) when it touched ₹83.71 a litre on Monday. But the march has been halted ever since then with no price

revision by the OMCs. Global crude prices have risen almost \$ 10 a barrel in the last one month to reaching over \$50 a barrel now. But even at this level, it is far less than than average crude price of \$ 80.08 a barrel in October 2018 when petrol prices reached highs of ₹84 a litre in the national capital. With Monday's pause, fuel prices have now increased on 15 of the past 25 days with petrol prices rising by ₹2.65 per litre and diesel by 3.41 a litre. Petrol price had been static since September 22, and diesel rates hadn't changed since October 2. Though the retail pricing of petrol and diesel has been deregulated and oil marketing companies were following a daily price revision formula, the same was suspended for almost two months to prevent volatility in international oil markets from impacting fuel prices regularly during the pandemic.

PRIVATISATION FLAYED



People under the banner of 'Bidyut Shramika Karmachari Mancha' hold a press meet at a private hotel in Bhubaneswar condemning the privatisation of discoms, Monday

OEC 2020 to focus on biodiversity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The eleventh edition of Odisha Environment Congress will be held from December 20 to 22 at ODM public school here. The theme of this year's session is 'Environment and Biodiversity'. Keeping the pandemic and restriction on social gathering in mind, the event will be conducted through virtual mode. Talking about this year's theme, Orissa Environment Secretary secretary Sudarshan Das said, "Biodiversity can be defined as the variety and variability of life on earth. Starting from pristine forest covers to the stunning coral reefs of deep oceans, from the mangrove dominated marshlands to the glittery sand dunes of the desert, each environment acts as a host to the numerous indigenous species of flora and fauna that live there." "A healthy environment ensures the sustainability of different ecosystems. A degrading environment is responsible for the loss of biodiversity," he added. In order to create momentum for biodiversity management and



policy development task, the United Nations General Assembly declared the period of 2011-20 to be the UN decade of biodiversity. Furthermore, 2021-30 has been announced as UN decade of Ecosystem Restoration. The UN Decade of Biodiversity focuses on three key areas, namely conservation of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources. It is in context that that the eleventh

edition of Odisha Environment Congress 2020 has chosen 'Environment and Biodiversity' as its main theme. There will be discussion on sub-themes such as Biodiversity and Human Well Being, Climate Change, Pandemic and Biodiversity and Policy and Legal framework on biodiversity among others by scientists and environment experts. This year's keynote speaker will be Madhav Dhananjaya Gadgil,

UN Decade of Biodiversity
In order to create momentum for biodiversity management, the UNGA declared the period of 2011-20 to be the UN decade of biodiversity
The UN Decade of Biodiversity focuses on conservation of biological diversity and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of utilisation of resources
It is in context that that the eleventh edition of Odisha Environment Congress 2020 chose 'Environment and Biodiversity' as its main theme

Ecologist and Founder of Center for Ecological Sciences. This apart OES will also organised the Children's Environment Congress at Xavier University in virtual mode December 22. The Odisha Environment Congress organised by HDF-Center for Development Action and Research in association with Center for Environment and Development, Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhubaneswar and Orissa Environmental Society.

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DGP reviews security in Malkangiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri/Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay visited the Swabhiman Anchal in Chittrakonda area of Malkangiri district Monday to review security arrangements.

The DGP's visit comes close on the heels of an encounter between security forces and Maoists that left two ultras dead.

He underscored the need for fast-tracking of infrastructure development with the strengthening of security systems in the district. The DGP held a review meeting with senior police and BSF officials about the ongoing anti-Maoist operations, movement of ultras, law and order situation and progress of various developmental activities.

He said that a special policy is being chalked out to contain the red-rebels in the area so that developmental programmes like construction of roads, schools, hospitals and appointment of healthcare professionals could be fast-tracked with ease.

"We have reinforced police deployment in Chittrakonda area to ensure security for carrying out de-



DGP Abhay and police officials in Swabhiman Anchal

EYE ON REBELS

The DGP said that a special policy is being chalked out to contain the red-rebels in the area so that developmental programmes could be fast-tracked with ease

The DGP also appealed to the Maoists to shun the path of violence and join the mainstream of society following which they will be provided with all the assistance available at the government level

The DGP also visited the CRPF camp at Trilochanpur in Kalahandi district. The most vulnerable area in Kalahandi is called tri-junction bordering Rayagada and Kandhamal

velopmental work. And the locals are also helping us in our efforts. The influence of Maoists on locals has decreased considerably," the DGP told reporters.

The top cop also said Maoists were targeting security forces as they have managed to earn the trust of the locals. "Local residents now trust the state government and the security personnel more than ever," he stated.

Senior police officials including, Director (intelligence) RK Sharma IG (Operations) Amitabh Thakur, SOG IG Aniruddha Singh, and

Malkangiri SP Rishikesh D Khilari were present at the meeting.

The DGP also appealed to the Maoists to shun the path of violence and join the mainstream of society following which they will be provided with all benefits and assistance available at the government level. The state government's special rehabilitation programme will help them return to the mainstream, he said.

This apart, the DGP also visited Koraput and the Maoist-infested tri-junction area (bordering Rayagada, Kandhamal)

at Trilochanpur in Kalahandi district.

He said that Odisha police has seized illegal ganja weighing 1291 quintal till November 2020. This year's seizure is more than twice the amount of the contraband seized in 2019.

The DGP also visited the CRPF camp at Trilochanpur in Kalahandi district. The most vulnerable area in Kalahandi is called tri-junction bordering Rayagada, Kandhamal. SPs of all the three districts and senior officers of CRPF took part in the meeting.

RI HELD FOR TAKING BRIBE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Dec 14: The Revenue Inspector (RI) of Baradia Revenue Circle in this district was arrested while taking a bribe of Rs 5000 Monday.

Odisha Vigilance officials caught Anita Tarai red-handed. Sabita Mallick of Gualigaon village had contacted Tarai for a report on a disputed land as she was directed by the Rajkanika tehsildar. Tarai had asked her to part with Rs 5000 to get the asked report.

With no option left, Mallick had lodged a complaint against the RI with the vigilance department. A trap was laid. As per the plan, Mallick met Tarai at her office Monday and handed over chemical-laced currency notes worth Rs 5,000. Just when Tarai accepted the money, the anti-corruption officials stormed into the office and caught her red-handed.

The officials recovered the amount from her possession and launched an investigation to find out if she has accumulated assets disproportionate to her known sources of income.

MAN KILLS MINOR NIECE TO HIDE ILLICIT RELATIONSHIP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, Dec 14: The incident of a seven-year-old girl remaining missing for three days and her body being recovered Monday in this district took a turn with the police claiming that the deceased's uncle had murdered her to conceal his illicit relationship.

Informing about the latest shocking development in the case wherein the deceased's body was recovered three days after she went missing, Basta sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Jalandhar Jali said Deepak Sahu, who happens to be an uncle of the deceased girl, had murdered her.

Bishnupriya, daughter of Balam Patra, was living and studying at Deepak's house in Sundarkoili village under Baliaipal police limits in Balasore district.

Deepak had been in an illicit relationship with his sister-in-law. On one occasion, Bishnupriya had chanced to see Deepak and his sister-in-law in a compromising position. In order to keep his extramarital relationship a secret, he



decided to kill his niece.

She had been missing since December 11 morning when she was playing with some of her friends near her house. Her body was recovered from a bush near a pond in the village December 14.

After recovery of the body the police had detained Deepak, suspecting his role in the case.

After a few rounds of interrogation, the police became sure of the fact that it was none other

than Deepak who along with his sister-in-law had murdered his niece by slitting her throat. After committing the crime, he hid the body in a bush.

The police detained the two accused for further interrogation.

Meanwhile, following the revelation of the new facts, tension ran high in the village. To avoid any untoward incident, a platoon of police has been deployed at the village.

Dhanu Yatra artistes seek financial aid



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Dec 14: Artistes associated with the Dhanu Yatra Monday met Bargarh District Collector Jyoti Ranjan Pradhan and handed over a memorandum to him, demanding financial assistance.

This year, keeping the prevailing COVID-19 situation in mind, the district administration has cancelled the world famous Dhanu Yatra. There are many artistes starting from make-up men to actors associated with this festival. On one hand, this festival has been a source of entertainment for many and on the other, it has been a source of earning for these artistes.

This year the artistes are to lose this once-in-a-year source of income. At a time when most artistes are suffering from financial problems due to cancellation of all sorts of cultural ac-

tivities, the recent cancellation of Dhanu Yatra has dealt a huge blow to them.

Yet, they have all welcomed the district administration's move. But at the same time they have requested the administration to provide them the remunerations they had received last year. Among others, Artistes' Federation chairman Chaitanya Paik and Bhubaneswar Pradhan, who plays King Kansa's character in Dhanu Yatra met the collector.

Earlier, the decision to cancel the 72nd Dhanu Yatra was taken at the Dhanu Yatra Core Committee meeting held at District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) conference hall Sunday. The meeting was chaired by District Collector Jyoti Ranjan Pradhan, who is also the chairman of Dhanu Yatra Festival Committee.

In fact, the plot of the festival is based on the mythological story of Lord Krishna slaying his uncle Kansa. It begins with Kansa dethroning Ugrasena and ends with the death of Kansa and coronation of Ugrasena as the king.

The festival's main attraction is King Kansa who sitting on the back of a caparisoned elephant moves around the town. During the 11-day festival, the town of Bargarh turns into Mathura Nagar, the kingdom of Kansa and Ambapali -- on the outskirts -- gets decorated and christened as Gopapur while the Jeera river which flows between Bargarh and Ambapali is called the Yamuna.

Mob attacks man on suspicion of child-lifting

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Dec 14: Amid a series of child kidnap and murder attempts in Odisha in recent weeks, Sunday night a youth was severely beaten up by a mob at Mina Bazaar in Dhenkanal district on suspicion of child-lifting.

Dhenkanal town police reached the spot and rescued the youth from the clutches of the angry villagers. However, the villagers demanded strict action against child-lifters.

The unknown youth was

Villagers started chasing and beating the unknown youth suspecting him to be a child lifter

found at Mina Bazaar: When the villagers asked the youth about his name and address, he didn't say anything and neither did he reveal his purpose of visit to the village.

Some villagers started chasing and beating him sus-

pecting him to be a child lifter. Some even claimed that they saw the young man allegedly lifting a five-year-old girl from their village.

Local police took him to the police station for interrogation. On December 12 a three-year-old girl had reportedly gone missing from the police station for interrogation. On December 12 a three-year-old girl had reportedly gone missing from the police station for interrogation. On December 12 a three-year-old girl had reportedly gone missing from the police station for interrogation.

BEAUTIFICATION DRIVE



An artist applying brushstrokes on awareness paintings on the wall of Sambalpur Collectorate as part of a beautification drive, Monday

OP PHOTO

Bangladeshi held for smuggling brown sugar into jail

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, Dec 14: Sahadevkhunta police late Sunday night arrested a Bangladeshi man for allegedly smuggling brown sugar into the main jail of Balasore district.

The accused was identified as Sheikh Babu Khan. Police said Monday they got information about smuggling of brown sugar into the jail. Acting on the tip-off police in civil dress were waiting near the main gate of the jail when the accused reached the spot to carry out his mission. The police detained the accused and found 42 grams of brown sugar from his possession. They also seized Rs 24,000 in cash from him. The seized brown sugar is estimated to be worth Rs 4 lakh.

Babu has links with drug trade in Arada Bazaar area. He served jail term for 13 years in a loot case in 2007. After completion of his jail term, he could not go back to his home due to the Covid lockdown. He was at Balasore jail barracks under the custody of police. Reports said he was fixing a deal through phone and was under the radar of cops. He was also involved in illegal gun trade, sources said.

Tension prevails over Birsa Munda statue vandalism

POST NEWS NETWORK

Thakurmunda, Dec 14: Tension continues to prevail in Thakurmunda block in Mayurbhanj district after a statue of tribal leader Birsa Munda was vandalised a few days ago.

According to a source, tribal freedom fighter and folk hero Birsa Munda's statue was installed at Dhipa Sahi of Kendujani panchayat under Thakurmunda block three years ago. Since then, on the occasion of Birsa Munda's birth anniversary, his followers would assemble at the statue to celebrate the day.

However, the statue was found damaged and lying on the ground December 10. Condemning this act as an affront to their leader, local people have been protesting, organising a 'prajameli'. They demand immediate arrest of the per-



sons involved in this mindless act. Meanwhile, the police are learnt to have assured the agitating people that they along with a forensic team will visit the spot and investigate the case.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL OFFICE, KORAPUT

Letter No.: 6575 Dated: 11/XII/2020

TENDER CALL NOTICE

No. E-433:- Sealed tenders are invited from the Registered Manufacturer or Authorised Distributor or wholesaler agencies/Firm for supply of Drugs Consumables under 20% Budget of CDM&PHO, Koraput for FY 2020-21. The tender documents should reach to the office of the undersigned by 31.12.2020, 1.00 P.M. through Regd. Post/Speed Post/Courier along with all relevant documents and will be opened on same day at 4.00 P.M. The Tender Fees/EMD & other terms and condition can be available in the district official website: www.koraput.nic.in. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject without assigning reason thereof.

Sd./- Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Koraput

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, JONK IRRIGATION DIVISION, NUAPADA e-Procurement Notice No. (JID) 01/2020-21 e-mail address: ee.jid.npd@gmail.com

PERCENTAGE RATE e-TENDER

1. The Executive Engineer, Jonk Irrigation Division, Nuapada, Dist.- Nuapada, Pin-766105 (Odisha) on behalf of Government of Odisha invites "PERCENTAGE RATE Bids" in SINGLE COVER SYSTEM, in electronic tendering system for the construction works detailed in the table below, which are eventually to be draw on PI agreement.

Package No.	BID ID No. (JID) 01/20-21 TO (JID) 02/2020-21
02 (Two) Nos. C.C. guard wall with bed lining	
Approximate value of work	Varies Rs.8.88 to Rs.8.88 Lakhs (Excluding GST)
Period of Completion	03 (Three) calendar Months.
Classification of Bidder	'D' & 'C' class Contractor only.
Bid documents available Date and Time	16.12.2020 to 28.12.2020 up to 17.00 hrs
Bid clarification start date & Closing date	16.12.2020 to 28.12.2020 during office hours
Date, Time and Venue of opening of bid online.	29.12.2020 at 11.30 hrs at O/o the Executive Engineer, Jonk Irr Division, Nuapada
If stipulation arises the Tender will be decided through Transparency Lottery System.	05.01.2021 at 11.30 hrs at O/o the Executive Engineer, Jonk Irr Division, Nuapada

Further details can be seen any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation to the above notice will be published in the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Jonk Irrigation Division, Nuapada
No. A-359 OIPR-32393/11/0001/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, NUAPADA

e-Procurement Notice No. O-686

BID IDENTIFICATION No. RWNPD-06/2020-21 (Online)

- Name of the Work : Road Works
- Total No. of Work : 05 Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Please refer the DTCN
- EMD : 1% of Estimated Cost
- Cost of Tender Document : Please refer the DTCN
- Class of Contractor : Please refer the DTCN
- Period of Completion : 01 (One) Calendar month as per Annexure
- Other Details : As per DTCN

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of Opening of Bid
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nuapada	RWNPD-06/2020-21 (Online)	17.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M.	28.12.2020 upto 5.00 P.M.	24.12.2020 upto 05.00 P.M.	29.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
OIPR-25050/11/0005/2021 Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nuapada

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement

No. 8050 (Online - 11) Tel. No. 06752-222092, e-mail id: eerwpr@gmail.com Date: 04.12.2020

No. O-683: The Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Puri on behalf of Government of Odisha invites percentage rate tenders through e-procurement for 6 Nos. of work for the year 2020-21 in the district of Puri.

- Total No. of Works : 6 Nos.
- Tender Cost of Packages : Amount varies from Rs. 1.33 lakhs to 29.20 lakhs
- Class of Contractor : As per DTCN
- Period of Completion : As per DTCN
- Period of availability of tenders Online/Date & time of bidding Online/last date of seeking clarification/Date of opening of tender papers.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date, time & venue of Opening of Tender
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Puri	Online - 11	17.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M.	29.12.2020 upto 3.00 P.M.	28.12.2020 upto 1.00 P.M.	30.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M. Office of the E.E., R.W. Division, Puri

6. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents, which is available in website: "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>".
OIPR-25065/11/0012/2021 Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Puri

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA e-procurement Notice OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR

e-mail: midbhanjanagar@gmail.com

Bid Identification No: EEMIDBNJ-03/2020-21

- No. of works : 1 No.
- Estimated cost : Rs. 71.19 Lakhs
- E.M.D. required : As per Column-4 of summary of DTCN.
- Class of Contractor : B & A Class
- Period of Completion : 3 (Three) Calendar Months
- Cost of Tender document : Rs.10,000/(Non - refundable)
- Availability of Tender in on line for bidding : From 15.12.2020 to 25.12.2020 up to 5.00 P.M.
- Date & Time of opening of Technical Bid : On 28.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M.
- Name and address of Officer Inviting Tender : Executive Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Bhanjanagar.

Further details can be seen from the government website <http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>
Executive Engineer, M.I. Division, Bhanjanagar
No. A-355 OIPR-32010/11/0006/2021

FOCUS GOVERNANCE

TOO MUCH DEMOCRACY



Officers trying to keep the ruling party in good humour, especially when they have been given plum roles is nothing new. They do not and must not have the right to oppose political choices of an elected government. Yet, how much they sing today's tunes, where they sing and how they sing is a matter of choice

Some exceptions) to care a damn. Should a government use the suffering wrought by a pandemic to push through such deep changes that will carry long standing ramifications for ordinary citizens without listening, debating, arguing and settling down for a bit of give and take? What is this, if not the working of a system that has decided that we have too much democracy, and it's time to cut it down and push ahead on a path that the people at the top have decided is best for all of us - with people at the bottom having little say in the matter? The pandemic has thus been used, not as much to bring immediate relief to the people or to help migrants who were forced to flee amid the ill-advised order of an almost sudden shut down, but to push an agenda while people of the nation are still suffering. And in the process, more strife and more sufferings follow and we see it on the roads and highways where farmers brave the wintry weather to take on a haughty government. Is it any surprise then that the names of crony capitalists are today becoming synonymous with the leading lights of the government? The government is not even getting into the arguments over MSP and how and why it has been left out of the farm laws.

Let us, therefore, not confuse the protests with reforms. People see them as only they can. This is a government on an agenda that has nothing to do with the ordinary citizens of India. It is taking us on a ride to a mythical, vain-glorious future, trampling aspirations, dignity and rights today to build airports, Parliament building and fancy factories for tomorrow.

To achieve this, "too much democracy" has to be tamed. And thus, all the nation's energy, vibrancy and diversity are being sucked out. It is the ultimate plunder of Mother India.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal.

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BJP-TMC Faceoff

Gratitude: A humble recognition of all that the Divine has done and is doing for you.

THE MOTHER



The showdown between the BJP and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in Bengal with the state Assembly polls only a few months away is an example of fierce and ferocious duel to both grab and retain power. To achieve their aims, both the contenders are resorting to methods flouting norms of decency and Constitutional propriety. The prize for the BJP is to get to rule Bengal for the first time and use its untapped resources for itself and the corporate world itching to invest in a land of opportunities. More importantly, it is toppling Mamata Banerjee who, today, stands as the only opposition to the sway of the BJP. All other non-BJP Chief Ministers have either bowed before the whims and diktats of the Center or those who belong to the Congress are convenient punch bags that the safe-front party would prefer to retain. Bashing the already crumbling Congress edifice is very easy. Apart from the party, the Gandhi family has been somewhat successfully built up as the arch enemy of every true Hindu. This public mistrust and dislike towards the Gandhis strengthen the BJP even in indefensible scenarios. On the other hand, a Mamata type of personality, unwilling to bend, with no big corruption charges and being a Hindu Brahmin herself, poses a threat that the BJP would not like to face at the national level. Therefore, elimination of Mamata is understandably high on the BJP agenda.

For the Trinamool it is to win the consecutive third term in office and enjoy power as well as retain the anti-BJP stance. With the Left parties and the Congress relegated to the position of distant third and fourth positions, Bengal is witnessing a battle between a rightist ideology that has been foreign to its soil and a hotchpotch of grassroots politics that started with the promise to work for the dispossessed, farmers and women but ended up getting mired in abuse of power.

The war of attrition between the BJP and the Trinamool has been continuing for the past few months, but it has got national attention after a dastardly attack on the motorcade of the BJP president JP Nadda last week when he was going to campaign for the party at Diamond Harbour, the turf of Trinamool MP Abhisekh Banerjee, who is a nephew and heir apparent of Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee. The selection of the place for the campaign itself is of great political significance not simply because of its connection with the ruling family of the state but also due to the aunt-nephew combine being the pivot of the BJP's electoral strategy to vertically split the Trinamool Congress exploiting the grouse that top party leaders have been nursing against the two for the rise of the nephew at their cost. This, the BJP leadership hopes, will play a key role in its dream to make the lotus bloom in Bengal.

The attack on the convoy of Nadda reflects poorly on the state administration, while the explanation given by the Trinamool is even more ludicrous. According to TMC, Nadda, enjoying Z Plus security cover, "hadn't informed the local thana of his plan to visit Diamond Harbour, allowed 50 motor cyclists in a rally and 30 supporters' vehicles to be part of his convoy". According to the Trinamool's logic this was the reason for the administration's failure to prevent the attack. It further argues the Director General of Police had deployed, for Nadda's security, a huge posse of police officials along the route and at the venue. The question about how the attack could take place despite providing such an elaborate security cover remains unanswered. The Trinamool even attributes the attack to the presence of a BJP activist facing 59 criminal cases who was travelling along with Nadda, raising slogans and provocative gestures at Trinamool supporters. It further alleges the attack had been masterminded by the BJP itself as its activists were video-graphing the entire rally so as to make it an all-India issue in the media.

The BJP-government at the Centre retaliated by summoning the state Chief Secretary and the DGP to meet the Union Home Secretary for the breach of security and transferred the IPS officers in charge of security to Delhi. This triggered protest from the state and the ruling party which slammed the Centre for violating Constitutional propriety, law and order being a State subject under the 7th Schedule of the State List of the Constitution.

It's indeed a brazen show of power by the BJP at the Centre lending itself to the charge of interfering with state affairs and breaching Centre-State relationship. Already, the Narendra Modi-government has been accused of encroaching into state's powers by passing the three controversial Farm Bills, agriculture being a State subject.

But, since everything is considered fair in love and war and in recent times power politics has been included in that list, the BJP has become a past master at following this strategic principle in capturing power at the Centre and the states. Winning Bengal this time around will have immense symbolic, strategic and material value for the BJP in national politics.



Jagdish Rattanani

LET US NOT CONFUSE THE PROTESTS WITH REFORMS. THIS IS A GOVERNMENT ON AN AGENDA THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ORDINARY CITIZENS OF INDIA

The BJP has distanced itself from the remarks by the Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant that India has been "too much of a democracy" to allow for reforms, which he career bureaucrat categorised as "bold". Officers trying to keep the ruling party in good humour, especially when they have been given plum roles, is nothing new. They do not and must not have the right to oppose political choices of an elected government. Yet, how much they sing today's tunes, where they sing and how they sing is a matter of choice. Each one must decide individually where they want to stand or fall in the full glare of the public. Kant was a little too much to digest even for the BJP, which has tried to end the furore over those remarks with Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad saying, "We are proud of our democracy." Kant himself has explained that the way his remarks were reported is not the way he meant to say it. We must accept his explanations yet note that his choice of words and the timing are ironic, even if nothing else needs to be said about the thinking in such senior echelons of our bureaucracy.

The question is not about "reforms", which many might reasonably argue are required (though the popular mood appears to have distinctly turned "anti-reform"). The point is the way these policy actions are being pushed down the throat of an unwilling nation when trust in the promises and actions of the government isn't at its best. There are simple ways to understand what the nation is going through. Sharad Pawar explained it in a few lines when he said: "When these Bills were tabled before Parliament, it was conveyed to the government that even though it was possible for them at that moment to clear these important Bills without any discussion, there was bound to be a reaction from the farmers at a later stage. But the government did not pay heed to this and cleared these Bills with a nominal discussion

of 15-20 minutes." The Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee understood it equally simply and explained: "It is not so much that you could not make a case for getting rid of many of these very old-fashioned institutions in the agriculture sector..., but the lack of trust is massive. The sudden cancelling of Centre's liabilities under the GST Act does not help. You... have power delivered from top down and (you say) we are just going to take decisions."

But this is precisely the way the approach and the method of choice for this government. We have it on authority from Kant, who explains in remarks that have not been cited enough: "The (Covid-19) crisis has been used by this government as an opportunity to unleash reforms that will modernise India's agriculture..." He goes on to cite a host of reforms that can only be contentious and even

more so when they are pushed without discussion. These are changes to labour laws, mining, coal and tariffs in the power sector so that there is no subsidy for home users. There is no doubt that these are "hard" reforms. The Niti Aayog CEO says they were held up for years and he cares not to pause to think or ask: Why? These remarks are bound to be contested; they will generate political heat and social strife. The anger may not find its way out on the streets in every single case but people are seething and this will come out somewhere and with not very good outcomes. Consider how labourers would respond when working hours have been stretched, when basic protections, already rendered weak by a contractual system are withdrawn and the unorganised are left to the vagaries of an owner class that has been known (with

SPECTRUM FARM LAWS

Centre must review farm laws



Shivaji Sarkar

THE FARMERS' ISSUE IS GETTING BOTH INTERESTING AND INTRIGUING. WITH THE NEW FARM LAWS, FOREIGN INVESTORS ARE BRINGING IN MORE MONEY AND FUNDING FOR WAREHOUSING IS ALSO INCREASING, THOUGH THE FARMER GETS LOW RETURNS

The farmers' issue is getting both interesting and intriguing. With the new farm laws, foreign investors are bringing in more money and funding for warehousing is also increasing, though the farmer gets low returns. In the talks between the Government and farmer representatives, the farmers refused to accept Centre's offer of a written guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and offer of levying cess on the new private mandis outside the APMC mandis. They allege that ingress of corporate is rising and a review is must. Importantly, the facts prove it.

Over the years, between 2013-14 and 2017-18, since farmers' return on their produce started reducing, the foreign portfolio investment (FPI) got booming and funding for silo - giant steel structures for storing grains for a longer duration - construction increased.

However, since 1967, when APMC Act was enforced, never have farmers been at such a distress and confusion. Normally, despite not being able to sell at MSPs, they were not unhappy at the returns. The MSP decided a floor price and provided the bargaining strength to them against the market forces. In 2013-14, the paddy price was 58 per cent higher than average input and



labour costs. This margin shrank to 41 per cent in 2018. The difference on maize reduced from 43 per cent to 25.6 per cent.

Other crops such as wheat, moong, jowar, bajra, arhar, groundnut, gram, rapeseed, mustard, barley, cotton soybean also were noticed to be less profitable. Despite rise in the MSP, in the past five years the farmer's actual income has not seen much increase.

Indian farmers have reasons to be unhappy. Their yields are low. World average for rice per kg per hectare in 2018 is 4679, maize 5924, all pulses 964, arhar 852, soybean 2791, groundnut 1611, wheat 3425, barley 2951 and gram 965. The Indian average is rice 2638, maize 3070, all pulses 757, arhar 757, soybean 1192, groundnut 1422, wheat 3371, barley 2693 and gram 956.

The prices they get are less and as the cost is high, approaching international markets is not easy.

In this backdrop if it is linked to FPI, the trend is surprising. In June, 2020, the FPI was ₹11,736 crore. It doubles to ₹22,866 crore in July. The three farm laws were introduced as Ordinances on June 5. In August as the farm bills were introduced for passing by Parliament, the investments jumped to ₹1,30,576 crore. About half the investments surprisingly came from two tiny countries, Mauritius and Singapore. Another large investor was Netherland.

These three countries have been the topmost foreign investors. These are destinations for round tripping - that is the funds are routed through these countries by various investors and supposedly include

domestic ones (Indians) too. The investments are reportedly made in farms, toll roads, rail corridors, airports, ports, smart cities, film cities and similar ventures. Such investments have heavy baggage. The falling rupee-dollar parity and high sensex are linked to these manoeuvrings.

It's said that 55 per cent of the foreign fund flow has reportedly gone to two western provinces, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Uttar Pradesh has got only one per cent.

The International Monetary Fund and Copenhagen University report says that 40 per cent of the total foreign capital comes from disguised sources. But international money flows like that despite many recent revelations. It is just not for tax savings but there are many other reasons. Many investors prefer to keep their footprints in shrouds to avoid competition and other strategic reasons.

Since it is a critical issue, a detailed discussion and policy formulations are needed. For a reassuring national environment the three laws, having wider and larger ramifications need a review with farmers, political parties, and finance and market experts. Let the nation not shy away from understanding the problem for an apt solution.

INFRA

WORDSWORTH

Bellwether

It's not uncommon these days, even though the word is still widely used, to find it spelled bellweather or even bellwhether. For example - I do not shrink from naming the guilty - the Washington Times for 29 October 2006: "That's why we should have used some bellweather event like the signing of the Iraqi constitution, or the parliamentary elections as our moment to declare victory and exit stage left." There's some excuse for this, assuming a lack of prior knowledge and the absence of a dictionary, since the second part of the word is now rare in our urbanised existence. Wether is an old English word for a castrated ram. The experts think it comes from a prehistoric root meaning a year, perhaps because the ram concerned was a yearling; it's a relative of veal, via the Latin vitulus, a calf. The shepherd used a wether as the leader of the flock, whom the rest would follow. To be sure to know exactly where he was, a bell was hung around his neck. So: bellwether. By the fifteenth century, it was being applied to people, as a contemptuous term for a leader whom only sheep would follow, especially one who possessed a loud mouth but little judgement.

Best bib and tucker

A tucker was a bit of lace worn around the neck and top of the bodice by 17th-18th century women, presumably something that was tucked in; the bib was closely related to our modern term - a shirt-front or covering for the breast. The expression is first recorded from the middle of the eighteenth century, initially only for women and girls, as you might expect, but later on also to men, when the words had become a fixed phrase and disengaged from their real meanings. Before then, the common expression seems to have been best bib and band (band meaning collar), also commonly used for men as well as women, which continued after the new term had come into use, though it seems to have died out at the end of the eighteenth century. The word derives from the same source as the tucker of food, but is unconnected in meaning.

LOL

Name of a perfume

A nice respectable lady with a savory smell of perfume got on the bus and took a seat beside me. After some moments I dared to ask her: "Excuse me lady do you mind me please to ask you what is the name of this perfume and where did you buy it from? I want to buy one for my wife."



The lady responded: "It is Chanel and from Paris."

After about ten minutes later I felt a strong wind in my belly so I slowly blew it out. Some seconds later she broke and said: "Off... what is this smell my God?" I said: "Gar lic and from Gilroy city in California."

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, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Politics over farm laws

Sir, For the last 19 days farmers have been protesting for their democratic rights and through this movement they have set an example of relentless courage and perseverance. In particular; the success of the "Bharat bandh" on December 12 has shaken the government from within. The government is now forced to admit that the decision taken by it was undemocratic and flawed and did not benefit the farmers in any way. Now the question arises as to why the government is insisting that it will not repeal the law but amend it. It is not difficult to solve the problem. The remedy is to just segregate the "Agricultural Price Commission Act". This means that the price of the product that is produced by an industry is determined by the owners of that industry. Even a cobbler determines the price of the shoes he makes. So why can't the farmers determine the prices of their products? The problem is, the government has taken away this right from the peasantry.
Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Colossal waste

Sir, The NDA government's "new Parliament" is all set for a take-off. The "Central Vista" project creation has invited bouquets and brickbats. PM Narendra Modi's ambition is to ensure the upscale building is ready for India's 75th Independence Day celebration in 2022. The Centre has said it wants to free-up the Lutyens space and bring more and more government ministries under a common roof apart from housing the Vice President and the Prime Minister. Also, since the freeze on the number of Parliament seats is going to end in 2026 paving the way for delimitation, states are likely to send more representation to the Lower House and consequently to the Upper House too and that will necessitate more space. But what about the mammoth cost to be incurred on the exchequer to put the new house in place? ₹20,000 crore is not little money. What's wrong with the existing parliament building? It is a 100-year-old imposing structure that is not just a building. It symbolises the spirit of Indian democracy that has stood the test of time. Yes, the structure looks old, but it looks grand. The very fact that the government is desirous of converting the old parliament into a 'museum' has pained observers. Felling of innumerable trees to make way for the sprawling 64,500 sq metre building is another widely disputed issue that has threatened to go out of hand.
Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Cong comeback in Raj ULB polls after panchayat setback

Owaisi now eyes big gains in Rajasthan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Dec 14: If present trends are to be believed, All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi seems to be eyeing big gains in Rajasthan in the long run by luring the Bharatiya Tribal Party.

In a surprising move, Owaisi recently extended his support to Bharatiya Tribal Party in Rajasthan soon after it announced to withdraw its support to the Congress.

The BTP recently announced its separation with the ruling party in Rajasthan after the Congress joined hands with BJP to defeat BTP in Zila Parishad polls in Dungarpur district.

Soon after the stunning political episode, BTP national president Chhotubhai Vasava, tweeted, "#BJP Congress are one. This is the only truth."

Replying to his tweet, Owaisi said, "Vasavaji Congress will teach you and me the lesson of Opposition unity in the morning and evening. However, it will not rise above the Janeyudhari unity itself. Both of them are basically one. How long will you support them? Is your independent power anywhere less than a kingmaker? Hope you will take a right decision soon. We are with you in this struggle of stake," he said. It needs to be mentioned here



FRESH INROADS

AIMIM IS KEEPING A STRONG VIGIL ON 40 SEATS DOMINATED BY MUSLIMS IN STATE

AS OWAISI HAS ALREADY MARKED A SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE IN BIHAR, HE NOW SEEMS TO BE MAKING ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE POLITICAL EQUATIONS IN TRIBAL AND MUSLIM BELTS IN RAJASTHAN TOO

IN THE PRESENT SITUATION, IF OWAISI TIES UP WITH THE BHARATIYA TRIBAL PARTY, THEN HE CAN BE THE GAME-CHANGER IN TRIBAL DOMINATED SEATS OF GUJARAT, MP AND RAJASTHAN

that there were reports of Owaisi taking a strong interest in Rajasthan soon after municipal polls were recently held in three districts. The Muslim leaders of the state wanted their community to be represented as they had a strong number of corporators in the walled city.

Feeling deserted, these community leaders then approached Owaisi, and since then, Owaisi is monitoring political developments in the state, confirmed official sources.

AIMIM is keeping a strong vigil on 40 seats dominated by Muslims in state, they added. Owaisi's tweet further strengthens this claim.

As he has already marked a significant presence in Bihar, he now

seems to be making attempts to change political equations in tribal and Muslim belts in Rajasthan too, confirmed sources.

In present situation, if Owaisi ties up with BTP, then he can be the gamechanger in tribal dominated seats of Gujarat, MP and Rajasthan. In Rajasthan, the BTP stands strong in Dungarpur, Banswara and Pratapgarh districts.

The party has two MLAs representing Rajasthan Assembly. However, the party which supported Congress in Rajya Sabha polls as well as during political crisis reported in July has withdrawn its support to Congress.

Rajkumar Rout, BTP MLA, told

IAN, "Our party has announced to withdraw support to the Congress as it joined hands with the BJP to emerge winner in the recent local polls. We are elected representatives and need to answer to people who voted for us. They were questioning us about how we could support a party which can join hands with the opposition to emerge as the winner," he said.

Meanwhile, all eyes are now set on what shall be the next step of Owaisi in the state. Will Rajasthan continue to be the two-party dominated state or if there will be a third front coming in at any point, remains the most discussed question in political corridors.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: After the loss in Panchayat polls in Rajasthan, alarm bells were ringing for Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot but in the just-declared urban local poll results, the Congress pipped the BJP and made inroads in urban areas which had been strongholds of the saffron party.

As per the State Election Commission, the ruling Congress won 620 seats, BJP won 548 and independent candidates bagged 595 of the total 1,775 councillor/members' posts in urban local bodies for which results were declared Sunday. The Congress is now trying to make up for the loss of the Panchayat polls and to win maximum seats for the post of Chairman.

A jubilant Gehlot thanked the workers and the voters for keeping faith in the Congress as the urban body results will compensate the loss in rural polls. Gehlot had blamed Covid-19 for the party's loss in the Panchayat polls, saying the results were not as per the Congress' expectations.



Insiders in the party feel that the urban poll results have given a reprieve to the Chief Minister who is fighting on two fronts - on internal revolts and the BJP onslaught to try and pull down his government.

Sensing danger, Gehlot had attacked his detractors in the party while inaugurating a Congress office in Sirohi district recently before the results of Panchayat polls, saying the state government was saved from a crisis as the senior leaders suspended the rebels within the party fold. He had also accused the opposition BJP of restarting a

'Game of Thrones' yet again to topple his government. The rebel leaders he was hinting at include former Pradesh Congress Committee chief and ex-Deputy CM Sachin Pilot and his loyalists Ramesh Meena and Vishvendra Singh, who were suspended and removed as state ministers after Pilot along with 18 MLAs went to Manesar in an open rebellion against the Gehlot leadership, earlier this year.

The central leadership of the party went into a damage control mode then to sort out the matter before things went out of control.

Farmers block Delhi-Jaipur highway

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Dec 14: Protesting against the Centre's recent farm laws, farmers from Rajasthan Monday blocked the Delhi-Jaipur national highway at Shahjahanpur in Alwar district after the police stopped them from marching to the national capital.

With the police stopping their march along the state's border with Haryana, the farmers camping at Jaisinghpur-Khera border in Shahjahanpur under the leadership of Swaraj Abhiyan chief Yogendra Yadav and others went on a day-long hunger strike, seeking the repeal of farm laws.

With the Rashtriya Swamajsevak Sangh affiliates Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Bharatiya Kisan Sangh too raising the demand for a legal guarantee on the MSP recently, Yadav dared RSS to clarify its stands on the farm laws.

"I have one simple question to RSS-affiliated BKS and SJM. Do they support the farm laws in the



existing form? Let them come clear on this," said Yadav, addressing reporters. He claimed the two right-wing organisations were not in favour of the farm laws since day one. But with the pressure building upon the RSS amid the farmers' agitation, they have now started saying that some amendments are required.

Both the organisations, SJM and BKS, have said the Centre's farm laws favour farmers but they need some amendments to allay their

fears over the MSP. "We are holding a day-long fast today to pay tribute to the farmers who lost their lives during the country-wide agitation. This fast is being held to give a message that God give wisdom to the government," said Kisan Panchayat president Rampal Chaudhary, who is also camping on the highway.

Due to blockade, vehicular traffic on the Jaipur-Delhi highway is being diverted to Bansur and other routes of Alwar, police said.

One-way traffic from Delhi to Jaipur is open but the Jaipur-Delhi traffic is blocked due to the agitation, they said.

The police are keeping a vigil on the border areas. Thousands of farmers are currently camping at Delhi's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in protest against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

They have expressed apprehension that these laws would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the 'mercy' of big businessmen. The government has been maintaining that the new laws will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture.

CALL OF THE DESERT



A tourist rides on a camel during sunrise in Thar desert in Jaisalmer, Monday.

PTI PHOTO

Vanishing red rice gets protection in Himachal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

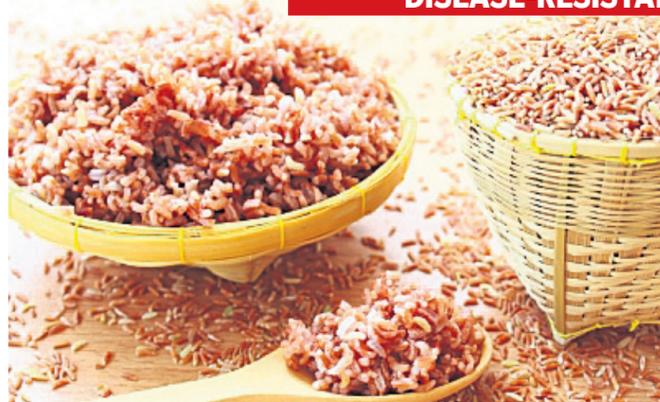
Shimla, Dec 14: Himachal Pradesh is trying to protect the traditional variety of red rice that is on the verge of extinction in the hill state by bringing at least 3,000 additional hectares under its cultivation in five years, state Agriculture Minister Virender Kanwar said Sunday.

The red rice is more disease-resistant and harder than strains cultivated commercially over most of India.

"With growing health consciousness, environmental concerns and the pressing need for updating our food systems to survive climate change, the red rice, probably the earliest of cereal grains that humans started domesticating, are making a comeback in the state," Kanwar told IANS.

He said the thrust of the government is to promote its cultivation, giving hope to farm scientists and conservationists who worked extensively in recent years to save the variety from certain extinction.

At present, most of the red rice is grown in around 1,100 hectares



THE RED RICE IS SERVED DURING COMMUNITY KITCHENS AND RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS IN THE HILL STATE, WHILE ITS STARCH IS CONSIDERED USEFUL FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND CHILDREN

THE RED RICE FETCHES FOUR-FIVE TIMES (RS 200-250 PER KG AVERAGE) HIGHER PRICES THAN THE NORMAL WHITE RICE

DISEASE-RESISTANT

THE RED RICE IS MORE DISEASE-RESISTANT AND HARDIER THAN STRAINS CULTIVATED COMMERCIALY OVER MOST OF INDIA

RED RICE CAN BE GROWN IN FLOODED FIELDS WHERE MANY VARIETIES WOULD ROT

by 4,122 families largely on the banks of the Pabbar, a tributary of the Yamuna, in Chhohara Valley in upper Shimla. It is also cultivated in some stretches of Kullu and Kangra districts.

The annual production of red

rice in the state is around 10,000 quintals, registering an average eight-10 quintal per hectare production. Red rice can be grown in flooded fields where many varieties would rot. Apart from that, agriculture experts are keen to

conserve all traditional crop strains that can be used in case the more widely cultivated varieties develop a disease they cannot cope with.

However, red rice production is declining in recent years as most farmers in the state have turned to

lucrative cash crops.

Kanwar said a target has been fixed to bring around 4,000 hectares of land under cultivation in five years that will produce 40,000 quintals of red rice.

To provide legal protection to the rice variety that would also protect the rights of the farmers and enable them and others to market the product around the world, the minister said the state has been trying to get it registered under the Geographical Indications (GI) of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999.

The unique geographical origin tag would boost its marketing and exports to foreign countries, he said.

In 2013, the red rice became the first crop variety of the state to be registered under the Protection of Plant Variety and Farmers Right Act of 2001.

According to experts, the red rice under various local names is gifted. Like 'Poli' is gifted on occasion of happiness like marriages, religious ceremonies and childbirth, etc., and 'Path' is gifted to a sick person and 'Sattu' on the occasion of sorrow.

Sainj side. Chief Wildlife Warden Archana Sharma said the Himalayan serow was sighted in Hurling area of Spiti Valley.

GHPN Deputy Ranger Roshan Lal Chaudhary told IANS that the sighting of the Himalayan serow in the nature is very rare.

"It is an extremely shy animal and its habitat is dense forests. Only in winter its sighting in the GHPN is possible when it migrates to lower elevations," he said.

Chaudhary said one could encounter signs of serow like pellets, resting places and footmarks, but it is almost impossible to spot the animal.

"In 2018 only once its sighting was recorded in a camera trap installed in the GHPN," he said.

Encourage students to visit 'technological marvel' Atal Tunnel: UGC to universities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has asked universities and engineering colleges to share details of the Atal Tunnel in Himachal Pradesh with students and encourage them to visit the 'technological marvel.'

The commission directed that students must follow COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Centre as well as the state governments during their visit to the tunnel.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Atal Tunnel, the world's longest motorable tunnel in Rohtang, in October.

"Situating at an altitude above 10,000 ft, this 9.02-km tunnel has been constructed in an extremely difficult and hostile climate, deploying the latest and best practices in tunnel technology with state-of-the-art features, including semi-transverse ventilation, SCADA controlled fire-fighting, illumination and monitoring system," UGC Secretary Rajnish Jain said in a let-

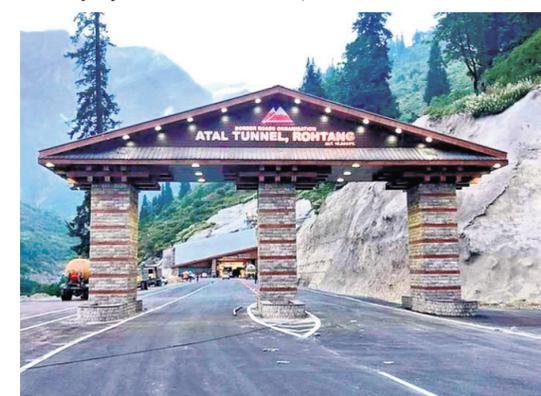
ter to vice-chancellors.

The all-weather Atal tunnel will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 46 km and the travel time by four to five hours. It is the longest highway tunnel in the world.

"It is desired that the knowledge of this technological marvel of the country, encompassing the best practices in engineering, design, planning, construction and project management be disseminated to students of engineering colleges who should be encouraged to visit this tunnel to see, appreciate and assimilate the capabilities in tunnelling efforts which now exist within the country," he added.

The tunnel is built with ultra-modern specifications in the Pir Panjal range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 3,000 metres.

The south portal of Atal Tunnel is located at a distance of 25 km from Manali at an altitude of 3,060 metres, while its north portal is located near village Teling, Sissu, in Lahaul Valley at an altitude of 3,071 metres.

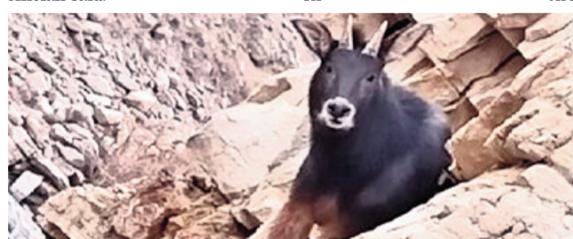


Himalayan serow spotted in Himachal's Spiti Valley

THE GOAT ANTELOPE IS AN EXTREMELY SHY ANIMAL AND ITS HABITAT IS DENSE FORESTS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, Dec 14: The near threatened and rarely seen Himalayan serow, a goat antelope, has been sighted and captured in a camera by the state wildlife wing in Himachal Pradesh's remote Spiti Valley for the first time, officials said.



The place of sighting is close to the Indo-Tibetan border: Earlier, Himalayan serow sighting in the state was reported from the Great Himalayan National Park (GHPN), a Unesco World Heritage site in Kullu district, in 2018. At that time, it was caught on a camera trap laid by the park authorities in

the



The government plans to promote all kinds of good films, including documentaries and short films
PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER

BLANKETS FOR RAM LALLA

As temperatures drop in Uttar Pradesh and winter chill intensifies, the Ram Lalla idol and those of the deity's brothers in a makeshift temple in Ayodhya have been provided blankets and a blower to keep them warm



of the day quote

In the coming days, many political parties will not be able to come upfront among the people and the farmers, their political existence will end



KAMAL PATEL | MADHYA PRADESH AGRICULTURE MINISTER

Facebook must demonstrate its neutrality through a thorough revamp of its institutional processes and standard operating procedures (SOPs), so as to ensure foolproof checks and balances that cannot be tinkered by an individual's whims and political leanings



KC VENUGOPAL | CONGRESS LEADER

The BJP's stand on cow slaughter ban is diametrically opposite in Goa state to what the party has taken here. In both the states it is the ruling party



SIDDARAMAIAH | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Five killed in road accident

Pratapgarh (UP): Five people, including an Uttar Pradesh Police constable, were killed on the spot when the vehicle in which they were travelling dashed against a tree near here, police said Monday. Additional SP (East) Surendra Dwivedi said the driver lost control over the vehicle leading to the accident on Pratapgarh Patti road under the Kandhari Police Station, 12 km from the district headquarters, Sunday night.

AIIMS nurses on indefinite strike

New Delhi: Around 5,000 nurses of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) advanced their indefinite strike with immediate effect Monday after the premier medical institute allegedly converted the terms of employment from permanent to contract basis. The strike was earlier scheduled to be observed from Wednesday. The nurses union of AIIMS claimed that the hospital administration has introduced contract terms to their employment which forced them to pre-empt their strike.

Mathadi workers resort to strike

Thane: Thousands of Mathadi workers (head-loaders) in Maharashtra stayed away from work Monday in protest against the state government's "indifferent" attitude towards their demands, a labour leader said. Former MLA and Mathadi leader Narendra Patil told reporters that the work at the Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs) at Vashi in Navi Mumbai and other places in the state was crippled due to the strike.

White tigress, cub die in zoo

New Delhi: A white tigress and a cub died at the Delhi zoo on Monday due to birth-related complications, officials said. The six-year-old feline, Nirbhaya, gave birth to two cubs Thursday morning.

Mini clinic scheme in TN

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Palaniswami Monday launched the AIADMK's Anna Mini Clinic scheme as he inaugurated 630 of the planned 2,000 clinics in the state.

Indian forces fought PLA bravely: Rajnath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: As the Ladakh standoff persisted, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Monday India's armed forces stood up to aggression along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh and fought the Chinese PLA with "utmost bravery" and "remarkable fortitude" and forced it to go back. "There comes a point in a nation's history, every now and then, when it needs to stand up for itself, tell that it can fight anyone, that it's capable to take any challenge, just to survive," Singh said in unusually pointed remarks on the seven-month-long military standoff with China in eastern Ladakh.



LADAKH ROW

In his address at the annual general meeting of industry body FICCI, he also said the "unprovoked aggression" on India's Himalayan frontiers is a reminder of how the world is changing and how existing agreements are being challenged.

In this context, the defence minister said the future of the region and world is becoming uncertain going by the way power is being asserted not just in the Himalayas but across the Indo-Pacific. Against the backdrop of the raging protests by farmers in the National Capital Region (NCR), Singh also stressed that agriculture was a "mother sector" and there was no question of taking any "retrograde steps" against it ever.

Referring to cross-border terrorism, he said India fought the scourge alone even when there was no one to support it, but later, the countries across the world understood that "we were right about Pakistan being the fountainhead of terrorism".

On the prolonged border stand-off with China, Singh said India's future generations will be proud

of what the armed forces have achieved this year. "In these testing times our forces have shown exemplary courage and remarkable fortitude. They fought the People's Liberation Army (PLA) with utmost bravery and forced them to go back. The coming generations of this nation will be proud of what our forces have managed to achieve this year."

The defence minister said while the world was fighting the deadly coronavirus virus, India's armed forces were valiantly defending its borders and asserted that no virus could deter from their duty. "The unprovoked aggression on our Himalayan frontiers is a reminder of how the world is changing, how existing agreements are being challenged, how power is being asserted not just in the Himalayas but across the Indo-Pacific."

"And how uncertain the future of the region and world could be in this backdrop. As you are aware, there is a big build-up of armed forces at the LAC in Ladakh," he said. The defence minister also said there may be comparison between the Indian and Chinese military strength, but when it comes to soft power, India is far ahead of China. "Whenever there is a situation at the LAC, the

most obvious outcome is a comparison between India and China's military strength. But I don't want to dwell on that. There can be a serious debate on who owns more military might but when it comes to soft power there is no scope of ambiguity," he added.

"India is far ahead of China when it comes to leading the world with ideas. If you look at the entire East Asia from Burma to Thailand to Indonesia and Malaysia even Japan, there is a huge Indian cultural impact on all these countries. Singh said Buddhism had a "monumental influence" over China to an extent that before the 1949 revolution almost 80 per cent of China's population followed Buddhism.

Elaborating on how India was a victim of cross-border terrorism, he said countries across the world understood India was right about Pakistan being fountainhead of terrorism. In May, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman rolled out a number of reform measures for the defence sector including making separate budgetary outlay to procure Indian-made military hardware, increasing FDI limit from 49 per cent to 74 per cent under the automatic route and generating a year-wise negative list of weapons which will not be allowed to import.

China carrying out development work in Tibet, says Bipin Rawat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 14: Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat stated Monday that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is carrying out development activities in Tibet Autonomous Region of China, amid the Sino-Indian standoff at Ladakh.

He also said that Indian forces are well-equipped to deal with any eventuality, and similar activities are being undertaken in the country. "We are locked in a stand-off in Ladakh. There is some development activity which has been going on in Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Every nation will continue to make preparations to boost its security based on its strategic interests."

"I don't think there should be much concern in that because we, on our side, are also carrying out similar activities," Rawat told reporters after the launch of indigenously built state-of-the-art stealth frigate 'Himgiri' at Defence PSU



Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers here. Indian Armed forces will leave no stone unturned to safeguard the country's frontiers, he insisted. "China's attempt to change the status quo on the Line of Actual Control along the northern borders amidst the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated high levels of preparation on land, sea and

in the air," the CDS said. The Indian Army, following the Doklam stand-off in 2017, has taken measures to ensure that the situation does not escalate there any further, he maintained. Indian forces are carefully watching the activities of the PLA at Doklam, where the armies of the two most populous countries in the world were engaged in a 73-day eyeball-to-eyeball stand-off in 2017. "We have taken necessary action to counter anything that would be a cause of concern to our national security," he said, when asked about possible Chinese misadventures in the eastern sector, in the midst of the Ladakh impasse.

The CDS further said that the Indian Armed forces have adequate strength and reserves to counter any threat, and is looking to equip themselves with more cutting-edge technology. "Time has come now to look at the future of war fighting, imbibing technology into our systems," he said.

NEW HOPE



Workers re-install a stall at Marina beach after it reopened for public following its closure due to COVID-19 pandemic, in Chennai

Kamal Nath hints at political exit

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: Senior Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath has hinted at retirement from politics, sparking speculation within and outside the party. The veteran leader, whose 15-month-old government fell after a revolt from the party MLAs, stunned everyone at a rally on his home turf Chhindwara Sunday. Kamal Nath said, "I have already achieved a lot and do not have any ambition of any post and want to take rest."



He clarified that he will take "political sanyas" when the people of Chhindwara desire since he has represented this constituency many times and his son is now MP from the constituency. But party insiders say that the statement has been made to pressure the leadership to let him continue as state president in Madhya Pradesh. Nath, under whom the party lost the recent Madhya Pradesh bypolls and dashed hopes of the Congress' return to power had met Sonia Gandhi last week amid the farmers protests. Sources said being a senior leader with good relations with most parties, he may be appointed treasurer of the party after the demise of Ahmed Patel. Nath has also been facing the wrath of state leaders such as Harpal Singh Thakur who have demanded his resignation after the bypoll loss. He is under tremendous pressure to quit the post of state president as he holds the twin post of leader of the opposition in the assembly.

The Congress wants to make way for younger leaders to take the party responsibility and prepare for next elections slated to be in 2023. But Nath had asserted that he won't leave state politics.

NEW TWIST DUBEY'S FAN PAGES DISAPPEAR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 14: Fan pages dedicated to gangster Vikas Dubey have started disappearing at an alarming speed after the Kanpur police took cognizance of the same.

Of the multiple fan pages, eulogizing the gangster, barely two remain on social media now. According to Kanpur (rural) Superintendent of Police Brijesh Kumar Srivastava, the police learnt about the Vikas Dubey pages when their surveillance teams found them active.

"An inquiry is underway. We have checked that the content is highly sensitive. Legal action will be taken. We will also send a letter to Facebook asking them to block these pages, but first we will complete our own investigation," he said. Vikas Dubey hit the headlines earlier this year when he was found responsible for the massacre of eight policemen in an ambush in the Bikru village on July 3. Dubey was killed a week later



in a purported encounter in Kanpur after he was arrested in Madhya Pradesh. Some of the Facebook pages on Vikas Dubey were found to glorify automatic weapons, eulogize the gangster and even solicit contract killings. These groups had sensitive and objectionable posts. The pages had names like 'Vikas Dubey Kanpur Wala' and 'Vikas Dubey amar rahe'. Some pages like 'Vikas Dubey Fan Page',

'Brahmin Shiromani Pandit Vikas Dubey' and 'Vikas Dubey gangster' have done the disappearing act on social media. The Kanpur police has asked its surveillance team and cyber cell to collect more details and take action against those who have created these pages. Incidentally, this is not the first time that the gangsters have found a strong presence on social media.

Google services restored after massive outage

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: Google-owned services including Gmail and Google Docs Monday has been partially restored after experiencing a major outage in India and several other countries.

According to Downtidetector, Google Meet and Google Play and were also inaccessible for some users. Most other Google services including Google Classroom also got affected by the outage. With Gmail, problems reported by users ranged from accessing website, logging and messages issues. Google has updated that Gmail, Google Drive, Google Calendar and most other services hit by the outage has been restored for some users. "Gmail service has already been restored for some users, and we expect a resolution for all users in the near future," Google said in a statement. A large number of YouTube users found problems in accessing the site and watching videos. However, some users reported on Twitter that they could watch YouTube videos in "Incognito" mode even during the outage.

'India to establish regional climate centre for Himalayas'

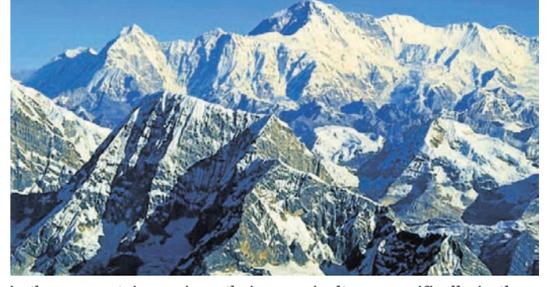
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: India is planning to establish a regional climate centre for the Himalayan mountain region which will not only provide weather-related advices within the country but also to its neighbours, India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General Mrununjay Mohapatra said Monday.

Mohapatra said the work for establishing such a centre has already begun and talks are also on with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). China is also building a similar regional climate centre on its side of the Himalayas, he said. Addressing a webinar on 'Weather and Climate Services over Mountains Region', Mohapatra said India has the eastern ghats, west-

ern ghats along the east and the west coast and the Myanmar hills in the northeast.

Considering the size of Himalayas and its role in India's hydrology, meteorology disaster management, ecosystem and many other activities, the world has correctly recognised it as the 'third pole of the world', he noted. As a part of the ecosystem, as a part of the land, ocean, atmosphere system, the mountains, including the Himalayas and all other hill ranges play a significant role, Mohapatra stressed. Being a data sparse region, the relative observational network is limited as compared to the plain ranges of the country, Mohapatra observed. He said there is a scope to improve further the physical understanding of various processes occurring



in these mountains regions, their modelling and hence the forecasting and warning services. "At the same time, we have to develop the climate applications scenarios, especially with respect to water sector, industries, tourism,

Himalayas," he said. The RCC is likely to come up in Delhi, Mohapatra later told the PTI. The RCC will provide weather-related services specially for the farmers and tribes residing there.

He added that Himansh, the country's remote and high altitude research centre, established in 2016, will also undertake weather research activities in the Himalayas. Mohapatra said a lot of initiatives have been taken by the Ministry of Earth Sciences and IMD for augmentation of observational network with deployment of doppler radars and automated weather stations and with the development of region specific numerical models and application activities with improvement in forecast activities and warning services. He said the

disasters in the mountainous regions play a dominant role in deciding socio-economic activities. Mohapatra said natural calamities in Himalayas like the earthquakes are well-recognised -- the heavy rainfall leading to cloud bursts and also many other phenomena that affect the local agriculture, local industry, local bio-system, local lives.

"We also have various types of disaster phenomenon in other hill ranges like western and eastern ghats. In the recent times, we all have witnessed that because of the monsoon rains, how the landslides, which have generally realised in the Himalayan ranges or the north-east states... How disastrous landslides have been realised in Karnataka and Kerala states," Mohapatra said.



The government is working to transform Guwahati as a gateway to Southeast Asia
SARBANANDA SONOWAL | ASSAM CM

VIRTUAL SUMMIT ON DEC 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina will hold comprehensive discussions on the entire spectrum of bilateral ties at a virtual summit on December 17, the Ministry of External Affairs said Monday



of the day quote

The Chief Minister should first speak about what the Maha Vikas Aghadi government has done for peasants
DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | BJP LEADER



We have been providing free treatment for COVID-19 and the preventive medicine is part of that treatment. We made it clear that it will be provided free of cost. There is no violation of any model code of conduct
PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM



This is not a fight only for the livelihoods and the lives of 62 crore farmers, but for the 120 crore people who eat what the farmers produce. To term the protests political is a big insult to the food-growers of the country. The Modi government should shed arrogance
RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA | CONGRESS LEADER



IIT-Madras turns into COVID hotspot with over 100 cases

The number of IIT-M students who tested positive for coronavirus has increased to 103 on Monday and there is fear that the number might go up

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 14: Just when the spread of coronavirus infection in Tamil Nadu appeared to be receding, the premier technical institute of Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) has turned into a Covid-19 hotspot.

IIT-M students who tested positive for coronavirus has increased to 103 on Monday and there is fear that the number might go up. All those who have tested positive including research scholars and staff have been admitted to the Kings Institute here.

The students allege that the IIT-M's decision to run only one mess could be the most probable reason for the large scale spread of coronavirus. One cannot ensure mask or social distancing as students mostly eat and are in congregation - that too in large numbers.

A total of 774 students are in the campus and most of those who were infected were residents of two hostels - Krishna and Jamuna. "These two hostels were not used as Covid-19 quarantine centres. The infection could be multiple sources," a research scholar said referring anonymity.

According to the scholar, there are women students who have been



infected and admitted in the Kings Institute. On December 6, there was information that about five tested positive for the virus in Krishna Hostel. Five more tested positive on December 7/8. After that, inmates of Krishna hostel were asked to go into quarantine and everybody was asked to undergo tests, the scholar added.

Queried about informing the parents, the scholar said all are mature and have been diagnosed with minimal symptoms. "As of now I haven't seen parents coming to Kings Institute," the scholar said.

The IIT-M has decided to shut down all its departments, centres and asked their staff to work from home and anyone with the symptoms like fever, dry cough, sore throat, diarrhoea, loss of taste

/smell, or any other symptoms have been requested to get in touch with the hospital officials.

The post graduate students, research scholars and others have been asked to be confined to their rooms with arrangements made to deliver food to their rooms. On Sunday, 32 fresh coronavirus infected cases were reported and the Tamil Nadu government has instructed that all the students be tested for the virus infection.

Till Sunday, there were 66 students and five staff members who had tested positive for coronavirus infection. According to officials, the students who had returned to the campus were quarantined for two weeks, but the quarantining capacity is limited. Those who have been infected with coronavirus are progressing well, officials said.

Narrow escape for Himachal Governor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad/Shimla, Dec 14: Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya sustained minor bruises on his knee on Monday after the car he was travelling in veered off the road and hit a tree at Choutuppal near here, official sources said.

The incident occurred on National Highway-65 (Hyderabad-Vijayawada) when the Governor was on his way to Nalgonda district to attend a felicitation and other programmes from Hyderabad, they said. The Governor thanked his well-wishers for their prayers.

Earlier, the car driver lost control apparently after the steering suddenly turned left and the vehicle veered off the road and hit a tree before coming to a halt, police said. "The Governor, who was seated in the front row of the car, suffered minor bruises on his left knee after his leg hit the dashboard," a close aide of Dattatreya, who was also travelling in the car, said, adding he later continued his journey in another vehicle.

A Raj Bhavan spokesperson in Shimla said the others travelling with Dattatreya were also safe. After reaching Nalgonda district, doctors examined the Governor and after being administered first-aid, he attended the programmes as per schedule. Union Home Minister, Governors of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister and Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy were among those who spoke to Dattatreya over phone and enquired about his health.

Now, Centre upgrades Vijayvargiya's security

Vijayvargiya's vehicle was attacked with stones during a visit to Diamond Harbour area in South 24 Parganas district December 10 when he was accompanying the BJP president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Kolkata, Dec 14: BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya's VIP security has been upgraded with the addition of a "bullet resistant" car in his convoy during his West Bengal tour, official sources said Monday.

The Union Home Ministry has issued an order directing the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to include an armoured vehicle in the convoy of the 64-year-old national general secretary of the BJP and ensure he only travels in that SUV, they said.

"The security of Mr Vijayvargiya has been upgraded with the inclusion of a bullet resistant four-wheeler in the convoy. This has been done keeping in mind the security requirements of the protectee in the wake of the recent attack on his vehicle that was part of a convoy of BJP president J P Nadda," an official source said.

The CISF has been providing 'Z' category VIP security cover to Vijayvargiya since February last year. The protection includes a mobile team of about six-seven armed CISF commandos as well as a pilot and an escort vehicle.

Vijayvargiya's vehicle was attacked with stones during a visit to Diamond Harbour area in the state's South 24 Parganas district on December 10 when he was accompanying the BJP president. Vijayvargiya confirmed his security upgrade to reporters after he arrived in Kolkata on Monday afternoon to take part in a programme at Mathurapur in South 24 Parganas.



"As per the order of the Union Home ministry, I have been provided with a bulletproof vehicle," he told the media at the airport. On December 10, several vehicles in Nadda's cavalcade were damaged in the attack. Sources in the BJP said its leaders, including Vijayvargiya and vice president Mukul Roy, sustained injuries in the melee.

Nadda has similar 'Z' level VIP security cover provided by the CRPF. His security protocol also allows him to travel in a bullet-resistant car. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said after this incident, "Bengal has descended into an era of tyranny, anarchy and darkness under the Trinamool rule... The manner in which political violence has been institutionalised and brought to the extreme in West Bengal under TMC rule is sad and worrying".

SHORT TAKES

CoBRA officer dies

Raipur: An officer of the CRPF's elite unit CoBRA, who was injured in an IED blast in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, died in the wee hours of Monday, a senior police official said. Deputy Commandant Vikas Kumar, belonging to CoBRAs 208th battalion, received serious injuries on Sunday when the improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Maoists exploded while it was being defused by security personnel in Kistaram police station limits, he said.

Elephant kills man

Korba: A 65-year-old man was trampled to death by a wild elephant in Chhattisgarh's Korba district in the early hours of Monday, taking the toll from such incidents to four in the last one week, an official said. Budhram Singh Gond was attacked by the tusker at around 1:30 am when he was asleep in his hut in Ghutra Para village under Katghora forest division, he said. "At least two pachyderms entered the village and one of them destroyed Gond's hut and then trampled him to death. The kin of the victim was given immediate aid of Rs 25,000, and remaining 5.75 lakh will be given after more formalities," the official said.

Man arrested

Mumbai: A 31-year-old man who claims to have lost his job in a telecom company in the coronavirus-induced lockdown was arrested in Santa Cruz area of Mumbai for allegedly possessing drugs worth Rs 15 lakh in the illicit market, an official said. The Vakola police station official said Faisal Iqbal Sayyed, a resident of Nagpada in south Mumbai, was held on the basis of a tip-off on Sunday by a team led by assistant inspector Sagar Nikam.

Gold seized

Pune: Police have seized around 6 kg gold worth Rs 3.16 crore from two people, who were coming from Visakhapatnam in a car, in Maharashtra's Solapur district, a police official said Monday. The gold was being transported from Visakhapatnam (in Andhra Pradesh) to Sangli in Maharashtra and it is suspected to be a case of smuggling or evasion of taxes, Superintendent of Police (Solapur rural) Tejaswini Satpute said.

No Khagyad Chaam in Sikkim this year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gangtok, Dec 14: For the first time since the 1800s, Buddhist monasteries of Nynmapa and Khagyud sects in Sikkim will not organise the famed Khagyad Chaam, a traditional mask dance, this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The mask dances, performed by monks, are held every year in various monasteries in the state during the Bhutia festival of Losoong (New Year), and are visited by thousands of devotees as well as tourists from all over the world.



Every year pujas and dances are held over ten days but this time the rituals will be performed for three days, during which Guru Thakmar pujas will be offered for global peace, and protection of the world against the COVID-19 pandemic, said Norbu G Bhutia, the former administrator of Gangtok's Enchey monastery, which is considered to be one of the holiest sites by the Buddhists.

In the wake of the pandemic, the state government has suggested to cut down on the festivities, which are attended by thousands every year, said Sonam Lama, the current in-charge of the Enchey monastery.

"This year, the mask dances, which is an important tradition in Sikkim, will not be held due to the pandemic. There is some disappointment among the devotees but keeping in view the guidelines of social distancing we have taken the decision," he said.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



People buy decorative items for the upcoming Christmas festival, in Ranchi, Monday

PTI PHOTO

UP opposes Kappan's bail plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Uttar Pradesh government Monday opposed in the Supreme Court the bail plea of Kerala-based scribe Siddique Kappan, arrested on his way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after allegedly being gang-raped, saying he has been "associated" with PFI, responsible for disrupting public peace by provoking "the class and caste conflicts".

The state government in its additional affidavit, filed through Satya Prakash Upadhyay, Special Secretary of Department of Home Affairs, has given details of the probe conducted by its Special Task Force (STF) so far in the case and



vehemently opposed the bail plea of Kappan moved by Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ). "Kappan has been associated with the Popular Front of India (PFI) which has been responsible for disrupting the public peace of the State by provoking the class and

caste conflicts within the State with an intention to destroy the public order and to tarnish the image of the government established by law..." the affidavit said.

"Investigation has also revealed that the accused Kappan is not only involved in hatching a design to commit a cognizable offence to disrupt public order an pace but is also a mastermind having links with various unfortunate riots, disturbing public tranquility nationwide," it said. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde fixed the plea of KUWJ questioning Kappan's arrest for hearing in the third week of January after asking it to file the reply to the additional affidavit of the state government.

Syringe makers in a huddle as India plans mass vaccination

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: With India set to begin mass Covid-19 vaccination in a couple of weeks, top syringe makers in the country are eagerly waiting for the licenses so that they can supply the required numbers to avoid the last-minute rush or shortage.

Reliable sources said on Monday that nation's top syringe manufacturers are ready to supply nearly 1.8 billion syringes required for hassle-free vaccination and are currently waiting for the tenders to be open.

According to Rajiv Nath,

Managing Director of Hindustan Syringes & Medical Devices Ltd (HMD), the estimated demand in India would be around 900 million pieces of different kinds of syringes for just one shot of the vaccine, considering 60-70 per cent of the country gets vaccinated.

"The number would amplify to 1.8 billion if the vaccine India chooses needs two shots," Nath said. He also stressed that the time taken to vaccinate all of India is linked to what percentage of population is targeted and how many vaccine dosages actually needed.

For example, to vaccinate 60-70 per cent of India, it may take little less

than one year approximately if there is a single dose and it may be 1.5 years if a double dose is needed. "We are currently producing approximately one lakh pieces of 0.5 ml Kojak AD syringes per hour, 24 hours a day. It's going to be a challenge to vaccinate over 1.5-2 lakh people every hour in eight working hours daily," Nath emphasised.

"By April-June, we will need to build infrastructure to vaccinate over 2-2.5 lakh people per hour i.e 16 to 20 lakh people daily."

The Covax facility working for global equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines ordered 140 million Kojak AD Syringes from HMD to be sup-

plied between August and December 2020. HMD has already shipped over 100 million pieces of Kojak Auto Disable Syringes to Covax stockpile facility as the Covid-19 vaccines are showing promising results across the globe and will soon send the next 40 million syringes within December.

Pavan Mocherla, Managing Director of Becton Dickinson (BD) - India and South Asia, an American multinational medical technology company, said that it is critically important to make sure that the healthcare workers are supplied with the right injection devices that will ultimately be needed to deliver a vaccine to help support India's 1.3

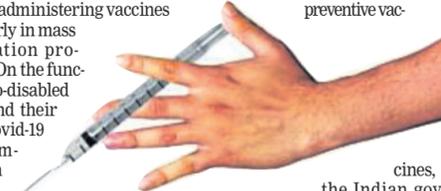
billion population.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF recommended that auto-disabled syringes must be used for administering vaccines - particularly in mass immunisation programmes. On the function of auto-disabled syringes and their role in the Covid-19 vaccine immunisation

programme, Mocherla explained: "Auto-disabled syringes are the ones

that get disabled after a single use." "To protect the population from contracting HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C while getting preventive vac-

cines, the Indian government has been adopting the use of single use auto-disabled syringes in its vaccination programmes from August 2005," he noted.



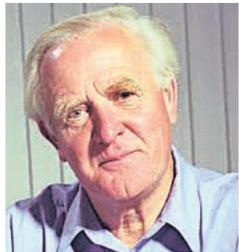
international



No, I worry about the country having an illegitimate president, that's what I worry about. A president that lost and lost badly
DONALD TRUMP | US PRESIDENT

BRITISH SPY THRILLER AUTHOR JOHN LE CARRE DIES AT 89

British writer John Le Carre, whose real name was David Cornwell, best known for his Cold War espionage novels "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" and "The spy who came in from the cold", has died aged 89



of the day quote

Sadly, the next four to six months could be the worst of the pandemic. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation forecast shows over 200,000 additional deaths
BILL GATES | MICROSOFT CO-FOUNDER



I definitely do want to look at the pandemic. The next biggest problem we're going to face is vaccine distribution and prioritisation. So I'm looking at my potential data and analytics approach towards that
GITANJALI RAO | YOUNG INDIAN-AMERICAN SCIENTIST



Singapore has approved Pfizer-BioNTech's novel coronavirus vaccine and expects delivery of the first shots by the end of December
LEE HSIEN LONGB | SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER



US Treasury, Commerce agencies hacked

HACKERS GOT INTO COMPUTERS AT THE US TREASURY DEPARTMENT TOUCHING OFF A GOVERNMENT RESPONSE INVOLVING THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Dec 14: US government agencies were ordered to scour their networks for malware and disconnect potentially compromised servers after authorities learned that the Treasury and Commerce departments were hacked in a months-long global cyber-espionage campaign discovered when a prominent cybersecurity firm learned it had been breached.

In a rare emergency directive issued late Sunday, the Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity arm warned of an "unacceptable risk" to the executive branch from a feared large-scale penetration of US government agencies that could date back to mid-year or earlier.

"This can turn into one of the most impactful espionage campaigns on record," said cybersecurity expert Dmitri Alperovitch.

The hacked cybersecurity company, FireEye, would not say who it suspected - many experts believe the operation is Russian given the careful tradecraft - and noted that foreign governments and major corporations were also compromised.

News of the hacks, first reported by Reuters, came less than a week after FireEye disclosed that nation-state hackers had broken into its net-



The US Treasury Department building

work and stolen the company's own hacking tools.

The apparent conduit for the Treasury and Commerce Department hacks - and the FireEye compromise - is a hugely popular piece of server software called SolarWinds. It is used by hundreds of thousands of organisations globally, including most Fortune 500 companies and multiple US federal agencies, which will now be scrambling to patch up their networks, said Alperovitch, the former chief technical officer of the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike.

The DHS directive - only the fifth since they were created in 2015 - said US agencies should immediately disconnect or power down any machines running the impacted

SolarWinds software. FireEye, without naming any specific targets, said in a blog post that its investigation into the hack of its own network had identified "a global campaign" targeting governments and the private sector that, beginning in the spring, had slipped malware into a SolarWinds software update. Neither the company nor the US government publicly identified Russian state-backed hackers as responsible.

The malware gave the hackers remote access to victims' networks, and Alperovitch said SolarWinds grants "God-mode" access to a network, making everything visible.

"We anticipate this will be a very large event when all the information comes to light," said John

While hacked cybersecurity company, FireEye, would not say who it suspected, many experts believe the operation is Russian given the careful tradecraft

News of the hacks came less than a week after FireEye disclosed that nation-state hackers had broken into its network and stolen the company's own hacking tools

The malware gave the hackers remote access to victims' networks, and Alperovitch said SolarWinds grants "God-mode" access to a network, making everything visible

Hultquist, director of threat analysis at FireEye. "The actor is operating stealthily, but we are certainly still finding targets that they manage to operate in."

On its website, SolarWinds says it has 300,000 customers worldwide, including all five branches of the US military, the Pentagon, the State Department, NASA, the National Security Agency, the Department of Justice and the White House. It says the 10 leading US telecommunications companies and top five US accounting firms are among customers.

FireEye said it had confirmed infections in North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, including in the healthcare and oil and gas industry - and had been informing affected customers.

China tightens up on info after Xinjiang leaks



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Dec 14: The Xinjiang regional government in China's far west is deleting data, destroying documents, tightening controls on information and has held high-level meetings in response to leaks of classified papers on its mass detention camps for Uighurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities, according to four people in contact with government employees there.

Top officials deliberated how to respond to the leaks in meetings at the Chinese Communist Party's regional headquarters in Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital, some of the

Communist Party chief Xu Hairong called reports on the leaks "malicious smears and distortions."

The Xinjiang government did not respond to a fax for comment on the arrests, the tightened restrictions on information and other measures responding to the leaks. The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not have an immediate comment.

Xinjiang's government had already mandated stricter controls on information in October, before the news reports, according to three of the people, all Uighurs outside Xinjiang. They include orders for community-level officials to burn paper

The Xinjiang regional government in China's far west is deleting data, destroying documents, tightening controls on information following the leaks

forms containing sensitive personal details on residents in their area such as their detention status, and for various state offices to throw away computers, tighten management of classified information, and ensure all information related to the camps is now stored on databases disconnected from the internet in special, restricted-access rooms to bar hackers, the Uighurs said.

"They became much more serious about the transfer of information," one said.

Publication of the classified documents prompted the central government in Beijing to put more pressure on Xinjiang officials, several of the Uighurs said. Some university teachers and district-level workers in Urumqi have been ordered to clean out sensitive data on their computers, phones and cloud storage, and to delete work-related social media groups, according to one Uighur with direct knowledge of the situation.

SHORT TAKES

Iraqi forces kill 42 IS militants

Baghdad: The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) killed 42 militants of the Islamic State (IS) terror group during an operation in Nineveh province, the country's military has confirmed. Acting on intelligence reports, the CTS forces backed by Iraqi and international coalition aircraft, stormed into the Ayn al-Jahash area south of the provincial capital of Mosul, the former stronghold of the IS, Xinhua news agency reported citing the military as saying in a statement Sunday. The CTS forces were engaged in fierce clashes with IS militants in the area for two successive days.

25 injured in Rawalpindi blast

Rawalpindi: At least 25 people were injured after a blast hit a market area in Pakistan's Rawalpindi city, police said. According to city police officer Mohammad Ahsan Younas, an improvised explosive device (IED) was planted under a cart, which exploded on Sunday in the busy Ganj Mandi market near a police station, roughly 2 km away from the military headquarters, reports Xinhua news agency. A rescue official told the media that they shifted 22 injured, some in critical condition, to a local hospital.

Blast 'strikes' ship off Jiddah

Dubai: A maritime group says an explosion has struck a ship off the Red Sea port city of Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. The United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations, an organisation under Britain's royal navy, said the blast happened Sunday, without elaborating. It urged ships in the area to exercise caution. Dryad Global, a maritime intelligence firm, also reported the blast. Saudi Arabia's state-run media did not acknowledge the explosion.

2 Indians abducted in Nigeria

Lagos: Police in southwest Nigeria Sunday warned foreign nationals to be vigilant days after gunmen kidnapped two Indian workers in the region. Gunmen seized the two men Wednesday as they drove out of a pharmaceutical firm in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state. The force was making a "concerted effort" to find and rescue them, but did not say if the kidnappers had made contact with the families.

SHARIF ADDRESSES PDM LAHORE RALLY FROM LONDON

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lahore, Dec 14: Former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif addressed the PDM opposition alliance's final power show in Lahore, during which he accused his successor Imran Khan for the country's "prevailing woes", the media reported Monday.

Despite the Pakistan government's ban on holding public rallies in the wake of the unabated Covid-19 pandemic, the Pakistan Democratic Movement held the power show, dubbed as 'first phase' on Sunday at the city's Minar-i-Pakistan.

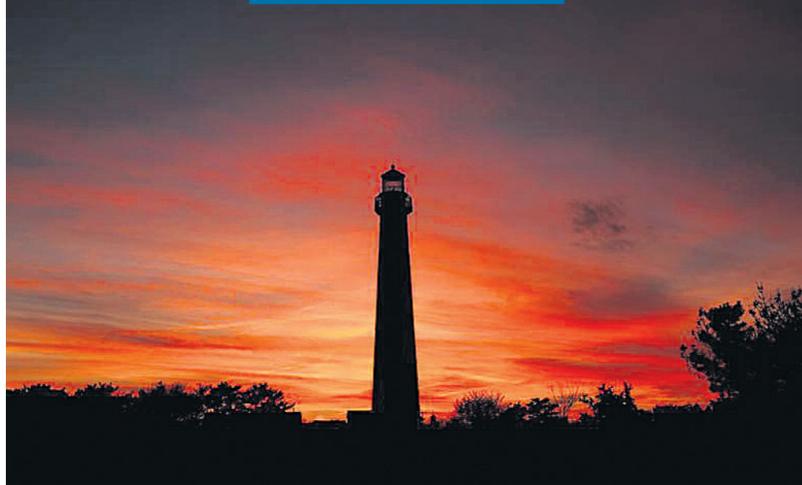


Sharif addressed the rally via video-link from London, where he has been residing since last year for medical treatment.

In his speech, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo said that Khan was not only responsible for the country's situation but also those who brought him into power.

"They pushed the country into unprecedented inflation and unemployment," the ousted premier said, adding that Khan's supporters were minting money out of wheat and sugar crisis. "He further said that if the incumbent 'fake regime' continues to be in former, it will further 'jeopardise the country's security'."

RIOT OF COLOURS



The sun sets behind the Cape May Lighthouse in Cape May, New Jersey

REUTERS PHOTO

Barnier still sees hope to clinch EU-UK deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brussels, Dec 14: European Union chief negotiator Michel Barnier said Monday he still has the firm belief that a Brexit trade agreement is possible, and whittled the outstanding disputes to be settled ahead of the New Year to just two.

Barnier said that the nine-month negotiations had come down to finding settlements on fair-competition rules and fishing rights, no longer mentioning the issue of legal mechanisms for resolving future disputes that also long dogged the negotiations.

"Two conditions are not met yet," he said as he entered a meeting to brief the 27 EU nations on

progress in the talks. He is expected to continue negotiations with his UK counterpart David Frost later Monday. "This deal, it is still possible," he added.

Both sides are teetering on the

European Union chief negotiator Michel Barnier said Monday that two conditions are not yet met

brink of a no-deal Brexit departure, but have committed to a final push ahead of January 1, when a transitional period following Britain's January 31 departure from the bloc is to end.

On Sunday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ditched a self-imposed

deadline and promised to "go the extra mile" to clinch a post-Brexit trade agreement that would avert New Year's chaos and costs for cross-border commerce.

Barnier is willing to accept British

trade with no tariffs or quotas, but only if they respect the rules and regulations that have made the EU's single market of almost 500 million consumers so successful. "Free and fair competition, fair and free, equitable and open, the two go together," Barnier said.

Johnson, however, says he does not want British business to be

hemmed in by EU restrictions, especially if those restrictions would have to be progressively adapted to mainland standards in the future.

On fisheries, Barnier demanded "an agreement that guarantees a reciprocal, I insist, reciprocal access to markets and waters." It highlighted that just as EU fishermen crave to continue working in British waters, the UK Seafood industry is extremely dependent on exports into the 27-nation bloc.

Johnson has made fisheries and UK control over its waters a key demand in the long saga of leaving the EU. It has been four-and-a-half years since Britons voted narrowly to leave the EU.

3 dead, 5 missing after ships collide

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Dec 14: Rescuers in China were searching Monday for five sailors missing after a collision between two ships at the mouth of the Yangtze River that left at least three dead.

State broadcaster CCTV showed dramatic footage of crews pulling 11 of the 16 sailors who had been on board the container vessel Xinqisheng 69 from the water; three of whom showed no signs of life. The Yangtze is China's most heavily trafficked river and the point at which it meets the East China Sea, just north of the commercial hub of Shanghai.

Families marry off daughters to ease finances amid Covid-19

Many countries had made progress against traditional and transactional marriages of girls in recent decades, but Covid-19's economic havoc has caused significant backsliding

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Koidu (Sierra Leone), Dec 14: The man first caught a glimpse of Marie Kamara as she ran with her friends past his house near the village primary school. Soon after, he proposed to the fifth-grader.

"I'm going to school now. I don't want to get married and stay in the house," she told him.

But the pressures of a pandemic

on this remote corner of Sierra Leone were greater than the wishes of a schoolgirl. Nearby mining operations had slowed with the global economy. Business fell off at her stepfather's tailoring shop. The family needed money.

Her suitor was a poor miner in his mid-20s, but his parents could provide rice for Marie's four sisters and access to a watering hole. They could pay cash. Before long, Marie was seated on a floor mat in a new dress as his family presented hers with 500,000 leones (\$50) inside a calabash bowl along with the traditional kola nut. "The day they paid for me was on a Friday and then I went to his house to stay," she says flatly, adding that at least now she will eat twice a day.

Many countries had made progress against traditional and transactional marriages of girls in recent decades, but Covid-19's economic havoc has



caused significant backsliding: The United Nations estimates that hardships resulting from Covid-19 will drive 13 million more girls to marry

before the age of 18.

Though most such marriages take place in secret, Save the Children estimates that this year

alone, nearly half a million more girls under 18 are at risk of being married off worldwide, most in Africa and Asia.

One aid organization said staffers in a remote corner of Sierra Leone overheard a relative offering up a girl as young as 8 for marriage earlier this year. When chastised, the grandmother later denied doing so. In most cases, needy parents receive a dowry for their daughter, such as a bit of land or livestock that can provide income, or cash and a promise to take over financial responsibility for the young bride. The girl, in turn, takes on the household chores of her husband's family and often farm work.

As the coronavirus spread quickly around the world, so too did financial hardship. India's harsh lockdown to contain the virus in late March caused millions of impoverished migrants to lose their jobs.

With schools closed and pressure on household finances mounting, marrying off young girls has become a more viable option for reducing expenses. The Childline India counted 5,214 marriages in just four months of lockdown between March and June 2020 across India. This is a vast undercount, the organisation says, as the majority of cases are not reported.

Intervention is only sometimes effective at preventing the marriages, even where they are illegal. Child protection authorities in Bangladesh said they received an 8:30 p.m. call back in June warning that a child marriage was to take place within the hour. As soon as the officials arrived the groom and his family ran away. The family said they were desperate because the father was out of work due to the Covid-19 crisis, but promised not to go ahead with the wedding.



Coal PSUs will adopt alternate transport methods like mechanised conveyor systems, computerised loading onto railway rakes etc, thereby replacing road transport in large mines
PRALHAD JOSHI | COAL AND MINES MINISTER

'FOCUSED ON INVESTING IN INDIA FOR LONG RUN'

Facebook is committed to investing in India for the long term and continues to build tools for businesses to help them build and grow their online presence, said an official. CRO David Fischer said they have made investments and undertaken some unique bets that it hasn't been done anywhere



of the day quote

We are proud to be the first in India to achieve this feat (of delivering a general cargo vessel to a Dutch client) since the COVID-19 pandemic. Our team worked relentlessly towards building the vessel before the set timeline and ensured that its delivery is not affected

ARJUN CHOWGULE | EXEC DIR, CHOWGULE & COMPANY

Limited reopening of borders has put the spotlight firmly on destination India and we are delighted to partner with the WelcomHeritage Hotels to catalyse domestic tourism

RAJEEV KALE, PRESIDENT & COUNTRY HEAD, (HOLIDAYS), MICE, VISA THOMAS COOK (INDIA)

In India, Flipkart and PhonePe had strong results for the quarter. The number of monthly active customers for these platforms is at an all-time high

C DOUGLAS MCMILLON | PRESIDENT & CEO, WALMART

NBFCs expect higher credit loss on Covid woes: Study

THE STUDY BY LEADING CONSULTANCY EY IS BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE STANDALONE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF 42 NBFCs, INCLUDING 14 HFCs, FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) are expecting higher credit loss as well as an increase in provision coverage rates, mainly due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a study.

The study by leading consultancy EY is based on an analysis of the standalone financial statements of 42 NBFCs, including 14 Housing Finance Companies (HFCs), for the year ended March 31, 2020.

The companies have reported an "increase in Expected Credit Loss (ECL) allowance by 33% and an



overall increase in provision coverage rate by 26% as at 31 March 2020 compared to the year ended 31 March 2019". Further, COVID-19 impact accounted for 19% of the ECL allowance as on March 31, 2020.

As per the study titled 'Expected credit loss analysis for non-banking financial companies' released Monday, there has been an overall increase in gross loans of NBFCs by 7.63% and HFCs by 2.44%. "There was an increase in ECL allowance on stage 1 and stage 2 by 56% as against 25% increase in ECL allowance on stage 3 assets.

"ECL expense has increased by 219% for the year ended 31 March 2020

as compared to year ended 31 March 2019. Also, the companies reported a COVID-19 impact of 32% of the ECL expense for the year ended 31 March 2020. The cost of risk ratio has increased by 202%," EY said.

Stage 1 refers to loans with no significant increase in credit risk while Stage 2 indicates loans with significant rise in credit risk.

Stage 3 refers to credit impaired loans. NBFCs analyse co-relation of a wide range of factors with their default patterns and shortlist the factors relevant to their respective businesses to take into account the impact of forward-looking information.

Burger King India makes remarkable market debut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: In a remarkable market debut, shares of Burger King India Monday zoomed nearly 131% against its issue price of ₹60. The stock opened at ₹115.35, a huge premium of 92.25% against the issue price on the BSE. It later closed at ₹138.40, a gain of 130.66%. On the NSE, it jumped 125% to close at ₹135 after opening at ₹112.50, up 87.5%.

The company's market valuation was at ₹5,282.10 crore on the BSE at the close of trade. On traded volume terms, 191.55 lakh shares were traded at the BSE and over 18.67 crore units on the NSE during the day.

Burger King India's share sale was subscribed a massive 156.65 times earlier this month.

The price range for the ₹810-crore initial public offering (IPO) was fixed at ₹59-60 per share.

The quick-service restaurant chain currently operates 268 stores in India and out of them, eight are franchises, mainly located at airports, while the rest is owned by the company.

Inflationary woes: WPI rises to 1.55% in Nov



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: The wholesale price-based inflation rose to a 9-month high of 1.55% in November on costlier manufactured items, even as food prices cooled. The WPI inflation was 1.48% in October 2020 and 0.58% in November last year. This is the highest level of wholesale price index-based (WPI) inflation since February, when it was 2.26%.

While food articles saw softening in inflation in November, manufactured items witnessed hardening of prices. Food inflation in November stood at 3.94%, against 6.37% in the previous month.

The rate of price rise in vegetables and potatoes remained high at 12.24% and 115.12% during the month.

Inflation in non-food articles was higher at 8.43% in November,

broad-based month-on-month increase of 0.8%, the core-WPI inflation rose to a 22-month high of 2.6% in November 2020.

"In our view, a rise in inflation for core items and commodities, including crude oil and mineral oils, would be partly offset by a base-effect led decline in the food inflation in December 2020, resulting in a fairly stable print for the ongoing month," Nayar said.

Elior India CEO & MD Sanjay Kumar said the increasing trend in the wholesale price inflation is essentially a mixed bag. Hopefully the price rise is on the back of increased demand and not because of an increase in input cost for manufacturing.

"If it is driven purely by demand, then it is a welcome sign as it signals an improvement in the economy, however one would have to watch with caution whether the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decides to tighten the monetary policy in view of the rising inflation," Kumar added.

The RBI in its monetary policy earlier this month had kept interest rates on hold to support growth and said that inflation will remain elevated, barring transient relief in the winter months.

It had projected retail inflation, based on consumer price index, at 6.8% and 5.8% in December and March quarter respectively. Retail inflation rose sharply to 7.3% in September and further to 7.6% in October.

In our view, a rise in inflation for core items and commodities would be partly offset by a base-effect led decline in the food inflation in December 2020, resulting in a fairly stable print for the ongoing month

ADITI NAYAR | PRINCIPAL ECONOMIST, ICRA



while in fuel and power basket it was (-) 9.87%.

ICRA Principal Economist Aditi Nayar said with a sharp and fairly

Fuel demand in country drops 3.6% in November

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: India's fuel demand fell 3.6% year-on-year in November, reversing the return to normal consumption levels attained in the previous month.

Total demand for petroleum products in November fell to 17.83 million tonnes from 18.51 million tonnes a year back, according to provisional data published by the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell.

BUDGET 2021: CII recommends three-pronged strategy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: Industry body CII has recommended a three-pronged strategy for Budget 2021 centring around the key themes of growth, fiscal consolidation and strengthening of the financial sector that would help overcome the impact of Covid-19 on the economy.

The recommendations were presented to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a meeting with industry leaders held Monday.

Presenting the suggestions, Uday Kotak, President CII, said, "This year's Budget comes at a time when the Indian economy is recovering from the unprecedented shock caused by Covid-19. The govern-

ment has an unenviable task of ensuring a fine balance between supporting economic recovery and growth on one hand and ensuring macro-economic stability on the other. CII's suggestions take this aspect into cognisance."

Elaborating on the key themes of the CII recommendations, Kotak said, "CII has suggested that the Budget proposals should focus on growth, and alongside look at fiscal management from a 3-year perspective. Aggressive disinvestment and monetisation of assets can augment government revenues at a time when tax revenues have fallen sharply."

Kotak further added, "Government expenditure should



be prioritised in three areas - infrastructure, healthcare and sustainability. The Budget proposals should also address two critical areas of boosting private investments and providing support for employment generation".

Emphasising on the urgent need for financial sector reforms, Kotak said "achieving the vision of India

FM holds pre-budget talks with industrialists

New Delhi: With the union budget-making process getting underway, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman held her first pre-budget consultation with top industrialists Monday. The meeting assumed importance as it would bring industry and government together to identify critical areas of reform that would pave the way for reinvigorating growth in the economy hit hard by the pandemic this year. The ideas from the industry would go as valuable inputs for government budgetary exercise for FY22. Uday Kotak from Kotak Mahindra Bank, Biocon's Kiran Majumdar Shaw attended the meeting organised through VC.

BIZ BUZZ

Ola to invest \$326mn in e-scooter plant

New Delhi: Ride-hailing firm Ola, backed by Japan's SoftBank Group, said Monday it planned to invest ₹24 billion (\$326 million) to set up a factory in Tamil Nadu to produce electric scooters. The plant will have an initial annual capacity to produce two million scooters and will create nearly 10,000 jobs, Ola said in a statement, as it gears up to launch electric scooters in the coming months. The Indian government has been pushing automakers to move to cleaner fuel technology, especially electric, in an effort to reduce its oil import bill and curb pollution in major cities. While carmakers have been slow to launch electric vehicles (EVs), mainly due to the high cost of batteries and weak demand from buyers, sales of electric scooters and rickshaws have picked up pace leading India's electrification drive.

Huawei forays into cloud content network service

New Delhi: Chinese telecom gear maker Huawei Monday announced its entry into cloud-based content delivery network (CDN) in India to help the businesses deliver the best user web-experience. The company claims to have been providing the service in 130 countries. "Given Huawei's 30 years of experience in providing reliable, secure, and sustainable ICT services to its customers, we have launched the Cloud CDN services to empower Indian businesses to deliver the best user web-experience," Huawei president of cloud and AI business group Steve Kim said in a statement.

TOP GAINERS 14 DEC		
46,253.46 BSE SENSEX		
POINTS	NAME	%
101.55	ONGC	4.91%
1249.35	L&T	4.61%
104.60	NTPC	2.15%
525.85	ICICI Bank	2.07%
576.05	Sun Pharma	1.42%
873.50	HCL Tech	1.39%
1461.00	Titan	1.27%
2549.40	Asian Paints	1.16%
5070.00	UltraTech Cem	1.13%
1940.15	Kotak Mahi	1.02%

Emphasising on the urgent need for financial sector reforms, Uday Kotak said that achieving the vision of a \$5tn economy is contingent on having a strong financial sector

ate, government-owned, professionally-managed Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) to finance key sectors of the economy, on the lines of KfW Germany, Brazil Development Bank (BNDES), and

Korea Development Bank. This could be achieved by infusing equity in NABARD for financing agriculture and rural sector, SIDBI for financing MSMEs and IIFCL for financing infrastructure.

Other suggestions given by CII include aggressive disinvestment of both loss-making and a few profit-making PSUs, especially given the fact that the capital markets are performing well and also explore sale or leasing of government's surplus land.

The industry body has also recommended that government should look at deficit management from a 3-year perspective given that the complete economic recovery is expected only in FY 2022.

'KOHLI CAN BE RUTHLESS'

We've plenty of moves to handle Australian chin music, says Gill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Dec 14: Australia limited-overs captain Aaron Finch wants the home team players to strike a 'fine balance' when they confront Virat Kohli in the opening Test as he believes, if provoked too much, the India skipper can be 'ruthless' against his opponents.

India and Australia have always shared an intense rivalry on the field, filled with verbal volleys, banter and controversies over the years.

The last time the two teams faced off in 2018-19, the Test series saw some heated exchanges between the two captains - Kohli and Tim Paine.

"I think there will be times when things boil over and when you have got strong characters on either team that's going to come to a head at some point," Finch was quoted as saying by 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

"(But) there is a fine balance there, isn't there? You don't want him (Kohli) to get up and about in the contest. When he does, he can be ruthless on an opposition."

The first Test of the four-game series, a day-night contest, begins Thursday in Adelaide and it gains prominence since Kohli will be returning home after the match for the birth of his first child.

Finch, who was part of the last home Test series between the two teams, said the Indian skipper looks much calmer the way he goes about his job now.

"I think the change is in the way he goes about it now. I think as a person he is probably a bit more relaxed out on the field and understands the tempo of the game."

Finch, who had played under Kohli in Royal Challengers Bangalore, said he was 'surprised' to see the Indian's confidence in this year's IPL in the UAE.

FINCH SUGGESTS OZ TO STRIKE FINE BALANCE WHILE CONFRONTING INDIA SKIPPER IN TESTS



"What really surprised me was how, he obviously does a lot of planning and preparation himself, and into the opposition, but he never fo-

cused more on the opposition than his own team," he said.

"At Bangalore, he was always confident in the XI players that

Henriques included

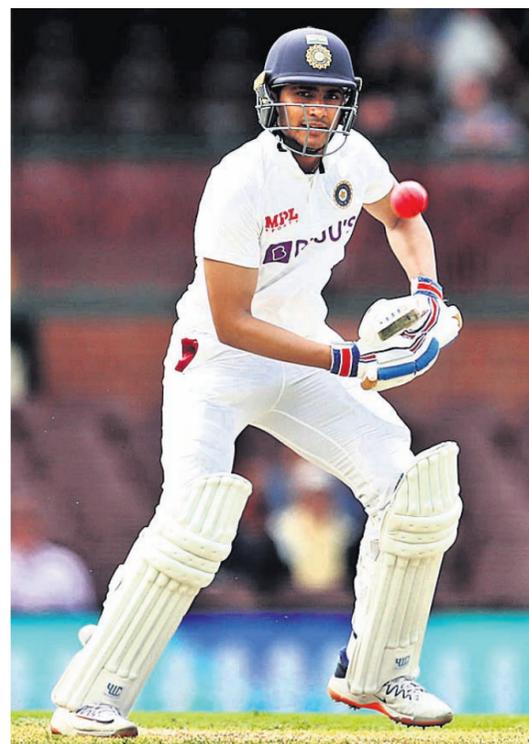
Sydney: All-rounder Moises Henriques was Monday added to Australia's injury-hit squad for the opening Test against India while pacer Sean Abbott was ruled out of the match due to a calf strain. Henriques, who had missed the three-day second practice game due to a low-grade hamstring strain, cleared the fitness Test Monday to return to the Test squad after a gap of four years. The opening game, a day-nighter, begins December 17 in Adelaide. Abbott became the latest Australian player to join the injury list after being picked up the strain during the second warm-up game. He is, however, expected to be available for the second Test in Melbourne, which begins December 26. Harris was included in the squad for the opening Test following a spate of injuries, including David Warner and opener Will Pucovski being ruled out of the first game due to a groin injury.

were picked and knew that if you played well, you had every chance of winning.

"I was really surprised by how confident he was in everyone, he had a lot of time for everyone. He was great around the group, a lot more relaxed. I had never played with him, I had only played against him."

As someone who had many on-field duels with Kohli, Finch said it was good to learn about his relaxed side. "We have had some great series where he has been on another level as a player but he has been right up and about in terms of being very vocal out in the middle. It was great to see that (relaxed) side of him."

Finch, who led Australia to a 2-1 win over India in the ODI series before suffering a 1-2 loss in the T20Is, is not part of the current Test squad.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Dec 14: Young Indian batsman Shubman Gill feels it can be 'quite intimidating' to play cricket in Australia but asserted that his team will not back down when faced with either sledging or short-pitched deliveries during the four-Test series starting in Adelaide December 17.

In contention for the opener's slot, Gill showed great technique and composure during his 43 and 65 in

the two innings against Australia 'A' in the pink-ball warm-up that concluded here Sunday.

The 21-year-old, who played for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL, is eyeing a Test debut and said he is looking forward to the opportunity of playing Australia in Australia.

"It's quite intimidating to play Australia in Australia, but I am really looking forward to it," Gill told KKR's official website. "As a batsman, there is no bigger opportunity

than to play against Australia at their home as your confidence gets a major boost if you manage to score runs here."

India and Australia have always shared an intense rivalry on the field, filled with verbal volleys, banter and controversies over the years.

The last time the two teams faced off in 2018-19, the Test series saw some heated exchanges between the two captains - Kohli and Tim Paine.

Gill said his team wouldn't be intimidated by sledging. "There was a time when (Indian) players had a reputation of not being too aggressive, and people would take that for granted when sledging. Things have changed now," he said.

"Every character is different, some people like to keep quiet and not react while for others, engaging in a verbal-battle eggs them on to do better. For me, I'm neither the kind to always keep quiet, nor the type to keep going at the opposition."

Ahead of the much-anticipated series, many players, including India's Ravindra Jadeja, the Aussie duo of Will Pucovski and Cameron Green, have suffered concussions.

In fact, Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood said that bouncers will be an integral part of the home team's strategy during the series.

"If the plan is to make us dance to their chin music, be rest assured we've got plenty of great moves in store," Gill said.

India have played just one pink-ball Test so far in which they beat Bangladesh by an innings and 46 runs in Kolkata last year.

"We practiced quite a bit with the pink ball in the lead up to the Test match against Bangladesh at Eden Gardens last year (in November). But I haven't played any competitive first-class match under lights," Gill said.

Struggling Barca to lock horns with PSG

Chelsea draw Atletico face-off in Champions League round of 16; easy draws for Bayern, Juventus, Man City

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nyon (Switzerland), Dec 14: Barcelona will face Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League round of 16 in a rematch of their classic encounter at the same stage four seasons ago. Barcelona will host the first leg this time because it was unseeded in Monday's draw after failing to win their group.

In 2017, PSG wasted a 40 first-leg lead by losing 1-6 at Camp Nou in the second leg when Barcelona scored three goals from the 88th minute on.

However, Neymar has since left Lionel Messi's side in Spain and switched to PSG, which also did not have Kylian Mbappe back then.

Another classy contest will take place when Atletico Madrid will face Chelsea. Defending champion Bayern Munich was paired with a Lazio team returning to the knockout stage after a two-decade gap.

Atalanta will host 13-time champion Real Madrid, and Liverpool is away first against Leipzig. Cristiano Ronaldo will return to his native Portugal with Juventus for the first



leg against Porto.

Here are the other pairings: Borussia Monchengladbach vs Manchester City and Sevilla vs Borussia Dortmund.

Teams could not be drawn against an opponent from their own country or one they already played in this season's competition.

Group winners were seeded in the draw and play the second leg at home. The round of 16 is spread over four midweeks. First-leg games are scheduled February 16-17 or 23-24; return games March 9-10 or 16-17. The final is scheduled May 29 at the Olympic Stadium in Istanbul.

2022 WT20 Qualification: 86 teams vie for 15 spots

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 14: The ICC Monday announced that as many as 86 teams will fight for the 15 spots in the 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia, the qualifying phase comprising 225 matches across 13 months.

The 15 spots will be decided through a four-step qualifying process which starts in April next year. Eleven regional qualification tournaments across five regions have been rescheduled to 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will now feed into the 2022 Australia event.

For the first time ever Hungary,

Romania and Serbia will be competing for men's T20 World Cup qualification and Finland will play host to an ICC event for the very first time.

It will also be the first time that Japan will host a men's T20 World Cup Qualifier, on the back of the U19 World Cup Qualifier they will host two weeks before. At regional level there will be 67 associate members taking part.

Due to the depth of strength within Africa and Europe, both regions have sub regional qualifiers feeding into a final qualifier for the region.

Africa, Americas, EAP (East

Asia and Pacific) and Europe will have one top tier regional qualifier and Asia will have A and B to determine which teams will progress into the two eight-team global qualifiers.

The 16 available spots in the global qualifiers will be filled by one team each from the Africa and EAP Qualifier respectively. They will be joined by two teams each from the Americas and Europe qualifiers.

Finally, Asia which has a Qualifier A and B will see one team from each event make up the eight spots from regional qualification. The remaining eight spots will

go to the four bottom teams from the T20 World Cup 2021 and together with Nepal, Singapore, UAE and Zimbabwe which have gained direct entry based on the ICC men's T20I team rankings.

Four teams from the two global qualifiers will join hosts Australia and the 11 automatic qualifiers from the ICC men's T20 World Cup 2021 to make up the 16-team T20 World Cup 2022.

In the lead up to the Australia event there will be 225 men's T20Is scheduled to be played across 13 months, giving every team an opportunity to climb the rankings chart.

"The pathway sees the likes of Hungary Romania and Serbia competing for the first time in an ICC event of this format, highlighting the increased competitiveness within associate members," said ICC head of events Chris Tetley.

The 16 teams that had originally qualified for the 2020 Australia event will now play in the T20 World Cup 2021 in India.

The participating teams for that event are Australia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, England, India, Ireland, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Scotland, South Africa, Sri Lanka and West Indies.

CRICKET TOURNEY

The members of Rourkela and Bhadrak cricket team pose with dignitaries marking the inauguration of the OCA Inter-District Senior Men's T20 League at the Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, Monday. Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) secretary Sanjay Behera inaugurated the event here. The tournament is played at nine different venues in Cuttack (Barabati Stadium, Bidanasi Ground, DRIEMS Ground, Nimpur Ground and Ravenshaw Ground) and Bhubaneswar (KIIT Ground, Centurion Ground, Mulapadia and Vikash Ground).



10-man Arsenal lose to Burnley with own-goal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 14: Arsenal's season went from poor to dreadful as captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored an own-goal and the Gunners were reduced to 10 men in a 0-1 loss to Burnley in the Premier League.

The Gunners have now lost four consecutive home league games.

Aubameyang had been looking to end his goal drought, but at the other end of the field at Emirates Stadium Sunday But the striker headed the ball into his own net while defending a Burnley corner in the 73rd minute.

Boos rang out from the home crowd with 2,000 fans allowed under coronavirus restrictions. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta is under increasing pressure with his team 15th in the division with 13 points from 12 games — four points more than Burnley which climbed out of the relegation zone.

Arsenal were already down a man after Granit Xhaka was sent off for violent conduct in the 58th after a VAR check and a review by the referee on the sidelines. Xhaka had grabbed Ashley Westwood by the throat and pushed him to the ground after a challenge on another player.

The Gunners were lucky not to be down to nine men after VAR deemed that Mohamed Elneny wasn't guilty of violent conduct just before the corner was taken that led to the goal.

Replays showed Elneny appearing to push defender James Tarkowski in the face. He ended up with a yellow card instead.

10-man Jamshedpur hold Mumbai City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Goa, Dec 14: A flurry of missed chances saw table-toppers Mumbai City FC settle for only a 1-1 draw against Jamshedpur FC in the ISL at the GMC Stadium, here Monday.

Owen Coyle's men took the lead through Nerijus Valskis (ninth minute) before Mumbai hit back through Bartholomew Ogbeche (15th). A red card for Aitor Monroy around the half-hour mark saw Jamshedpur reduced to 10-man but some dogged defending and a number of missed chances for Mumbai, saw the former get away with a draw.

Mumbai dominated the early exchanges as Monroy had to dive to block Ogbeche's shot as early as the first minute. But it was Jamshedpur who drew first blood. Just nine minutes had passed when Jackichand Singh found Valskis in the penalty box. The Lithuanian's first-time shot was unerring. Barely three minutes later, Monroy could only find the side netting from a free-kick.

Monroy was in the thick of things a couple of minutes later, hacking



Mumbai City players celebrate the equaliser against Jamshedpur, Monday

Cy Goddard down and getting himself in the referee's book. Then, Mumbai found their equaliser. Adam Le Fondre made a run down the right before squaring the ball to Bipin Singh. The latter found Ogbeche and the Nigerian unleashed a powerful drive past Jamshedpur keeper TP Rehenesh. Jamshedpur responded to the

goal with a flurry of attacks but in the 28th minute, the match turned firmly in Mumbai's favour. Monroy brought Ogbeche down right in front of the referee and got his second yellow.

Mumbai unleashed wave after wave of attacks, but to no avail. Mourtada Fall blazed one over in the 38th minute while, a couple of min-

utes later, Ogbeche headed wide from close range. The Jamshedpur defence held firm as both teams went into the break on level terms.

The second half picked up where the first had left off with Sergio Lobera's men giving everything in their bid to find a winner. They missed a golden opportunity in the 61st minute when a blocked Ogbeche shot trickled down to Rowlin Borges. The midfielder had the goal gaping in front but somehow managed to hoof it over the bar.

Jamshedpur were doing a lot more than just defending. Valskis thought he had given them an unlikely lead in the 79th minute, only for the referee to raise his flag. At the other end, Rehenesh produced a terrific double-save in the 83rd minute to keep his side in the game, first blocking a stinging volley from Le Fondre and then pushing away the rebound to prevent the onrushing Ogbeche from bundling it in.

Ogbeche then missed a clear-cut chance to put his team ahead in injury time, failing to divert a free header from close range into goal.

Messi secures narrow victory for Barcelona

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, Dec 14: Facing another setback in an already difficult season, Lionel Messi found his finishing touch to save Barcelona from falling further behind in the Spanish league.

Messi's late goal secured a hard-fought 1-0 home victory over Levante Sunday to end a two-game losing skid for Barcelona.

Messi fired a left-footed shot off the far post and into the net to get Barcelona's breakthrough in the 76th minute after Levante had withstood the hosts with tenacious defending. The victory for Barcelona came after last round's upset loss to Cadiz and a 0-3 home defeat to Juventus in the Champions League.

Barcelona still have a long way to go to get back in the title race, but it was able to claw back some ground after front-runners Real Sociedad and Atletico Madrid both dropped points this weekend.



Barcelona are in eighth place at nine points behind the leaders. Barcelona and Atletico have played two fewer games than Sociedad.

Levante goalkeeper Aitor Fernandez kept Levante in the match with multiple stops. Messi finally beat Fernandez with his 10th shot of the match. He was set up by Frenkie de Jong after the Netherlands midfielder and Braithwaite stole possession from Mickael Malsa inside Levante's half. Fernandez got his hands to Messi's powerful strike, but not enough to keep it out.