



SCARY NUSHRRATT

Actor Nushratt says she has found a technique to help her sleep after catching up on horror movies

LEISURE P2



AILING MEDICAL SERVICES

CAG highlights Karna gov't's successive failure in running the emergency medical services

TWO STATES P7



HARD TIMES

The US has set a new grim record of more than 3,000 COVID-19 related deaths in a single day

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



... and there is an anti-national cess too if you want to complain about the rising prices

SHORT TAKES

Nadda's convoy attacked in Bengal

Diamond Harbour (WB): Stones rained in a torrent, shattering windscreens of vehicles Thursday as the convoy of BJP chief JP Nadda came under attack by alleged TMC supporters in West Bengal, leaving several people injured, party leaders and eyewitnesses said. An angry Nadda called the attack "unprecedented" and alleged the state has slipped into "complete lawlessness and goonda raj". West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee insinuated the attack was staged. **P8**

Crime Branch takes Akash on remand

Bhubaneswar: The SDJM court here Thursday allowed the Crime Branch to take Akash Pathak, son of suspended IFS officer Abhaykant, on five-day remand from Friday for interrogation in connection with his involvement in a fake job scam. Pathak allegedly duped several job aspirants by impersonating Tata Motors managing director. Earlier, the Crime Branch sleuths arrested former BJD leader and Gopalpur MLA, Pradeep Panigrahi on charges of collecting money on behalf of Akash from the duped job aspirants. Panigrahi is currently lodged in Jharpada jail after the court sent him on 14-days judicial custody.

Mediation in Varsha, Anubhav divorce case

New Delhi: The Supreme Court mediation centre Thursday held the sixth round of mediation between Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Anubhav Mohanty and his wife Varsha Priyadarshini in order to settle their marital discord. According to advocate Ashwini Dubey, counsel of Anubhav Mohanty, the mediation was conducted by advocate Pooja Anand, a mediator in Supreme Court and High Court for 12 years. The next round will be held December 18. **P3**

CM to take final call on reopening schools

DESPITE ONLINE CLASSES, MANY STUDENTS ARE UNABLE TO GET ITS BENEFITS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Uncertainty prevails over the reopening of educational institutions in the state with different departments stating different dates for the resumption of physical classes. The Higher Education department has said that they are expecting the educational institutions to reopen in January and this was also echoed by the School and Mass Education department. A final decision in this regard, however, would be taken by the Odisha government after reviewing all the related aspects, including the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic in the state, said Commissioner-cum Secretary of Odisha Higher Education department Saswat Mishra, Thursday.

The School and Mass Education department had hinted earlier that it would reopen in-person learning for students from Class X to XII early next year. The Higher Education department via a notification issued December 7 stated that UG and PG examinations will be held after resumption of classroom teaching and completion of syllabus.

In a letter to vice-chancellors of the state-run universities and principles of all government and non-government colleges, Saswat Mishra had said that the academic session has been badly affected due to prevailing Covid-19 pandemic-related dislocations.

Despite the online classes, most of the students are unable to get its benefits due to various reasons, the notification read.

"Therefore, at present it is not desirable to hold examinations only on the basis



POST-PANDEMIC CLASSES

Both Odisha Higher Education department and School and Mass Education department confirmed that all educational institutions will reopen in January, but a final decision will be taken by the Chief Minister

Board examinations will only be held after 100 days of classroom teaching and each student will get a 'question bank' to prepare for the examinations

of online teaching. Examinations should be conducted only after resumption of physical classes and completion of syllabus by such classes," it added.

However, the Higher Education department had allowed reopening of laboratories at higher educational institutions across the state. "The higher educational institutions are permitted to open laboratories only for research scholars, MPhil and PG students in science and technology streams requiring laboratory/experimental works," the department had said in a letter

Meanwhile, School and Mass Education department Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Thursday said there is a possibility of reopening the schools from January 2021.

Addressing the press meet Dash said, "A decision on reopening schools in January has been arrived at and priority would be given to physical classes for students of Classes X, XI and XII so as to help the students appearing for the board examinations next year."

Dash further said, "Around six lakh students will appear in the examinations after 100 days of classroom teaching. Each student will get a 'question bank' to prepare for the examinations."

"That's why we are gearing up for reopening of schools from January next year," added Dash.

Meanwhile, expressing displeasure on statements issued by different departments over the reopening of schools and colleges in the state, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said the government will take appropriate decision after considering all aspects.

Farmers' unions threaten to intensify stir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Virtually ruling out repealing of new farm laws, the government Thursday asked farmer groups to consider its proposals for amending the Acts to address their concerns and said it is open to discussing its offer further whenever the unions want, but protesters remained defiant and threatened to block railway tracks too in addition to highways.

As the issue remained deadlocked with both sides sticking to their respective positions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while laying the foundation stone for a new Parliament building, invoked Guru Nanak to underscore the importance of dialogue and noted that interaction should continue till eternity.

A day after protesting farmers rejected the government's offer for a written assurance on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and amend few provisions in the new farm laws, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said at a press conference that union leaders must consider the proposals and said he is ready for further discussions with them, but left it to the farmer groups to propose a date for the next round of talks.

At least five rounds of formal talks have taken place between the Central government and representatives of thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab and Haryana, protesting on various borders of the national capital for about two weeks, but the deadlock has continued with the unions sticking to their main demand for the repeal of the three contentious laws and repeatedly rejecting the Centre's offer to make some changes in law.



NAYAGARH SDPO TRANSFERRED, IIC SUSPENDED

Opposition raises question on SIT formed to investigate the case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Taking action on the alleged murder of minor girl Pari, state government Thursday suspended Nayagarh Sadar IIC Rinarani Sahoo and transferred sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Niranjan Padhi to Kandhamal.

Sahoo and Padhi were supervising the Pari case, which created hue and cry in the state following a self-immolation bid by her parents in front of Assembly here. The cops were under scanner for their roles in handling the murder case. Pari's mother had also alleged that the local IIC was "torturing" her.

Meanwhile, Opposition BJP and Congress continued their attacks on the government over the issue and raised questions on the probe by a special investigation team

(SIT). Newly-appointed state BJP in-charge Daggubati Purandeswari Thursday visited Jadupur village in Nayagarh and met the parents of the deceased girl.

She claimed that SIT doesn't have judicial power to investigate the sensitive case as it is headed by Arun Bothra, who is CMD of Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC). "As he (Bothra) doesn't have judicial power, how he will investigate?" she asked. The BJP leader demanded CBI probe into the case to give justice to girl and her parents.

Alleging that local MLA and Minister Arun Sahoo is protecting the accused, Purandeswari demanded immediate resignation from Sahoo. "If he (Sahoo) is not resigning, then Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik should remove him from the Cabinet," she said.

Naveen warns banks on delay in credit disposal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday said the state government will not tolerate banks found neglecting credit disbursement to different livelihood programmes launched to counter the impact of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic.

Patnaik said this while reviewing the Covid-19 situation in the state and the government's efforts in tackling the pandemic situation.

Patnaik has earlier launched several livelihood programmes for farmers, members of Mission Shakti, MSME and others affected due to outbreak of the disease.

The banks were told to disburse adequate credit to the vulnerable groups in order to bail them out of the pandemic situation.

"The Chief Minister will take a review of the credit disbursement

to different livelihood programmes with district magistrates and bank authorities December 22, an official statement said.

"The state will not tolerate negligence in disbursement of credit to the livelihood programmes. The state government will lodge complaint against the erring banks if found neglecting credit disbursement," Patnaik said.

The state government December 22 will write to the Finance Ministry on the erring banks, a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office said, adding that Patnaik has asked the state administration to remain alert towards the challenges posed to the state's economy. The Chief Minister said that the sero-survey will be undertaken in Ganjam, Nayagarh and Koraput district by December 31, while the next round of sero-survey to take place in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack in January.

A HAZY DAY



Vehicles ply on the Vani Vihar over bridge covered with morning fog in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

PHOTO BIKASH NAYAK

PM lays foundation stone of new Parliament building

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the new Parliament building Thursday and described the event as a "milestone in India's democratic history", asserting that if the old Parliament House gave direction to the country post-independence, the new one would be a witness to the making of an 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

Addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone and performing the ground-breaking ceremony, Modi urged the people to take a pledge to keep 'India First' and asserted that every decision should increase the strength of the country, whose interest is paramount.

Asserting that Indian democratic traditions predate the Magna Carta, a 13th century document many scholars consider as the framework for a modern republic, the prime minister said that the day is not far when the



world will term India "mother of democracy" if Indians extol the country's democratic history with confidence.

"It is a very historic day. Today is a milestone in India's democratic history... We, the people of India, will together build this new building of Parliament," Modi said, adding that the new building will be an inspiration when India will celebrate 75 years of its independence. The making of the new Parliament building is an example of co-existence of the new with the old, he said.

The new building, whose construction is likely to be completed in 2022, will have an area of 64,500 square metres.

Chinese products flood City electronic markets

ONLINE CLASSES HAVE BOOSTED THE SALE OF INEXPENSIVE WEBCAMS, LAPTOPS, COMPUTERS AND HEADPHONES

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Several campaigns urging people to boycott Chinese products notwithstanding, inexpensive 'Made in China' items continue to flood the electronic markets in the state capital.

Several electronic outlets at Bapuji Nagar and other parts of the city are flooded with Chinese items procured from Delhi and Mumbai. Encouraged by the popularity of short videos filmed with the aid of mobile applications like Instagram Reels and Facebook Video Status, several youths are trying to use the gadgets to get online fame.

Moreover, the online classes during the lockdown have drawn par-



A shop selling 'Made in China' electronic items at Bapuji Nagar in Bhubaneswar

ents and students to the electronic market for inexpensive laptops, computers, headphones and webcams, boosting the sale of these

'Made in China' products. Buoyed by the easy availability of supporting equipments like ring lights, tripods (stand), mobile zoom

lens and others, the electronic market has become their favourite destination. Traders here told Orissa POST that the amateur videomakers often seek such equipment at low prices.

"In fact, very few consumers refuse Chinese products and opt for Made in India alternatives. However, there are very few Indian alternatives when it comes to cheap video-making devices. So most consumers opt for the Chinese items," said Manas Ranjan Sahoo, a shopkeeper from Bapuji Nagar.

Sahoo also claimed that after the ban on Tik tok, the demand for such basic video-making devices has dwindled. Echoing the same sentiments, others shopkeepers

from the area said that besides the ban, Covid-related lockdowns also disrupted the sale of electronic items in the city.

Debasis Sahoo, another trader dealing with electronics item in the city, said, "Not only the demand for such items have declined, the supply of new innovative items has also seen a dip. Our sector suffered a setback midway during lockdowns. However, it is picking pace now as online classes have become the norm."

He added, "The online classes, on the other hand, gave a fillip to the electronic sales where the webcams, headphones, laptops and computers among others saw a boost in sales."

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	45959.88 ↓ 143.62
NIFTY	13478.30 ↓ 50.80
DOLLAR	74.00 ↑ ₹0.08
EURO	89.49 ↑ ₹0.43
GOLD	₹49,480 ↑ ₹220
SILVER	₹64,280 ↑ ₹781

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	30.7°C	31.2°C
MIN	20.2°C	17.5°C
Humidity	96%	96%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Fog or mist in the morning	

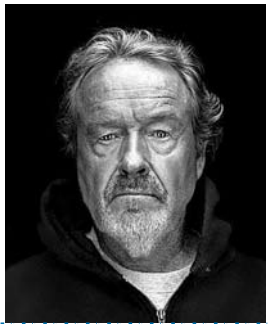


CLASSIC TRUE BLOOD REBOOT IN THE WORKS

The classic *True Blood* is set to get a reboot, and the project is already in early development stages. Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa and Jami O'Brien will pen the script and executive-produce for HBO. The original series creator and showrunner Alan Ball will also executive produce, reports *variety.com*.

SCOTT WASN'T THE FIRST CHOICE TO DIRECT ALIEN

Filmmaker Ridley Scott says he was the fifth choice to direct the iconic sci-fi horror film *Alien*. The 83-year-old director gained fame after directing the 1979 movie, but revealed that he was only able to helm it due to others dropping out, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
If you get a chance to display your presentation skills, don't lose it, says Ganesh. Your eloquence may receive wide acclaim. Your children too may give you reason to be proud. Do remember to take time out for the elderly in your family.

TAURUS
Chaos will reign supreme as unexpected things occur and expected ones are missed out on, says Ganesh. Luck will favour you and nothing is powerful enough to hamper you other than you own thoughts. You will dodge any trouble that is headed your way and escape easily, much to the embarrassment of others.

GEMINI
You will meet someone special who is here to stay for good, predicts Ganesh. Your kind and considerate nature will benefit others. You need to understand that it's okay to spend a little on comforts and entertainment. Be ready for a busy, yet cheerful, day ahead.

CANCER
Today, you will be trying new things in your style of work. You may come across as mad, but there will be a method in your madness. Your new strategy and innovative ideas will give a new lease of life to the projects you are working on.

LEO
Easy come, easy go – that is the best way to sum up money. Try holding on to it, advises Ganesh, as there is a strong possibility that you shall incur a lot of wasteful expenditures today. Always think twice before you spend your hard-earned money. Remember the Grasshopper, cautions Ganesh, and learn from the fable, if not the life philosophies of the famous rich men of our age.

VIRGO
A medley of good and bad awaits you today. Emotional people will find you immature and inconsistent. But your bag o' jokes is never empty, and you remain the jester as always. Ganesh advises you to meditate and engage in spiritually rich activities to channel and focus all your talents.

LIBRA
There is no end to work, so buckle up, as it is highly probable that work pressure will take up most of your time today. This leaves precious little for your family, but as always, they fully understand. Ganesh expects you to be both hard-working and conscientious today. You may also launch a new business scheme, especially if you are self-employed.

SCORPIO
The spectre of financial instability will keep haunting you. But there can be a brighter side to life too, says Ganesh. Long overdue payments might get encashed today. And those blind bluffs you call sometimes in business might pay handsome rewards, predicts Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
A tiring day is in store for you today. Find yourself labouring worse than Hercules. The positive outcome would be that you would lose a few extra calories. But late in the day, a nice quiet time with family and friends would relieve you of all the stress.

CAPRICORN
That you are affectionate towards your loved ones will be more noticeable today than ever before, says Ganesh. In fact, you will enjoy their company and will do everything in your capacity to make them feel wanted. Long-term relationships will also thrive.

AQUARIUS
Today, your social butterflies will set hearts fluttering! Also, whatever you have been working on will reach completion now. You do have a great vision, but you're lost when it comes to executing your plans. Ganesh assures success if only you are a little more practical!

PISCES
Being a friend in need is what today will be about, says Ganesh. Making new acquaintances and associations is also on the cards. Try not to let jealousy mar your better judgement while you are at it.

Nushratt's

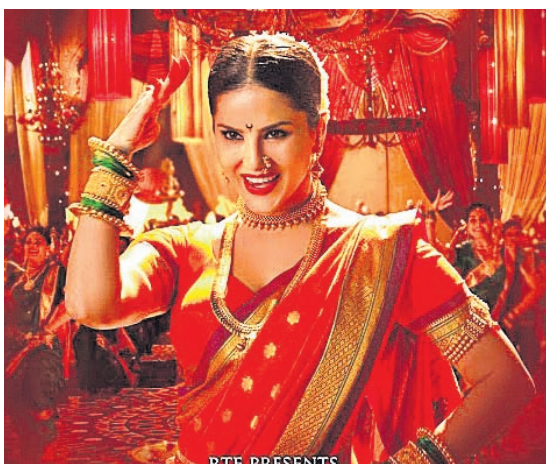
method to sleep after watching horror films

Mumbai: Actress Nushratt Bharuccha is not a huge fan of horror genre, but has to watch a few in the line of work. She says she has found a technique to help her sleep after catching up on scary movies.

She is set to headline the horror film, *Chhorii*, for which the actress seems to be preparing in full swing. "For me watching a horror film is like one of those cheap thrills, which I know I'll not be able

to get through, but I still would want to, and go down that road anyway. I cannot watch a horror film fully. I keep hiding behind my shawl, or cover my face with something when some eerie part comes because I just can't see it," she said.

On how she deals with the fear, she shared: "Even after that, I can't sleep alone. When I'm at home, I ask my mom or my friend to sleep with me, or if I'm shooting outdoors, I'd call my hairstylist and ask her to spend the night with me. I'm that scared."



Sunny plays spy in historical drama

Mumbai: Sunny Leone plays a spy who poses as a dancer in the upcoming historical film, *The Battle Of Bhima Koregaon*. The film, set between 1795 and 1818, also features Arjun Rampal as a Mahar warrior.

The film's lyricist, producer and director Ramesh Thete is not very keen to reveal too many details about Sunny's role. "She plays a spy who poses to be a dancer," is all that Thete said for now.

On Rampal's character, Thete said: "The personality and physique of Arjun Rampal is perfect for Sidhmal, the Mahar warrior. He is the protagonist of a rare kind who carries the narrative of the untouchables well. Arjun was the fittest actor for the role."

Mahar soldiers were said to be part of the British troops that fought against the Peshwa Bajirao II's army in the Koregaon Bhima battle January 1, 1818.

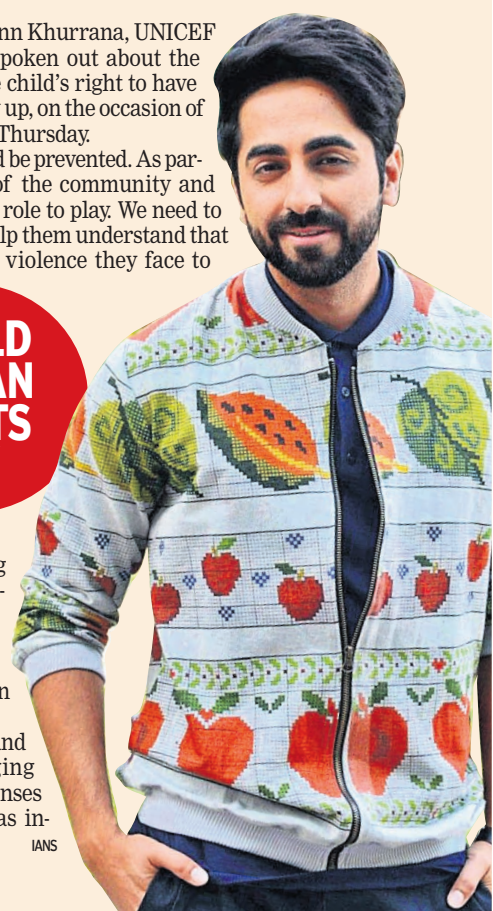
Ayushmann opens up on kids' safety

Mumbai: Actor Ayushmann Khurrana, UNICEF Celebrity Advocate, has spoken out about the safety for children and the child's right to have a safe environment to grow up, on the occasion of World Human Rights Day Thursday.

"Violence can and should be prevented. As parents, teachers, members of the community and duty bearers we all have a role to play. We need to reach out to children, to help them understand that they can speak out about violence they face to their parents or call ChildLine 1098. We have to help children understand how they can protect themselves," Ayushmann said.

He stressed that reaching out to parents, friends, communities is also important as violence happens at home, in school, in playgrounds, by people children trust.

"Helping them understand the importance of changing their behaviours and responses towards violence as well as increase reporting," he added.



When directors come in front of camera

SUBHASH GHAI IS ONE OF THE FIRST HINDI FILM DIRECTORS WHO STARTED THE TREND OF DOING CAMEOS FOR THEIR OWN FILMS

The trailer of *AK vs AK* is out now, and while the audience loves the style of Anil Kapoor, his co-star Anurag Kashyap, a popular director, is getting lauded for his acting skills too.

AK vs AK is not Anurag's first film as an actor, and he certainly is not the first director to come in front of the camera.

Here's a list of present day directors who took on the challenge of being an actor for their own films or that of others:

Subhash Ghai
He is one of the first Hindi film directors who started the trend of directors doing cameos in their own films. Be it *Hero*, *Ram Lakhan*, *Karma*, *Yaadein*, *Pardes* or *Taal*, he

always had a signature cameo shot – often as a passer-by in a song.

Prakash Jha
With Priyanka Chopra in the lead role, Jha cast himself in a pivotal role of his directorial front of the camera.

Jai Gangaajal, as DSP Bhola Nath Singh. Last year, he went on to act in *Saand Ki Aankh* starring Taapsee Pannu and Bhumi Pednekar, and directed by Tushar Hiranandani.

Karan Johar
Before his directorial debut with the romantic comedy-drama *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* in 1998, Karan did a cameo as Shah Rukh Khan's friend in the 1995 blockbuster

Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge. Years later, he played a prominent role as a wealthy businessman in Anurag Kashyap's *Bombay Velvet* and also appeared in a couple of songs.

Anurag Kashyap
He will be seen as a filmmaker who kidnaps the daughter of a film star in Vikramaditya Motwane's upcoming film *AK vs AK*. He had also appeared as a cop in *Ghoomketu* directed by Pushpendra Nath Misra. Prior to this, he had acted in AR Murugadoss' *Akira*, Tigamanshu Dhulia's *Shagird* and Zoya Akhtar's *Luck By Chance*.

Tigamanshu Dhulia
As far as acting goes, he is best known for playing politician Ramadhir Singh in Anurag Kashyap's *Gangs Of Wasseyapur*. He also featured in the much publicised film *Zera*, directed by Anand L Rai, Hansal Mehta's *Shahid* and Honey Trehan's *Raat Akeli Hai*.

Farah Khan
Choreographer-turned-Director Farah Khan appeared in comic roles in her *Om Shanti Om* and *Main Hoon Na*. In Karan Johar's *Student Of The Year*, she was briefly seen as a judge but she had a full-fledged role opposite Boman Irani in the romantic-comedy *Shirin Farhad Ki Toh Nikal Padi*.

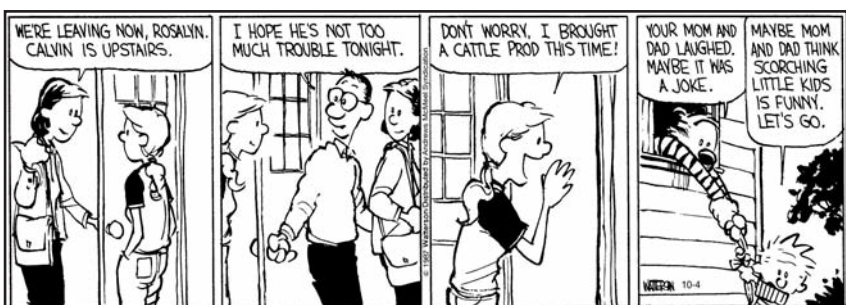


FUN post

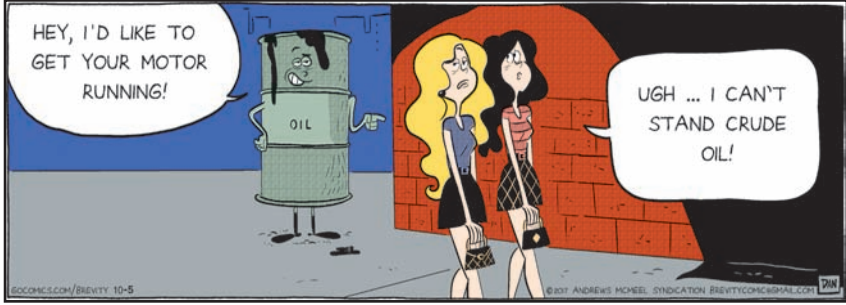
PEANUTS



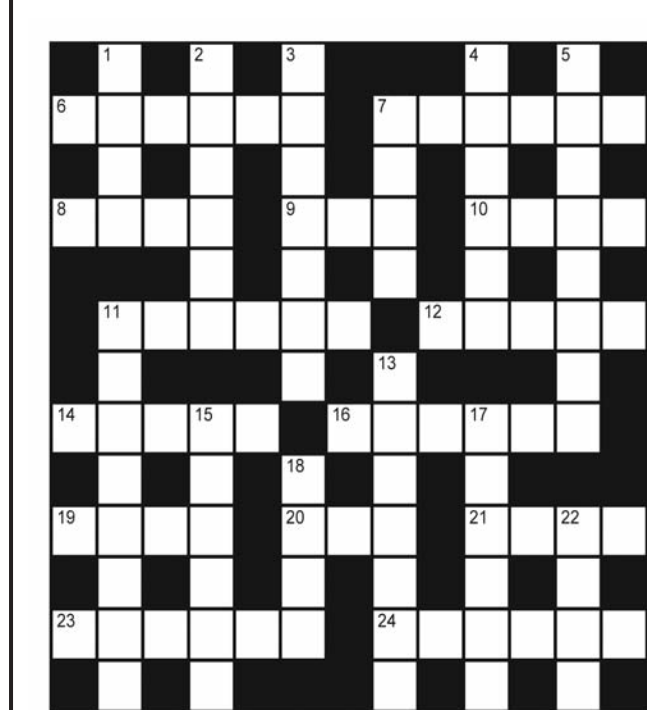
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



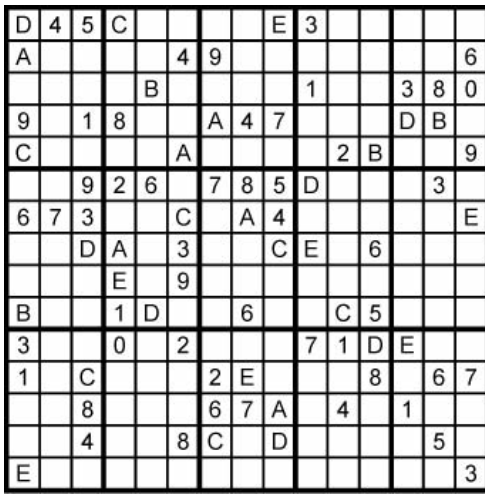
CROSSWORD



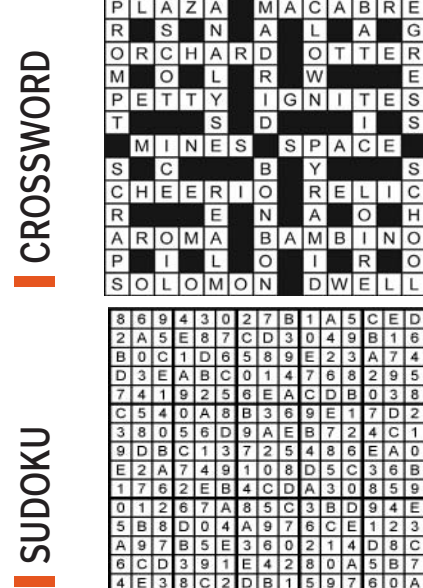
- Across**
- 6 False
 - 7 "The magic word"
 - 8 Food for sea urchins
 - 9 Road crew supply
 - 10 Black, to poets
 - 11 Snapper
 - 12 Backgammon piece
 - 14 Tennis shot
 - 16 U.F.O. crew
 - 19 Kind of exam
 - 20 Sun or moon
 - 21 Not piquant
 - 23 Sharp as a tack
 - 24 Thief
 - Down**
 - 1 "Trick" joint
 - 2 Prim's pal
 - 3 Legumes
 - 4 Rule out
 - 5 Wows
 - 7 Lima's locale
 - 11 Hypothecate
 - 13 "Arabian Nights" hero (3,4)
 - 15 Heroism
 - 17 Regal fur
 - 18 Part of DMZ
 - 22 Lion's den

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



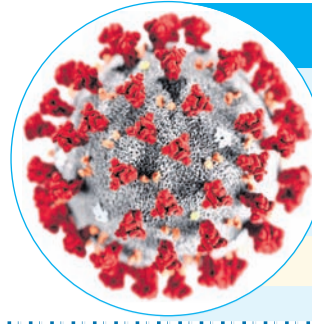
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



EVICION DRIVE

Civic authorities remove encroachments from the main road at Dolamundai in Cuttack, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	6,95,07,519	4,82,06,505	15,80,300
India	97,67,371	92,53,306	1,41,772
Odisha	3,22,642	3,17,870	1,794

18-month deadline for ISBT work

The much-awaited new Interstate Bus Terminal (ISBT) in Bhubaneswar will be ready by mid 2022

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Works for the much waited state-of-the-art Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) at Baramunda will be completed in 18 months, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, after making a field visit to the site here Thursday.

"It is estimated that the new inter-state bus terminal will cost about ₹180 crore and is expected to be completed in 18 months. Its design is beautiful and I am sure it will be a new landmark in Bhubaneswar," Naveen told reporters.

The Chief Minister visited the construction sites of the bus stand and depot at Khandagiri. The development works at the bus depot has been complete.

During the CM's visit, Minister Ashok Chandra Panda, MLAs Ananta Narayan Jena and Sushant Rout, Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy, Secretary to CM (5T) VK Pandian, Police Commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi and Municipal Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary were present.

Naveen expressed satisfaction over the quality of the new bus



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik accompanied by 5T Secretary VK Pandian and other officials visits Baramunda bus stand, Thursday

TOTAL REVAMP

The work of Baramunda ISBT is being carried out under the 5-T charter of the Chief Minister

This involves state-of-the-art technology and design, ample facilities for passengers and space for buses

Currently, the bus stand at Baramunda is functioning as the biggest bus terminal in the city with an area of 15.5 acres.

Approximately, 800 buses are operating from the terminal. The proposed design can accommodate approximately 2,000 buses on daily basis

depot at Khandagiri. The state government intends to develop the Baramunda ISBT as a major bus ter-

minal in eastern India. The bus stand transformation work has been taken up as part of

the 5T initiative of the state government. The ISBT will have terminal space and commercial space. It will also have bus bays and parking space for buses, four-wheelers and two-wheelers.

The proposed terminal will have facilities like uninterrupted power supply, fire detection alarm system, firefighting system, information display system, passenger announcement system, CCTV system, water treatment system, solar elevators and escalators. Currently the bus stand at Baramunda is functioning as the biggest bus terminal in the city with an area of 15.5 acres. Approximately, 800 buses are operating from the terminal. The proposed design can accommodate approximately 2,000 buses on daily basis.

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FEE WAIVER CASE ICSE schools' assn submits affidavit

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 10: The ICSE schools' association Thursday submitted an affidavit to Orissa High Court on a case seeking waiver of fees for private schools in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

ICSE schools' association, Odisha secretary S. Joseph submitted the affidavit to a division bench of Chief Justice Mohammad Rafiq and Justice Bishwanath Rath.

In his affidavit, Joseph pointed out that the state government has no control over the fee structure of private schools in the wake of the RTE Act-2009.

However, the state government has the authority to issue Certificate of Recognition (CoR) to both ICSE and CBSE schools, said the affidavit.

Odisha DAV School Zone-1 regional officer, Keshab Chandra Satpathy, also filed an intervention affidavit in the HC.

While pleading for private school guardians' association, advocate Bibhuti Bhusan Choudhury sought to know whether the private schools have taken steps to provide free education to a certain number of students as per the provisions of RTE Act.

The next hearing on the case has been posted to December 15.

State puts together logistic support for Covid vaccination

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The state government prepared a database of healthcare workers and made necessary logistic support ready for Covid vaccination programme.

This was announced at a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday via videoconferencing mode.

He said, "The vaccination process in the country is likely to start soon. As the programme may continue over a period of one year in the country, I advise officials to ensure proper enforcement of Covid guidelines till that period."

Fears that had been raised during the festive season had been successfully dispelled, he added.

Stating that Odisha was ranked among the best states in the country in Covid management, he said NITI Aayog also praised the state government in this regard.

The CM directed the officers to be fully vigilant to deal with the economic challenges posed due to Covid-19 pandemic. Patnaik said he would hold a meeting with the district collectors and bank authorities this December 22 to review the livelihood programmes along with issuance of loan to farmers, Mission Shakti and MSMEs.

Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy said the state government is taking all necessary steps for the vaccination programme in consultation with the Centre.

State allots land to 28 enterprises

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Fast tracking investment projects, a high-level Land Allotment Committee headed by Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy Thursday approved allotment of land parcels for 28 investment projects worth ₹588 crore.

Twelve investment projects recommended by state-level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) and other nodal agencies and, sixteen other projects recommended by District Level Single Window Clearance Authorities (DLSWCAs) were accorded in-principle approval for land allotment.

Chairman and Managing Director (CMD), Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO), Sanjay Kumar Singh said, "Most of the projects are MSME units from varied sectors like sea food processing, IT and ITES, automobiles, agro-food processing, tourism, light engineering, warehousing, seed processing and manufacturing."

The major units for which land was allotted include B-One Business House Private Ltd, for its sea food processing unit, at Sea Food Park, Deras; UBN Software Solutions Pvt Ltd, for its software unit, at Infovalley-II; World Skill Center in Mancheswar Industrial Estate; Falcon Marine Exports, for its shrimp processing unit, at Seafood



The projects, which include 16 MSME units, will create employment opportunities for 3,245 people

Park, Deras; State Data Center at Infovalley-II and common facility center for Pahala Rasagola at Anantapur of Khurda district.

Similarly, 16 MSME units will be allotted land in the industrial estates of Bhubaneswar, Chhatabar, Food Processing Park Khurda (Janala) and Chandaka. These projects will create employment for 3,245 people.

While giving nod for allotment of land to the units, Tripathy directed the entrepreneurs to complete their construction works on respective sites within the scheduled timeline of IDCO. He further directed concerned departments to facilitate support for early grounding and commissioning of the projects.

HONING SKILLS



Lifeguards take part in a mock drill at the Blue Flag beach in Puri, Thursday

Sundari: An eye opener in tiger relocation

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: India's maiden experiment of inter-state tiger relocation turned out to be a huge failure with the Madhya Pradesh High Court ordering relocation of the tigress Sundari from Raigoda enclosure in Satkosia to Ghorela centre in Kanha Tiger Reserve.

Recently, MP Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan wrote to his Odisha counterpart Naveen Patnaik, urging him to ensure proper care of the tigress till she is shifted to the Kanha Tiger Reserve.

The failure should be deemed as a pathfinder for achieving success in the next venture by overcoming shortcomings in the study, planning and execution by the Forest Department, opined wildlife experts and animal activists of the state.



Secretary, Orissa Environmental Society, Jaya Krishna Panigrahi said, "Tiger is a key-species that speaks of the status of other wild animals and health of the forest ecosystem. In addition to existing Similipal and Satkosia TRs,

we have Sunabeda and Debrigarh as proposed tiger project sites for safeguarding the survival of this endangered species."

"Odisha should not lag behind in enhancing its tiger population, which has been static at 28 for the last four years, while other states have demonstrated increasing trends, as is evident from the tiger census report of 2018. Our management initiatives and their suc-

cess will testify to our commitment to the cause of wildlife conservation in the state," he added.

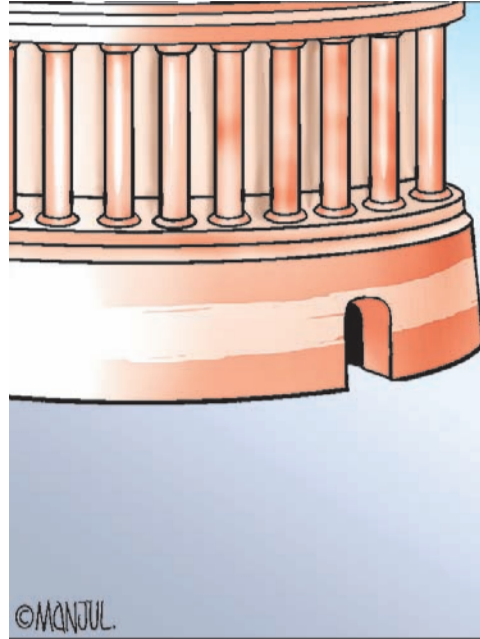
Animal activist Purabi Patra said, "Sundari was supposed to be relocated long back. The concern is, after being in enclosure for such a long time, it's difficult to assess her wild instincts. Unnecessary interference in nature's course leads to disaster. Humans should draw a limit in-

stead of trying to rule everything." A member of Wildlife Crime Control Bureau Bijaya Kumar Kabi said, "In the last two decades, many incidents of animal deaths in the sanctuary have come to light. This proves that there are some loopholes in our plan. The state forest and environment department don't have a disaster management team for handling such crisis. Before bringing Sundari from MP, the government could have studied the habitat, where the tigress would have been comfortable."

"The government must look at the example of the crocodile project in Bhitarkanika where last year, forest officials sighted more than 1,500 crocodile in the water bodies of the Bhitarkanika National park and its nearby areas," he added.

A member of Animal Welfare Organisation Sanjib Kumar Das said, "The translocation was part of India's maiden experiment of inter-state tiger relocation under the joint project of the NTCA, Odisha government and Madhya Pradesh government. The government could have taken the local population and stakeholder into confidence and utilise them in conservation work. This is very important because they play a crucial role in such projects. We also need more tiger reserves."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



AREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO DEMOLISH THE SYMBOLS OF SLAVERY BEFORE REPLACING IT WITH NEW BUILDING?

WE WERE TRYING THE SAME PAST 70 YEARS!



ANUBHAV-VARSHA DISCORD

6 rounds of mediation complete

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 10: The Supreme Court mediation centre held mediation between Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Anubhav Mohanty and his wife actor Varsha Priyadarshini here Thursday. It was the sixth round of mediation to settle their marital discord.

As per advocate Ashwini Dubey, counsel of Anubhav Mohanty, the Supreme Court mediation centre has conducted six rounds of mediation till date. Pooja Anand, who has been a mediator in the Supreme Court and High Courts for 12 years, conducted the proceedings. The next round will be held December 18.

Significantly, the Supreme Court had October 16 asked the couple



File photo of Varsha & Anubhav

The Supreme Court had October 16 asked the couple to explore possibilities of mutual settlement.

The Supreme Court's order had come with Varsha's petition seeking transfer of the divorce petition filed by Mohanty at Patiala House court to the Family Court in Cuttack.

It is to be mentioned here that the BJD MP had filed the divorce petition in Patiala House Court here July 7 and submitted that since the date of wedding, the marriage between them have not been consummated due to Varsha's selfish behaviour.

The bench had observed that the couple are high profile personalities of Odia cinema and asked them to explore possibilities

to explore possibilities of mutual settlement. A bench of Justice Hrishikesh Roy had heard the transfer petition filed by Varsha Priyadarshini and asked the couple to appear before the Supreme Court's mediation centre here.

The bench had observed that the couple are high profile personalities of Odia cinema and asked them to explore possibilities

Wi-Fi service eludes SCB medics

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 10: At a time when online teaching has become a necessity due to Covid-19 pandemic, MBBS or undergraduate students of Sriram Chandra Bhanja Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) here are not getting Wi-Fi service in their hostels.

The students have claimed that they had raised the issue with the authorities concerned several times but to no avail.

At least 1,400 MBBS students, including girls, are staying in five hostels at SCBMCH, the biggest state-run health institute in Odisha. Of the five undergraduate hostels, two has Wi-Fi service. But, the facilities are insufficient for the boarders, sources said. According to the students, they require at least 7 to 8 GB data daily for online study purposes. The students claimed



that they are facing problems to have the required data of their own.

The authorities concerned are yet to arrange proper Wi-Fi service for the hostel boarders, they said. "The Directorate of Medical Education and Training (DMET) had asked the students' union to prepare an estimate for Wi-Fi service

STUDIES HAMPERED

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JAYA KRUSHNA PANIGRAHI | SECRETARY, ORISSA ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY

With 5 more deaths, state's Covid-19 toll touches 1,794

No cases detected in Boudh, Deogarh, Gajapati, Kandhamal and Nabarangpur

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: State's Covid-19 caseload Thursday climbed to 3,22,642 after 343 more people tested positive for the infection, while five fresh fatalities pushed Odisha's toll to 1,794, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the 343 new cases, 197 were reported from various quarantine centres, and the remaining detected during contact tracing, said the official.

Sundargarh recorded the maximum number of new cases at 41, followed by Khurda and Angul at 32 each. Five districts — Boudh, Deogarh, Gajapati, Kandhamal, and Nabarangpur — did not register any case since Wednesday.

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

One each died in the districts of Bolangir, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh and Khurda

The positivity rate in the coastal state stands at 5.14 per cent

Over 62.81 lakh samples have been examined in the state so far, including 30,569 Wednesday

As many as 53 Covid-19 patients have also died due to comorbidities, the official said.

Over 62.81 lakh samples have been examined in the state so far, including 30,569 Wednesday.

Meanwhile, another 458 Covid patients recovered in Odisha, taking the total recoveries in the coastal state to 3,17,870.



IN NUMBERS
Sundargarh recorded the maximum number of new cases at 41, followed by Khurda and Angul at 32 each

Odisha gears up for nCoV vaccination

Bhubaneswar: The state government has prepared a database of healthcare workers and made necessary logistic support ready for Covid vaccination. This was announced at a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday via videoconferencing mode. He said, "The vaccination process in the country is likely to start soon. As the programme may continue over a period of one year in the country, I advise officials to ensure proper enforcement of Covid guidelines till that period." Fears that had been raised during the festive season had been successfully dispelled, he added. Stating that Odisha was ranked among the best states in the country in Covid management, he said NITI Aayog also praised the state government in this regard. The CM directed the officers to be fully vigilant to deal with the economic challenges posed due to Covid-19 pandemic. Patnaik said he would hold a meeting with the district collectors and bank authorities this December 22 to review the livelihood programmes along with issuance of loan to farmers, Mission Shakti and MSMEs.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: In what would give a fillip to the emergency health services delivery in remote pockets of Malkangiri district, the state government will launch two 108 boat ambulances in the southern district, Saturday.

The new pair of ambulances will be flagged off at Telbei ghat under Chittrakonda block, close to Swabhiman Anchal of the southern district. The two boats will be stationed at jetties at Kunturpadar and Orapadar on the Sileru river waters.

"The boat ambulances will be inaugurated in Malkangiri district Saturday. Earlier, two such boats were launched in Kendrapara district. Now, we have four operational boat ambulances. The two new ambulances will help around 20,000 people living in nearby areas to access medical services in a shorter span of time during emergencies," said Sabyasachi Biswal, State Head of Ziqitza Healthcare Pvt Ltd which manages the operations of 108 ambulances.

The boat ambulances would offer first aid, medicines and infrastructure which are available in any other ambulances

Man loses ₹1.50L to cyber crooks

Bhubaneswar: Cyber fraudsters duped a man of around Rs 1.50 lakh here by luring him with a free gift offer. Sources said the victim, Surya Kant of Baramunda here had received a phone call from a lady who introduced herself as Nisha Choudhury from e-commerce giant Amazon. She told Surya that he had been selected to win a gift which he could avail by making a purchase of Rs 4,999. Accordingly, the lady sent list of gifts to the WhatsApp number of Surya. Later, the victim selected the gift and enquired to buy a 'Knee pain relief massager'. He downloaded an application and followed the instructions. However, he did not get any gift but around Rs 1.50 lakh was withdrawn from his account.

FOCUS SWABHIMAN ANCHAL



The two new ambulances will help around 20,000 people access medical services in a shorter span of time during emergencies

The boat ambulances would offer first aid, medicines and infrastructure which are available in any other ambulances

structure which are available in any other ambulances. The floating ambulance also carries delivery kit, splints for handling accident patients, BP machine, stethoscope, cardiac shock machine and all other possible first aid medicines, suction machine, anti-venom drugs,

rested by the Commissionerate Police during a special operation

Guns, bullets seized from D-bros' house

Cuttack, Dec 10: A team of the Commissionerate Police Thursday raided the house of jailed gangsters Dhalasamanta brothers in CDA area here and seized a huge cache of firearms and bullets.

Police seized seven firearms and more than 500 live bullets during the raid, sources said.

Police raided Dhalasamanta brothers' house in the wake of reports that the duo was operating their crime syndicate from the jail, sources said.

Police had arrested a few associates of D-brothers over extortion charges some days ago.

It is worth mentioning here that the gangster brothers were arrested by the Commissionerate Police during a special operation



The seized firearms and bullets

saline, injections and others.

A driver, an assistant, a paramedic staff and a boat assistant have been provided for each ambulance to serve the people in need. The boat ambulance has been connected with the 108 ambulance service which could be accessed by dialing the helpline number being controlled from the call centre at Bhubaneswar.

After receiving the call, the call centre employees would inform the driver and provide them the location and contact numbers of the patient and their caregivers. The boat ambulance has been given GPS and fitted with advanced motors for a high speed travel on river waters.

The move is likely to aid in medical service delivery of several remote villages where reaching the nearest health centre via road takes a lot of time.



The seized firearms and bullets

Police had then seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition, cash and other luxury items from their CDA residence. Several aides of the gangster brothers were also nabbed by the police. The duo has been lodged in jails since then.

PNB ATM burglary accused duo to be brought in remand

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The Commissionerate Police will soon bring in remand the interstate burglars involved in the loot of Punjab National Bank (PNB) ATM at Patia railway station road here.

Sources claimed that a team of Commissionerate Police is likely to leave for Visakhapatnam Friday. The looters will be brought in remand for three days, the sources added. Cops will try to elicit information regarding their likely involvement in other ATM loot incidents in the state. The police will also elicit information about the presence of other gang members in the Capital city or state.

The duo identified as Samarjyot Singh from Punjab and Zafar Sadiq from Kerala had decamped with cash worth over Rs 28 lakh October 10, 2020. Singh and Sadiq are the members of an interstate robbers' gang being operated from Bengaluru. The duo belongs to a gang that used to target ATM kiosks in different parts of the country. The burglars reached Bhubaneswar October 5 and checked in two hotels during their stay here. They gas cutters to open the ATM kiosk before decamping with the cash.

Rayagada UPHC gets ISO tag

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The International Accurate Certification of the United Kingdom has awarded the prestigious ISO 9001:2015 certification to the Urban Primary Health Centre in Rayagada district on 'Quality Management System', an official said Thursday.

The National Health Mission (NHM), Odisha took to the Twitter to say, "We are happy to share that the Urban PHC, Rayagada has achieved ISO 9001:2015 certification on quality management system, in recognition of our continuous efforts to provide quality health care in the state (sic)."



Members of 'OSSTET Qualified (PET, Hindi and Sanskrit) Trained Unemployed Teachers' Association' stage a sit-in near PMG Square in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, urging the state government to notify recruitment of PET, Hindi and Sanskrit teachers in high schools

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

OHRC teams to visit remote pockets to review cases

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Several teams of Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) will soon visit remote districts in the state to take stock of various human rights related activities. The teams will also visit prisons, police stations and organise sensitisation programmes to make aware the public about their rights.

Speaking on the occasion of International Human Rights Day celebrations at the OHRC office here, the rights panel's Chairpersons BK

As many as 3,419 applications have been received by the OHRC till December 1, 2020

Patel Thursday stressed on the need to bring awareness among people about various facets of basic human rights. The OHRC staffers revealed during the meeting that as many as 3,419 applications have been received by the commission till December 1, 2020. Participants in the event stated that



conviction rate has grown with passing of every year at the OHRC which has tried to address issues related to deprivation of basic human rights of the victims.

"The commission's intervention has resulted in noticeable improvement in many illustrative areas," claimed the participants.

While speaking in another even organised by Human Rights Front, the OSCPCR Chairperson, Sandhyabati Pradhan, said that the

CSOs urge Chief Minister to make workplaces harassment-free

BHUBANESWAR: On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, several civil society organisations (CSOs) Thursday wrote to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to take steps to make all workplaces as 'harassment-free zones'.

The CSOs urged the state government to issue guidelines to curb online violence against women and girls.

The letter having an eight-point charter of demands was sent to the CMO, Odisha Human Right Commission (OHRC), Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPCR) and Odisha State Commission For Women to ensure social and legal protection to women and girls in the state. They demanded that the government should create a special website for information on women's rights and violence-related cases. They said that special investigation teams should be appointed to address all issues related to violence against women.

Further, the letter said that a special women's court should be opened to address all forms of violence against women and ensure speedy justice for all categories of women. The letter mentions about provision of incentives with special facilities for the protection of witnesses in all cases of violence against women. Moreover, to ensure that all forms of violence against women are addressed, legal provisions should be explained in public at various Gram Sabhas and Palli Sabhas. The CSOs demanded identification of problems through grassroots women village councils for their early redressal.

Slogan writing competition at Utkal

BHUBANESWAR: A slogan writing competition among the students of various departments of Utkal University marked the observance of Human Rights Day at the premier university here, Thursday.

The competition was organised by Utkal University's Utkal Entrepreneurship and Career Hub in collaboration with the Rural Outreach team of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan.

Speaking on the occasion, Utkal University Registrar Abhay Ku Nayak said, "Universities are citizen-making factories and we, at Utkal, are determined to produce citizens who are responsible and brave to stand up for human rights." On this year's theme—Recover Better - Stand up for Human Rights, Nayak said that in order to protect the students' right to education during this pandemic, the university is strengthening its e-library.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on the same in 1948. The National Human Rights Commission and the rights bodies of various states including Odisha were established in 1993 after the enactment of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

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Purandeswari meets Pari's kin, presses for CBI probe



BJP leaders stage sit-in at Jadupur

Nayagarh, Dec 10: The state in-charge of BJP, Daggubati Purandeswari visited Jadupur village in Nayagarh district Thursday. She along with several other leaders met the parents of the deceased Pari. She demanded a CBI investigation in the case as it was allegedly linked to organ trafficking.

Accompanied by BJP's state unit president Samir Mohanty and several party leaders, Purandeswari talked to the deceased girl's parents and also visited the crime spot near the house.

The BJP leader observed, "Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo, who is accused of shielding the accused, should resign. The SIT formed by the state government has no judicial power. For a proper investigation into the case, we demand a CBI probe. The matter is also linked to organ trading."

She also said that the government is incapable of providing security to the couple.

The girl's father Ashok Sahoo and mother Saudamini had November 24 attempted self-immolation outside the State Assembly demanding justice for their daughter. Alleging police inaction in the case, the couple accused minister Arun Kumar Sahoo of shielding accused Babuli Nayak. They claimed that Nayak is a close aide of the

PARI MURDER CASE

Nayagarh MLA

Notably, the minor girl was allegedly kidnapped and murdered while playing in front of her house July 14. Her skeletal remains were found packed in a sack behind her house July 23. Her parents have accused Nayak of perpetrating the crime.

Notably, the state government has formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by IPS officer Arun Bothra for investigation of the case while the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has taken suo moto cognizance of the case.

HC should monitor SIT probe: Narasingha

Bolangir: Bolangir MLA Narasingha Mishra, Thursday demanded a special investigation team (SIT) under the supervision of the Orissa High Court to ensure an impartial probe into Nayagarh minor girl's murder case. Mishra, who is also the leader of Congress legislative party in the State Assembly, said, his party has no objection whether an officer of state police or CBI becoming the member of SIT formed by the state government. However, the SIT should work under the direct supervision of Orissa High Court for an impartial probe. He questioned that how could IG Arun Bothra could probe the Pari murder case as he is posted as the CMD of Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) and has no power as a police officer on the basis of Section-36 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc). He demanded that whoever becomes a member of SIT should be vested with powers on the basis of Section-36 CrPc. Moreover, the probe by the SIT should be monitored by Orissa High Court following which the probe into Pari murder case could be impartial and trustworthy, he added.

Family seeks stern action against cops

Nayagarh: Soudamini Sahu, the mother of five-year-old Pari, alleged Wednesday evening that the IIC of Sadar police station Rinarani Sahu had misbehaved with her. The investigation of the murder was intentionally played down upon the direction of Minister Arun Sahoo, she added. "I had already expressed that the IIC of Sadar police station has links with Minister Arun Sahoo. She has been deliberately investigating the murder in a different angle to shield Babuli Nayak including and Sahoo. Why has she not been arrested or interrogated so far," Pari's mother questioned. Police picked up Pari's parents from their house at 10am on the 12th day of her murder. They were dropped at their house around midnight. The IIC has been forcing for a false confession, the mother stated. "Police have been treating us like criminals. Once, they even forcibly barged into our house and manhandled me including my mother. The IIC along with Nayagarh SP should be suspended. Strong action should be taken against them," she demanded. Revealing the unholy nexus between the Minister and the criminal, Soudamini said, "I have heard the IIC talking with the minister over phone and taking instructions from him while I was there in the police station for a lie detection test. I can assert that Sahoo is involved in this sensitive murder case."



Police personnel taking part in a bike rally as part of an awareness drive on helmet use by bikers and pillion riders in Koraput, Thursday

SAFETY AWARENESS

Two arrested for gemstone smuggling

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 10: In a major crackdown, the Rayagada police arrested two persons including a teacher Thursday afternoon in connection with smuggling of gemstones in the district.

According to police, they were Radhamohan Mahana, 53, of Sudha Street area in Boudh district and Subash Ratnallu, 45, of Muniguda area in Rayagada district. However, Radhamohan works as a block grant teacher.

Notably, the Special Task Force (STF) of the Crime Branch had raided and seized 23 gemstones worth over Rs 1.5 crore from a house at Jagannath Complex in Rayagada town December 7.

Later, police had arrested Jitendra Kumar Behera from Bijabandali village of Ambadala panchayat under Muniguda tehsil in Rayagada. The STF team confirmed during interrogation that Radhamohan and Subash were also allegedly involved in the supply of gemstones. Further investigation in this connection is under way.

Cong bandh over medical college issue in Bhadrak

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Dec 10: The District Congress Committee of Bhadrak observed a 12-hour bandh Thursday, demanding establishment of a medical college and an overhaul of the healthcare services in the district.

Various outfits have been staging agitations over the government medical issue for last two years. Hundreds of Congress workers picketed at various places in the town.

Due to the bandh, shops and business establishments remained closed. Vehicular movement was disrupted as party leaders and workers staged road blockades at various places in the town.

The agitators also blocked road on NH-16 and burned effigies of the



ruling party leaders. As a result, hundreds of vehicles remained stranded on both sides of the road. Several local organisations and associations have supported the bandh call.

Several platoons of police were deployed across the town to ward off any untoward incident during the bandh.

The Congress workers alleged

that healthcare services had gone for a toss at the district headquarters hospital. People have always been at the receiving end of the ill-equipped healthcare system.

"On the plea of Covid pandemic, general and other patients are denied treatment and referred to Cuttack. People have to suffer a lot. The hospitals are plagued by staff shortage. Covid management has been in disarray as the ruling party has failed. Massive irregularities have been committed," they alleged.

They demanded a whitepaper on Covid management in the district. Congress workers warned of intensifying the agitation if their demands are not fulfilled immediately.

20 hurt as bus turns turtle in Mayurbhanj

Baripada/Rairangpur, Dec 10: Around 20 persons were injured Thursday after a bus in which they were travelling turned turtle near Kalikapur of Rairangpur in Mayurbhanj. According to an eye-witness, the vehicle was on its way to Baripada from Rairangpur locality. The driver of the bus lost control over the wheels, following which the ill-fated vehicle skidded off the road and overturned and fell into a nearby farmland, the eye-witness said. A team of local police and fire-fighting personnel rushed to the spot after they were informed about the accident. They rescued the injured passengers and sent them to Rairangpur hospital. Later some of those injured were shifted to the Pandit Raghunath Murmu Medical College and Hospital, as their conditions deteriorated. Rairangpur police have seized the bus and initiated a probe in this connection. The driver and conductor of the bus managed to flee the spot soon after the mishap, a police official said.

Woman dies after delivery, medical negligence alleged

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Dec 10: Villagers of Kohla area under Tihidi police limits in Bhadrak district strongly resented the death of a pregnant woman due to alleged medical negligence at a private hospital in the district, Thursday.

Archana died Thursday morning due to heavy bleeding after delivering a baby girl in the private hospital.

The woman's husband alleged that though they had informed the hospital doctors in this regard, they had not taken the matter seriously.

Other family members decried medical negligence.

Her kin lodged a complaint with Bhadrak Town police alleging negligence on the part of the doctors and hospital staffers during her treatment.

Locals also protested and demanded police to take the matter seriously and punish the real accused responsible for the woman's death. Police have started an investigation into the incident.

MIDDLEMEN PLAY SPOILER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh/Keonjhar, Dec 10: Even as middlemen have been scuttling paddy procurement at some places in Sundargarh district by luring farmers into giving their paddy at below MSP, the district administration has initiated action and engaged a special squad to crack down on the middlemen.

In Keonjhar, tokens have been a problem for farmers in selling off their paddy with scores of them angrily awaiting their turn for procurement. In case of further delay in tokens, they think of selling their paddy to traders.

Reports from Sundargarh said, paddy procurement has started from November 23 at 134 procurement centres run by 47 cooperative societies under three marketing regulating committees.

But at many places, middlemen have been active and are buying paddy from farmers at low price. Acting on complaints in this regard, Collector Nikhil Pawan Kalyan directed the civil supplies department to crack down on such illegal paddy buying.

A special squad of the civil supplies department raided Tudalaga under Badagaon block Wednesday and seized 14 quintals of paddy from middlemen.

The Collector has made it clear that strong action will be taken on buying



of paddy by middlemen. The crackdown on middlemen will continue, he added.

Reports from Keonjhar said, scores of farmers in Ghasipur area have applied for tokens at Khaliamenta cooperative society. They have harvested their paddy, but tokens have not been issued to them. "We have not received tokens for procurement. The officials concerned have not verified their land records as attached during the registration in August. We are in problem," they lamented. 537 farmers were deprived of tokens due to technical reasons.

Sources in the department said the land of farmers was categorised as irrigated through lift irrigation, but in reality the lands are non-irrigated.

Assistant registrar of cooperative societies Pramod Bariha said such

problems have arisen due to lack of coordination among the district civil supplies department, the cooperation department and the lift irrigation department.

On the other hand, farmers were surprised to learn about the reverse status of their land in registration records. "We have no irrigation points in the area. We have not even mentioned the lands as irrigated during the registration. How could this happen to us," they wondered.

They are worried about preservation of their paddy when the area is haunted by elephant menace.

Many of them said inordinate delay in procurement will force them to sell the paddy to traders. They have taken up the issue with the district administration.

Covid hospital nurses on strike seeking regularisation of jobs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 10: Nurses of the Covid-19 hospital at Sitalapalli in Berhampur of Ganjam district held a demonstration in front of the office of the Medical College Thursday demanding regularisation of their services.

It was learnt that Odisha Sub-Ordinate Staff Selection Commission floated a notification inviting applications from eligible candidates for filling up of 6,432 vacant posts of nursing officers.

The nurses urged the government as they have been serving Covid-19 patients for nine months; the state government should give them first priority against vacant nursing posts in various government hospitals of Odisha.

Seeking necessary action in this regard, the nurses wrote a letter to CM Naveen Patnaik.

Bolangir tourist spots see fewer footfalls

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 10: Even as the tourist season started in November; unlike previous years, most of the tourist places in Bolangir district have failed to draw tourists in large numbers this year due to Covid fears. This has happened despite the fact that intensity of the pandemic has subsided and restrictions have been relaxed, a report said.

According to the report, the major tourist draws are Harishankar, Ranipur-Jhari, Bhimdunguri, Kumudapahad and Jalamahadev. These places usually keep on drawing tourists throughout the year for picnicking and tourist purposes. Locals said Covid has affected the tourism sector for the last nine months.

Tourist and picnic spots look deserted. As Covid infection graph has subsided, and Covid guidelines were relaxed, tourists have started coming in small numbers to Harishankar, Ranipur-Jhari, Bhimdunguri, Kumudapahad, Magurbada Darhi and Gaikhai.

The report said Harishankar temple has been lying closed due to Covid



restrictions, preventing people from doing darshan of the deities. However, the stream and Sholpathar have been drawing tourists in small numbers, local said.

Tourists have been asked to maintain safety guidelines - social distancing and mask wearing. But in reality, all such guidelines have been thrown to winds.

Locals said tourists are keen to visit the places, but they do not come here in fear of Covid infections. For the

EFFECT OF COVID GUIDELINES

Tourist and picnic spots look deserted. As Covid infection graph subsided and Covid guidelines were relaxed, tourists have started coming in small numbers to Harishankar, Ranipur-Jhari, Bhimdunguri, Kumudapahad, Magurbada Darhi, Gaikhai

Harishankar temple has been lying closed due to Covid restrictions, preventing people from doing darshan of the deities

last few days, shops and markets have opened. Bhimdunguri is another tourist draw. There are 63 ancient caves here. Its picture postcard natural setting has been an attraction for tourists who are coming gradually.

Picnickers were seen gathering near a water body at this place, but they complain about lack of infrastructure.

A few days ago, OTDC launched a tourist bus service from Bolangir to Harishankar. For 80 km journey, the

fare has been fixed at Rs 140 per head. It was alleged that as the bus is not operating daily, it has been problem for tourists to come this place. Some tourists alleged that high fair is a factor that discourages tourists from visiting the place.

District tourism officer Rabintra Kumar Dalai said though tourist places were thrown open, social distancing and mask wearing are still in force. Tourists are advised to adhere to Covid guidelines.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER LOWER INDRACANAL DIVISION, KHARIAR
e-Procurement Notice No. - LICKHR-02/2020-21
No. A-348 E-mail id: eelickd.khr@gmail.com

- Type of Works : Shifting of 11KV line & Sub-Station (Electrical Works)
- Total No. of Works : 06 (Six) Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Rs. 7.07 lakh to Rs. 17.83 lakh
- Period of Completion : 30 (Thirty) days

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount in Lakh Rs.	Availability & Submission of Bids Online
Executive Engineer, Lower Indira Canal Division, Khariar	LICKHR-04/2020-21	Rs. 17.83	From 14.12.2020 10.00 A.M. to 23.12.2020 5.00 P.M.
	LICKHR-05/2020-21	Rs. 17.75	
	LICKHR-06/2020-21	Rs. 10.97	
	LICKHR-07/2020-21	Rs. 7.97	
	LICKHR-08/2020-21	Rs. 7.49	
	LICKHR-09/2020-21	Rs. 7.07	

Date of opening of Tender/Bid : 24.12.2020 at 10.30 A.M.
Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Executive Engineer, Lower Indira Canal Division, Khariar
OIPR-32206/11/0002/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER, KORAPUT
TENDER CALL NOTICE NO.-01/NHM/Koraput/2020-21

- Name of the works :- Const. of Multi Utility Centre at PHC (N) Level.
- Number of works :- 22 Nos. of works
- Approximate estimated cost :- 6 to 7 lakhs
- Period of completion of the work :- 2 months
- Date & Time of availability of bid document :- Dt. 11/12/2020 at 11.00 A.M. to Dt. 31/12/2020 at 12.00 P.M. at O/o CDM & PHO, Koraput
- Last date & time of receipt of tender document in portal :- 31/12/2020 at 12.00 P.M. at O/o CDM & PHO, Koraput
- Date and time of opening :- Dt 31/12/2020 at 3.00 P.M. at O/o CDM & PHO, Koraput
- Availability of the tender document and tender call notice at :- WWW.KORAPUT.NIC.IN
- Availability of Detail tender Document, Specification including BOQ (Civil+EI+PH) :- O/o the DPMU, NHM at office of the CDMPHO, Koraput

Sd./- Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Koraput
OIPR-10077/11/0009/2021
No. E-427

boyanika
Corrigendum for EOI No.2456 Dt.20.11.2020
No.2581 Dt.10.12.2020
Name of the work :- Corrigendum for EOI No.2456 Dt.20.11.2020 for Selection of Manpower through Service Provider by Boyanika. The last date and time of submission of EOI extended to :- 16.12.2020 at 2.00 P.M. Refer website for details-www.boyanika.com.
Sd/- Managing Director Boyanika

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, BALASORE
e-Procurement Notice for Road Works
No. O-703 Bid Identification No. Online tender/07/RWD II BLS/2020-21

- Name of the Work :- Road Work
- Total No. of Works :- 14 Nos.
- Estimated Cost :- Estimated Cost Rs.0.28 lakhs to Rs.21.57 lakhs
- Class of Contractor :- "C" and "D"
- Time of Completion :- As per TCN
- Other details :-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding	Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of Opening of Tender in O/o. EE RW Divn.-II, Balasore. (Single Cover)
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Balasore	1	3	4	5
	2	4	5	6
1	07 of 2020-21	14.12.2020 at 5.00 P.M.	22.12.2020 upto 5.00 P.M.	21.12.2020 upto 5.00 P.M.
2				24.09.2020 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Sd/- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Balasore
OIPR-25052/11/0004/2021



You take up the spiritual path only when you feel you cannot do otherwise.



THE MOTHER

Exploiting masses

There is a runaway rise in fuel prices in the country. So much so that pump prices of petrol and diesel are at a two years' high. Already reeling from a prolonged economic recession and pandemic-triggered distress, the unrelenting rise in petrol and diesel prices is hurting the common man the hardest. Over the last three weeks, petrol price rose by nearly ₹2.5 per litre, while diesel became dearer by ₹3 per. Petrol currently sells at nearly ₹90/per litre, while diesel costs in the upwards of ₹80. In the pandemic time when household incomes are at rock bottom, high fuel rates are adding to the general distress of the people. After six days of continuous rise, fuel prices paused for the third day Thursday. Earlier this month, the RBI had flagged rising fuel rates as one of the key drivers of the steep rise in consumer price index (CPI) inflation. The fresh upturn in fuel rates looks to pose a major challenge even as the Indian economy struggles to recover from the damage inflicted by the Covid-induced economic slowdown. Why are fuel prices rising even when the economy is plodding along? There are two factors for the gyrations of fuel prices. One is the change in international crude prices and, secondly, taxes being levied by the Centre and the state governments. First, the global factors: In, 2018 the commodity sold at almost \$70 per barrel, much higher than what it is right now. A barrel of Brent crude currently costs below \$50. Yet, fuel prices are reaching all-time highs. The reason is not far to find. Higher taxes levied by the Centre and state governments are pushing up the pump prices of fuel. For every litre of petrol that we buy we pay in the upwards of ₹50 towards taxes, while for diesel it is over ₹40. High level of excise duty (levied by the Centre) and the value added tax (levied by the states) accounts for 65 per cent of petrol and 60 per cent of diesel costs. The Centre levies around ₹30 as tax on petrol and diesel. This includes basic excise, special additional excise and road or infra cess. This number has almost doubled over the last year. Added to that are taxes by the state governments which vary from state to state. Criticizing the high fuel rates, BJP leader Subramaniam Swamy has dubbed it a monumental exploitation by the Centre of the people of India. Swamy said petrol must sell at maximum ₹40 per litre. Fuel tax constitutes a lion's share of state finance and that is why state governments never want to bring it to within the ambit of the goods and services tax (GST). The higher the prices go up the fatter becomes the government's kitty. Both the Centre and the state governments do not care for the mindless rise in fuel prices even as the poor suffer silently. Ironically, tax receipts of the government have fallen even as the excise on petrol and diesel has grown sharply. The Centre's receipts from excise duty, a bulk of which is generated from petrol and diesel and crude oil sales, have shown a 40 per cent year-on-year rise. High fuel prices will blunt public consumption of fuel and will prove counter-productive for the economy. That apart, the unforeseen fuel rates will stoke resentment among public as fuel is a major input in rising consumer price inflation. India's retail inflation is close to a seven-year high of 7.6 per cent. Food inflation has already seen a steep rise and high fuel costs have further increased the grocery bills. The public anger is building up amid high inflation. It was reflected in the success of the Bharat Bandh called by the farmer unions Tuesday. The bandh was spontaneous and got enormous public sympathy. But this torturous exploitation of the poor must stop before it becomes too late for the government.

WISDOM CORNER

- Do one thing every day that scares you. **ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**
- Whatever you are, be a good one. **ABRAHAM LINCOLN**
- Your passion is waiting for your courage to catch up. **ISABELLE LAFLECHE**

WORDSWORTH

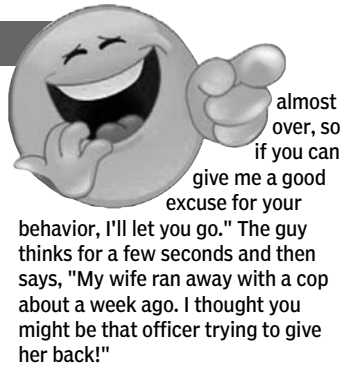
Between the Lines

Until very recently, the standard British expression has been railway station, a term which had been in use since the early days of passenger transportation on rails, and which is still usual among people over the age of about 40. The OED's first citation is from 1838, eight years after the world's first passenger station was opened in Manchester on 15 September 1830, but which must surely have been employed earlier. The word railway itself is rather older, first used in the 1770s. The idea of moving goods by wagons running on parallel sets of rails goes back to the sixteenth century at least, but these early routes had wooden rails (or even stone ones at times, as at Bovey Tracey in south Devon) and were usually called wagonways or tramways. The shift in emphasis that led to the use of the word rail instead was partly due to the increased use of the technique in the colliery routes in north-eastern England, which came to be called lines of rails, but I suspect was most strongly influenced by the introduction of iron rails in the late eighteenth century. They became known as rail ways or rail roads, at first two words, using the word rail in its sense of "rod; bar". This comes from an old French word reille, "iron bar", whose Latin precursor regula, "straight stick, rod", has also bequeathed us regular and rule. At first railway and railroad were used pretty much equally, but by the 1830s the former had prevailed in British English, though the latter was taken to North America and became the dominant term there. Incidentally, when cast iron began to be employed in colliery tramways in the mid eighteenth century — as a result of the new manufacturing method using coke that had been pioneered by Abraham Darby at Coalbrookdale in Shropshire — it was cast into flat plates, usually with a flange. The men who laid this kind of track came rapidly to be known as plate layers and this name persisted as the standard British English term for the men who maintain the track, the permanent way in British railway jargon, even after the iron began to be cast into the form of rails instead. A similar example of the conservative use of language can be found in the name for the conveyances on the new passenger railways. They were called carriages by analogy with horse-drawn vehicles, and this remains the standard term in British English for rail-drawn vehicles, specifically those containing seating for passengers (for which American English would use coach). American English has the general term car for railway vehicles, which British English only uses in compounds, such as restaurant car or sleeping car. (Incidentally, car is not an abbreviated form of carriage but a quite distinct word; they came from the Latin original by different routes, car being a very general term for any wheeled conveyance.) As early drawings show, the design of British railway carriages was actually based on the enclosed carriages of the time and looked exactly like stage coaches on rails; unsurprisingly, as there were plenty of coach builders about who knew exactly how to create a vehicle of that type (a similar example of fabricational conservatism can be seen in the Iron Bridge over the Severn in Shropshire, which is fastened together exactly as though it were made in wood). A similar effect is apparent in the early days of the motor car, but at least we have been spared the cumbersome name of horseless carriage.

LOL

Good Excuse

A police officer attempts to stop a car for speeding and the guy gradually increases his speed until he's topping 100 mph. The man eventually realizes he can't escape and finally pulls over. The cop approaches the car and says, "It's been a long day and my shift is



almost over, so if you can give me a good excuse for your behavior, I'll let you go." The guy thinks for a few seconds and then says, "My wife ran away with a cop about a week ago. I thought you might be that officer trying to give her back!"

THE VC AND THE VARSITY

FOCUS EDUCATION

Odisha made news recently for an unusual final test to choose vice-chancellors for several universities in the state. The short-listed candidates - all presumably highly qualified, experienced and senior academicians - were handed over a question paper as they were waiting presumably for their interview with the Chancellor - the Governor. It was unusual on several counts and has rightly raised the eyebrows of many eminent academicians and intellectuals. The Chancellor was dealing with a personal tragedy and couldn't attend to the scheduled interviews. Instead, an official conducted the test with four questions - "The universe is built on...?", "The role of the university to build the universe?", "You have work experience. The style of working? The spirit of working?", "If God appears before you and asks for a boon, what will you like to ask for?" The questions were to be addressed in under 45 minutes in a physically proctored written test. Much has been written on social media on the merit or lack thereof of the questions for the purpose of selecting an academic leader. The much larger question, however, is the role of a vice-chancellor or for that matter any academic leader of significant institutions (say IITs and IIMs, etc) in achieving the true purpose of the organisation.



Dhanada K Mishra

THE RECENT MOVE BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO REPLACE THE MEMBER OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE REPRESENTING THE UNIVERSITY SYNDICATE WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT GOING TO HELP THE SITUATION

The now annual ritual of be-moaning the fact that no Indian institution of higher education figures in the top 100 universities in either of the global surveys - be it Time Higher Education (THE) ranking or QS ranking. A number of universities from a small autonomous region like Hong Kong let alone mainland China figure in such elite lists. Fortunately, in recent years, many younger institutions and particularly those set up in the non-government sector in India are finding a place in the rankings although not yet among the top global names. Among many factors that are attributed to such performance of Indian institutions, the role of leadership is a critical one. There are many aspects to choosing the right leader for an institution of higher education. The process can be quite a



Academic leaders are picked for a long tenure unlike the case in India where the typical tenure for a vice-chancellor or director lasts three or four years at most. By contrast, top world universities appoint them for tenures of anything between 10 and 15 years

complex and long drawn out event as in many cases it takes a global search spanning over several years to select a leader for any top ranking university. Generally, they are picked for a long tenure unlike the case in India where the typical tenure for a vice-chancellor or director lasts three or four years at most. By contrast, let's look at two prominent examples from among top world universities. One of the oldest, the University of Michigan (global THE ranking of 22 and QS ranking 21) which was founded in 1817 has had 14 presidents over its 203 years history with an average tenure of around 15 years with the longest being that of James Burrill Angell of 38 years from 1871 to 1909! On the other hand, one of the youngest global universities, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST, ranked 27 on QS ranking and no 1 in the under 50 years old university by Times Higher Education ranking) which was founded in 1991 has had four presidents each approximately having had a tenure of about 10 years. Interestingly recent data suggests that in many universities around the world the average tenure of presidents or vice-chancellors is becoming shorter. A major reason for this is the rapidly changing higher edu-

cation landscape that makes it difficult for an individual to re-invent himself/herself continuously to adapt or set a new agenda periodically. The other reason is the evolving nature of the leadership position which has become more complex with multiple challenges to deal with such as cuts in state funding, public relations, performance assessment, accountability, etc.

Closer home, the newer IITs have been getting directors appointed for a term of five years keeping in view the challenges of setting up a new institution in a short time frame from scratch. As a result, some of them have done really well in global rankings. Director of IIT Gandhi Nagar, Prof Sudhir Jain is in his third five-year term and will probably set a record completing a total of fifteen years at the helm of IITGN. The institution has come up really well under his stewardship. Several other newer IITs, including our own IIT Bhubaneswar, also demonstrate the benefit of leadership positions with longer tenure.

Tenure of the leader of a higher education institution may not be the only factor in achieving excellence but there is overwhelming evidence that it is an important one. It is well established in organisational management research

that tenure of a minimum of five years is necessary to make a lasting impact in an executive position. Short tenures cause loss of continuity, reset momentum, and create a leadership vacuum. Revolving doors are no good for stability. Vice-chancellors, presidents, or directors come in with a vision for the institution and prepare a strategic plan to turn the vision into reality. It needs time - especially in higher education where a leader has to work with many stakeholders in a participatory governance model.

The recent move by the state government to replace the member of the search committee representing the university syndicate with a representative of the government is not going to help the situation. As per the recommendation of the 2011 Higher Education Taskforce, the government should reform the outdated university Acts and Statutes in line with the latest UGC guidelines rather than reverting back to the much older Odisha Universities Act, 1969, with amendments by ordinance. It would appear that the unfortunate Indian tradition of selecting academic leaders for 3-4 year tenures in state government institutions is borrowed from a similar practice for bureaucrats. A practice that has been long discarded by the British who introduced it in India for no reason other than the fear that with a longer tenure if an officer becomes popular that may be a problem for the British rulers. Unfortunately, such undesirable traditions seem to linger on in our country in many domains. Of late, there are also reports of ideological dispositions of the ruling dispensation, outright bribery, and quid-pro-quo affecting such appointments. Such perversions would harm the prospects of affected institutions of higher education very badly when it comes to competing with their peers on a global platform.

The author is an academician currently visiting Hong Kong University of Science and Technology as a Research Scholar. He can be reached by email at dhanadam@gmail.com

SPECTRUM EMPLOYMENT

Right skills critical in job market

In an age of skyrocketing unemployment, made worse by the pandemic, it is integral to incorporate marketable and real-world skills within the education system. A system that integrates skills and education can go a long way in ensuring that the youth are better equipped to handle a challenging employment market.

Moin Qazi

IN AN AGE OF SKYROCKETING UNEMPLOYMENT IT IS INTEGRAL TO INCORPORATE MARKETABLE AND REAL-WORLD SKILLS WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Employers need to interact with education providers. Both can benefit from strong reciprocal relations, with employers advising educators what skills they need (and even assisting in designing curricula and extending faculty support) and educators providing students with practical training and hands-on learning. There are compelling economic benefits in rebalancing the labour market; conversely, the human costs of failing to do will be enormous.

By deploying its corporate and social responsibility (CSR) capital on skill development projects, the private sector stands to benefit enormously from the availability of a large skilled and disciplined workforce. This can parlay into better levels of customer service, increased productivity and efficiency, reduced absenteeism and em-

ployee turnover, along with lower wages and recruitment costs.

The results of several such programmes have, however, been mixed. Programmes have reported high dropout rates, low employment percentages and continued attrition post-placement, leading to unsatisfied employers as well as frustrated youth. Providing 'skill-training and certification' alone cannot be a solution to the problem. There is clearly a case for going back to the drawing board.

The new emphasis on skill training should focus on a lifecycle approach. This approach looks at all aspects of skilling, from the aspirations of people before training to counselling and following up with beneficiaries during their employment. Adopting a lifecycle approach to skilling will make sure the kind of skills imparted to trainees are marketable and linked to the available jobs.

It is also important to ensure that specific skills are not scaled across multiple areas in the same region as it saturates the market with limited opportunities for those who are trained. If everyone is trained in becoming a blacksmith, there will be too many blacksmiths

and not enough jobs. Imparting locally relevant skill sets like repairing bicycles or motorised two-wheelers, solar lamps, mobiles and running a poultry unit or small animal husbandry and the like makes families self-sustaining.

There are hundreds of organisations and agencies engaged in honing vocational skills and promoting entrepreneurship. While these successful efforts demonstrate the critical roles that employers and social sector actors play in the development of a healthy workforce, they are not able to achieve system-wide change. Businesses, educators, governments and young people need to adopt a collective approach and synergise their latent strengths. Closing the skills gap requires that educators and employers work together more closely.

The missing link that underlies the growing unemployment is 'skill development', which is the key ingredient to robust economic growth. With the dilutions of the old 'iron bowl' of employment protection, the idea of lifelong secure employment has now been shattered.

Technology is advancing faster than we can adapt, upending the job

market and delivering unimaginable shocks to both our values and or patterns of thinking. Repetition-based jobs are stagnating the world over and will soon disappear. Most children entering school today will do jobs that don't exist yet.

Many of the children now being educated in the old system will find the norms, institutions and patterns of working and civic life they were trained for scrambled, when they enter the adult world. Tools of the job are in a state of extreme flux. Spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations and other boardroom documents have all been changed by the cloud — sharing and group editing are the new norm.

Skills development holds the key to India's ability to activate the vast potential of its youth population for inclusive growth and to evolve as the hub of the global economy. It is perhaps most crucial to long-term alleviation of poverty. Several challenges remain for skill development in India. The huge proportion of informally trained workers who form a part of the informal sector have still no formal training avenues.

INFA

Nepal's tryst with Mt Everest

Sir, The joint statement made by Nepal and China regarding the new height of Mt Everest, the world's tallest peak, has to be interpreted as not just the renewed measurement of the peak but something more than that - the tryst that the Himalayan nation is now having with its giant neighbour. The latest of this Chinese influence on Nepal is now exposed through this agreement of a joint declaration of the peak's height. Nepal had hitherto adhered to the measurement made by India which was 8,848 metres. It has to be noted all these years Nepal and China had a conflict over the height of the peak. For years Beijing and Kathmandu had differed over its exact height. Expeditions were carried from both sides to get its exact measurement as geographical experts and scientists doubted whether any changes occurred in its altitude after the great Himalayan earthquake a few years ago. Surveyors from both the nations have agreed that the new height is 8,848.86 metres, a bit more than their previous calculations. Now it has to be seen whether the joint official confirmation of both the nations regarding the height will take their relationship to greater heights or if like a Himalayan avalanche will come sweeping down.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

MGNREGS funds

Sir, The raking up of one after another MGNREGS funds embezzlement in several blocks of this tribal district worth ₹2 to ₹5 crore in recent times is a great poser to the overall mismanagement of this enviable scheme. Last June, the dist administration had directed the Jashipur block to file cases against a group of official over embezzlement of MGNREGS funds to the tune of ₹3-5 crore but other than suspension of few GPEOs and PRI members not much was done. Similarly, years ago, there were allegations of squandering away of MGNREGS funds in Bijatala block to the tune of around ₹13 crore on which several inquiries by the DRDA and state Panchayatiraj department were undertaken, but there was not outcome as the investigators stated that everything was alright. Mayurbhanj has the highest 26 number of blocks where public funds worth hundreds of crores are found to be spent irregularly every year despite strict online monitoring system. Hence the need of the hour is to appoint DLM district-level monitors to gauge the trends of such funds spending or else the huge funds sharing amongst a coterie comprising politician, bureaucrats, contractors and vendors shall continue depriving the people for whom the funds are meant.

Janaki Ballav Dash, MAYURBHANJ

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

The dismal ambulance service of Karna

108-ambulance service failed to reach 50 pc of patients within time between 2014-15 and 2018-19

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Dec 10: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its latest report has highlighted Karnataka government's successive failure in running the emergency medical services (EMS) under the 108 ambulance services.

The CAG said that in 50 per cent of the trauma cases, ambulances nearly did not reach within the critical golden hour, between 2014-15 and 2018-19.

Besides, the CAG also observed that only in 72 per cent of the cases the ambulance services have reached in the stipulated 30 minutes duration.

The CAG further noted that studies have indicated that the 108 services in cases of cardiac ailments, respiratory and stroke cases, though the time frame stipulated was 10 minutes, in over 60 per cent of cases, it reached much later.

"The success of EMS is largely dependent on its responsiveness to emergencies and the adequacy of the infrastructure in place. Audit noticed that EMS fell short of achieving the desired objectives completely," the CAG explained.



Outsourced image

The report added that the project aimed to reach the patients/sites within 20 minutes on an average in urban areas and 30 minutes on an average in rural areas and it was noticed that this was achieved in only 72 per cent of the cases.

Citing an example in Chitradurga, the CAG has said December 2, 2017 at 4.29am, the call centre received an emergency call related to cardiac ailment from Chitradurga district. An ambulance (KA07G402) was assigned to the case immediately.

"The ambulance took 56 minutes to reach the patient," the CAG stated.

While an example of the delayed responses to send an ambulance was also recorded wherein May 4, 2018 at 1.33am, the call centre received an emergency call related to medical

assault from Raichur district. "An ambulance was assigned to the case at 1.39am. The ambulance took 80 minutes to reach the spot. It was observed that the caller made 18 follow-up calls to check on where it was stuck," the CAG claimed.

In its report, the CAG has said that between the period 2014-15 and 2018-19, the centralised call centre in Bangalore attended as many as 253 lakh calls.

Of these, the CAG has noted, that the Centre has identified 91.62 lakh calls were triaged as effective calls, 51.05 lakh as medical emergencies and 41.94 lakh cases saw ambulances being dispatched.

The CAG has urged the government to chalk out a standard operating procedure (SOP) to the operations of emergency medical services to govern the operations of the ambulances, address the calls and also pre-alerting the hospitals on the arrival of the patients.

The success of EMS is largely dependent on its responsiveness to emergencies and the adequacy of the infrastructure in place. Audit noticed that EMS fell short of achieving the desired objectives completely

CAG REPORT FINDS

HOW BEEF-BAN IN KARNA HURTS TOURISM IN GOA

GOA IS LARGELY RELIANT ON THE SOUTHERN STATE TO FULFILL ITS DEMAND FOR LIVE CATTLE OR SLAUGHTERED BEEF

AGENCIES

Panaji, Dec 10: The new anti-cow slaughter bill passed in the Karnataka state Assembly Wednesday is likely to paralyse beef sales in Goa. Goa is largely reliant on the southern state to fulfill its demand for live cattle or slaughtered beef.

"The new law prohibits even the transport of cattle with a jail term. This will make it near impossible for us to bring live cattle to Goa for slaughter," Manna Bepari, president of Quraishi Meat Traders' Association, said Thursday.

Majority of the beef sold in Goa is sourced from the neighbouring state of Karnataka, especially from the border district of Belgavi. On an average, Goa consumes nearly



25 tonnes of beef every day, and the demand rises during the tourism season which stretches from October to March.

The red meat is commonly consumed by tourists, as well as by the members of the minority communities in the state, which account for more than 30 per cent of the population.

Over the last few years, supply of beef in Goa's meat stores has been inconsistent on account of erratic functioning of the state's only authorised abattoir, the Goa Meat Complex, which is allowed to slaughter cattle. Raids by cow vigilante groups on trucks transporting live cattle as well as slaughtered beef

from Karnataka have also taken a toll on the easy availability of the red meat.

Bepari maintains that the supply of beef from Maharashtra had already dwindled on account of the strict laws being enacted in that state and now with the anti-cattle slaughter bill being strengthened by widening the definition of cattle as "cow, calf of a cow and bull, bullock, and he or she buffalo below the age of thirteen years" in Karnataka would mean that very little amount will come from the southern state too. "In Maharashtra, the law was already strict but now in Karnataka the law has changed too," Bepari said.

Kerala civic polls: 2nd phase records enthusiastic voting



AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 10: The second phase of Kerala's civic polls in five central districts is seeing a very enthusiastic response from the electorate as after five hours of start of polling there has been a 40 per cent turnout.

The first phase of polls was held Tuesday. Thursday, districts of Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad and Wayanad went to the polls.

Superstar Mammootty, a resident of Ernakulam district along with his wife and actor son Dulquer Salman failed to vote as their names were missing from the voters list, as they had moved their residence.

Former top bureaucrat turned short story writer NS Madhavan after casting his vote at a booth in Ernakulam said the voting pattern in the civic polls has a different picture as it's mostly concerning local issues.

The most keenly awaited contest will be the one at Ernakulam where the ruling CPI-M led Pinarayi Vijayan's Left Democratic Front is determined to wrest the Cochin Corporation, which for the past two terms are with the Congress led UDF. Likewise in Kottayam, it's a do-or-die battle between once former close aides and belonged to

the Kerala Congress (Mani).

Today that party is deeply divided and the faction led by Jose K Mani, son of late KM Mani has switched his allegiance and is now an ally of the Left and the other faction led by party veteran P.J. Joseph and his faction is with the Congress led UDF.

"The traitors of Mani sir will be given a fitting reply by the electorate," said Jose, while Joseph said he is supremely confident of his party doing extremely well and Jose's faction will bite the dust.

Considerable interest is coming up at Palakkad, where the BJP is expecting to do well as they consider it as one of their strongholds. Left convenor and also the CPI-M state secretary A Vijayaraghavan said there is no doubt of the outcome as they are going to come out with winning colours.

Congress legislator Anil Akkara has approached the State Election Commission with a complaint against State Local Self Government Minister AC Moideen, who is understood to have cast his vote at 6.55 am.

The official polling time is from 7 am to 6 pm, with the last one hour kept for Covid positive patients and those in quarantine, who all will have to come in PPE kits.

What next for Vijayan's aide

ALL EYES ON ED AS KERALA CM'S AIDE SEEKS MORE TIME TO APPEAR

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 10: All eyes are on the ED now as Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's close aide CM Ravindran once again failed to appear before the agency for questioning on Thursday in the gold smuggling case. "He was unwell and sought two weeks time to do so," a report said.

A letter to this effect was handed over to the ED by Ravindran's counsel, which was endorsed by a medical professional. The letter said that he needed two weeks as he had just recovered from Covid-19 and had constant headache and neck pain.

Ravindran, an Assistant Private Secretary to the CM, is under treatment at the Medical College Hospital here and was issued notice for the third time to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials at their Kochi office Thursday.

While the opposition Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have gone hammer and tongs at Vijayan for allegedly shielding Ravindran, Communist Party of India (Marxist) leaders are defending and giving him a clean chit.

This is the second time in succession and overall the third time that Ravindran was admitted to the Medical College Hospital here Tuesday.

State BJP President K Surendran said there has to be an "impartial" medical team of experts who should identify Ravindran's health issue.

"CM Ravindran is CM's Ravindran and our CM (Vijayan) will be in trouble the moment Ravindran appears before the ED. Hence, they are trying to see that he does not appear before the ED," said Surendran.

State Tourism Minister and CPI (M) leader Kadakampally Surendran claimed that the BJP leader was known for blurring out baseless statements and all need to look into



Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan (L) and his aide CM Ravindran

CM Ravindran is our CM (Vijayan) and our CM (Vijayan) will be in trouble the moment Ravindran appears before the ED. Hence, they are trying to see that he doesn't appear before the ED

K SURENDRAN | PRESIDENT, BJP'S KERALA UNIT



his present outbursts as such.

In November, a day after Ravindran was served the first notice by the central agency, he had tested coronavirus positive. After his self-quarantine period ended, a second notice was issued to him November 25 but he was hospitalised within hours after complaining of breathing problems.

The first notice was served in early November after the gold smuggling case prime accused Swapna Suresh's alleged links with Ravindran had surfaced.

Ravindran is a CPI (M) nominee and is posted in Vijayan's office. Vijayan has acknowledged that Ravindran has known him for the past several years.

He was reportedly posted in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) by bypassing rules related to his educational qualifications and age.

A native of Kozhikode district, Ravindran has been a vital cog between the party and the top leaders of the CPI (M) and was on the personal staff of party leader Kodiyeri Balakrishnan from 2006-11, when he was the Home Minister in the VS Achuthanandan government.

When Vijayan took over as the Chief Minister in 2016, Ravindran wielded major clout and his alleged close proximity with accused senior IAS officer M Sivasankar is often talked about.

Incidentally soon, after Ravindran failed to appear before the ED, the agency started a probe into several business ventures of Ravindran, based on a few complaints received by it.

The ED officials went around two dozen business establishments in Kozhikode and Kannur districts and have reportedly got several leads.

After Ravindran failed to appear for the second time, the ED asked the state Registration department to submit a list of properties owned by Ravindran.

Why should I resign, asks Kerala Speaker

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 10: In a point to point rebuttal of all allegations levelled by the Congress and the BJP, Kerala Assembly Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan Thursday ruled out his resignation.

"I have done no wrong, so why should I resign," asked the soft spoken Sreeramakrishnan, while addressing the media, the first time since allegations made against him nearly a week ago.

Earlier in the day, Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and state BJP president K Surendran went hammer and tongs against the Speaker, and the latter demanded the Speaker's resignation. Ever since the statement of prime accused in the Kerala gold smuggling case, given in a court surfaced that 'big sharks' had a role in helping the accused like Swapna Suresh, the name of the Speaker started doing the rounds and both the Congress and the BJP went to town with it.

"I have already made it clear that I knew her, but had no clue of her background of what has come up now. No help was given or taken and as said by me, yesterday, I will again say, I have never travelled with the accused nor have I met them, when I was abroad," said the Speaker.

"If a need arises, I am prepared to appear before any to testify about this and if I have to do that, I do not need any 'insulation' and will appear as just an ordinary person. Since at the time agencies are probing the case, the question of taking legal steps will be taken later," added the speaker.

Chennithala said the total construction cost of building the Kerala Assembly then (in the mid-nineties) was Rs 76 crores.

"Since Sreeramakrishnan took over as the Speaker in 2016, so far



P Sreeramakrishnan gives a point to point rebuttal to all allegations levelled by the Congress and the BJP regarding the gold-smuggling case

he has blown up Rs 100 crores which includes fresh construction, holding programmes, etc. This is a colossal waste of money, when Kerala is passing through the worst of the financial crisis," said Chennithala.

"Lot of work has been handed over to the Uralungal labour contract co-operative society, flouting all norms. The Speaker has given huge sums of money to them under 'mobilisation advance', a thing which former state PWD minister VK Ebrahim Kunju did and he is now in jail. All elementary norms have been violated by the Speaker," added Chennithala.

"The work was given to Uralungal as they can be given the work without any tender, as per the rules. Also wish to know which company has a track record of returning Rs 18 crores back after they have completed all the work. All the work done by the Speaker is overseen by a three tier committee. I do not know why such allegations are being raised now," asked Sreeramakrishnan. He said he is open to any probe by any committee which even Chennithala can head.

Now, Bangalore has 243 wards

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Dec 10: The Karnataka government passed a crucial bill - 'Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Bill, 2020' - without the Opposition parties' participation in the Assembly session Thursday.

Piloting the BBMP Bill, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister JC Madhuswamy said the Bill is not only aimed at increasing the wards from 198 to 243 but also including all local bodies situated on the fringes of the 816 sq. km boundary of the BBMP.

The BBMP Bill is aimed at the inclusion of at least a one km area beyond the existing BBMP limits to bring in IT pockets from outside the existing limits like parts of Electronics City and some IT parks outside Mahadevapura. This is expected to boost the civic body's revenues.

Taking umbrage over the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tabling and passing the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill - 2020, popularly known as the Anti-Cow Slaughter Bill, without mentioning it in their agenda, the Opposition



Congress boycotted the Legislature session while the Janata Dal (Secular) staged a walkout from the Assembly.

"We have not fixed any limit though the report tabled on Wednesday maintained one km as a limit, though in the Act there is no limit but we are fixing the local body as a unit to be merged into the BBMP limits," Madhuswamy said.

Madhuswamy disclosed that the terms of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor have been increased from one year to two-and-a-half years.

The main reason behind increasing the number of wards is to simplify administration and each Assembly constituency should have only three or four wards instead of six to eight wards as at present, he added.

India shows strong return-to-office trends

BANGALORE AND HYDERABAD ARE CURRENTLY AT LESS THAN 5 PER CENT OF PRE-COVID LEVELS AMONG THE METRO CITIES

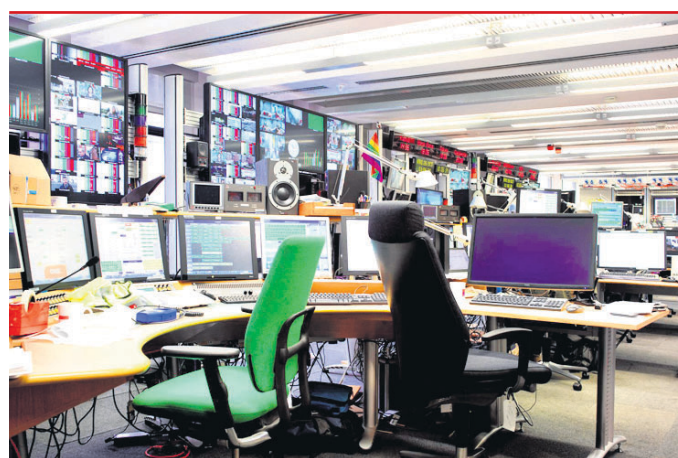
AGENCIES

Bangalore, Dec 10: Led by women workers, India is showing a strong return-to-office trend and the number of people returning to work in November has risen to 10 per cent of pre-COVID levels, a new report revealed Thursday.

Overall, 375 per cent more people returned to office in November as compared to April in the country.

Based on the data collected from more than 4 lakh employees across the country, the report by hybrid workplace solutions provider WorkInSync and employee transport solutions service MoveInSync said that Mumbai and Delhi-NCR led the 'return-to-office' trends, currently at greater than 20 per cent of pre-COVID levels.

Bangalore and Hyderabad are



currently at less than 5 per cent of pre-COVID levels among the metro cities. However, 20 per cent workforce in the rest of India has returned to

offices compared to 10 per cent in Metros to pre-COVID levels.

The data suggested that women employees are way ahead of their

OVERALL, 375 PER CENT MORE PEOPLE RETURNED TO OFFICE IN NOVEMBER AS COMPARED TO APRIL IN THE COUNTRY

DATA SUGGESTS THAT WOMEN EMPLOYEES ARE WAY AHEAD OF THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS IN THE EFFORT TO GET BACK TO OFFICE

COMPANIES IN PHARMA SECTOR (27 PER CENT) AND IT, ITES AND BPO SECTOR (16 PER CENT) ARE RETURNING TO OFFICE AT A FASTER RATE, COMPARED TO PURE-PLAY SOFTWARE PRODUCT COMPANIES (3 PER CENT)

male counterparts in the effort to get back to office. While the rate of return to office is faster for women than men, overall ratio of women vs men

remains low at 0.53 vs 0.72 pre-Covid. "The data clearly shows that India wants to get back to business as usual very quickly. The index is also indicating the fact that with the hope of a vaccine in 2021, return-to-office levels in IT, ITES & BPO sector could potentially reach 50 per cent of pre-COVID levels by May 2021 and up to 80 per cent by September," said Deepesh Agarwal, CEO of WorkInSync. Companies in Pharma sector (27 per cent) and IT, ITES and BPO sector (16 per cent) are returning to office at a faster rate, compared to pure-play software product companies (3 per cent).

"Since the phase II of re-opening, there has been a consistent upward shift in the way employees have returned back to work and that trend will pick up pace in the next few months," Agarwal said.

of the day quote

The new agriculture laws brought by the Centre will exploit the farmers
KAMAL NATH | CONGRESS LEADER

Covid cases are falling, and death count in a day is lowest in the last 40 days. The situation has improved, and we can definitely say the third wave of the pandemic here is on the wane
SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

Schoolteachers whose family members have tested coronavirus positive should not be asked to teach in schools until their home isolation stint ends
PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Techie ends life

New Delhi: A 32-year-old engineer, who was working from home following the Covid-19 outbreak, committed suicide by stabbing himself with a knife in Delhi's Pashchim Vihar area, the police said Thursday. According to the police, an argument occurred in Udai's family on Wednesday night. At the time, all the family members were present in his room. Following the incident, Udai threatened the family members that he will hurt himself with knife if they didn't move out of the room immediately.

Militant held

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Police arrested a Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militant in Budgam district of the union territory, officials said Thursday. Tariq Ahmad Bhat was arrested during a 'naka' checking late on Wednesday night, the police officials said. They said a pistol and some incriminating material were recovered from his possession. Bhat had reportedly joined militant ranks in September this year.

Four killed

Dhanbad: Four people were killed and five others, including a woman, injured when the vehicle carrying them rammed into a trailer from behind in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district, police said Thursday. The accident took place late Wednesday night when the vehicle coming from Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi crashed into the trailer on National Highway 2 near Chali Bangla village under the jurisdiction of Rajganj police station, they said.

Three killed

Korba: Three persons were killed in separate incidents of elephant attack in Chhattisgarh's Korba district in the last four days, a forest official said Thursday. The latest attack took place in the early hours of the day, in which Budhmaniya Bai (50) was trampled to death by a tusker when she was sleeping at her farm in Ghaghra village under Pasaan forest range, the official said. Similarly, a pachyderm attacked Bandhano Bai (70) in Badgaon village under Lemru forest range, and she later succumbed to her injuries at a hospital, he said. A 65-year-old man identified as Ghasiram Gond was killed by an elephant in Birra village in Pasaan area on December 7, the official said. The kin of the deceased persons were given an instant relief of Rs 25,000 each, while the remaining compensation of Rs 5.75 lakh each will be handed over on completion of formalities, he said.



The farmers' agitation is also a movement to restore the democratic values of India
AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT

DATE EXTENDED

The last date for submission of application forms for Haj 2021 has been extended to January 10, Union Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi announced Thursday



Nadda's convoy attacked in Bengal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Diamond Harbour (WB), Dec 10: Stones rained in a torrent, shattering windscreens of vehicles on Thursday as the convoy of BJP chief J P Nadda came under attack by alleged TMC supporters in West Bengal, leaving several people injured, party leaders and eyewitnesses said.

An angry Nadda called the attack "unprecedented" and alleged the state has slipped into "complete lawlessness and goonda raj". West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee insinuated the attack was staged. "Every day they (BJP activists) are coming out (for rallies) with firearms. They are slapping themselves and blaming it on the Trinamool Congress. Just think of the situation. They are roaming around with the BSF, CRPF, Army, CISE... Then why are you so scared," Banerjee said in Kolkata.

Several union ministers, including Home Minister Amit Shah, and West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar reacted with indignation over the incident. "Bengal has descended into an era of tyranny, anarchy and darkness under the Trinamool rule. The manner in which political violence has been

institutionalized and brought to the extreme in West Bengal under TMC rule is sad and worrying," Shah tweeted.

Dhankhar accused the state administration of failing to act in spite of his alerting the chief secretary and the director general of police. The governor tweeted that he had intimidated the state administration, at 8.19 am and 9.05 am on Thursday, of the possibility of the collapse of law and order during a BJP meeting at Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas district.

"Concerned at alarming reports of anarchy and lawlessness @MamataOfficial indicating ruling party harms on rampage at BJP President Convoy and political police @WBPolice in support," the governor wrote. "Am sure they have immunity and protection of political police with administration extension of political outfit," Dhankhar wrote, adding "Events indicate total abdication of lawful authority."

The vehicles in Nadda's motorcade were attacked when he was on way to Diamond Harbour to address a meeting of party workers, resulting in injuries to several BJP leaders including party general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya. Nadda, who was in a bullet-proof vehicle, was unharmed.

NCB nabs hairstylist, drug peddler

The duo was caught near Meera Towers in the posh Oshiwara area of Jogeshwari West and the NCB team recovered 11 gram of cocaine and Rs 56,000 cash from them

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 10: Tightening the noose on Bollywood, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has arrested a celebrity hairstylist and a drug peddler and seized 16 packets of cocaine, as part of the ongoing probe into the drugs mafia angle related to the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, officials said here Thursday.

The arrested persons were identified as hairstylist Suraj Godambe and drug peddler Lalchandra Yadav who is an auto-rickshaw driver who delivered drugs to the customers. They were produced in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court and were remanded to NCB

SUSHANT DEATH PROBE



custody till December 16, said NCB Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede. The duo was caught near Meera Towers in the posh Oshiwara area of Jogeshwari West and the NCB team recovered 11 gram of cocaine and Rs 56,000 cash from them. "We have seized 16 packets containing overall 11 gram of cocaine along with an auto-rickshaw and drug

proceeds amounting to Rs 56,000," the NCB said.

While Godambe worked with several top Bollywood personalities and film production houses, Yadav was the conduit who supplied the contraband on behalf of a Nigerian drug syndicate. With this several prominent Bollywood names have come under the NCB scanner and are likely to be summoned for questioning soon.

The latest development comes a couple of days after the NCB seized more than 5 kg of 'Malana Cream' hashish worth more than Rs 2.5 crore and arrested two persons from the Oshiwara area through whom the drugs were procured allegedly for Sushant Singh Rajput.

Law to protect senior citizens soon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 10: The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is planning to amend laws that will prosecute people who harass and evict their parents from the property.

According to official sources, the government is planning to bring in changes to 'UP Maintenance of parents and senior citizens rules 2014' wherein the older parents' children could be punished for evicting them from their property.

The children, in such cases, may also be divested of their rights to parents' property. The Uttar Pradesh Law Commission has prepared an amended draft and sent it to the state government.

The maintenance rules for the parents were prepared in 2014 but there were not enough provisions for protection for the property of senior citizens from their children. Earlier this week, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court had taken cognizance of the case of an elderly couple whose daughters were trying to force their parents out of their house. The court directed the Lucknow district magistrate to provide protection to an elderly couple who are allegedly being harassed by their daughters for property. The court also sought the state government's reply on the measures taken for the establishment of the tribunal and appellate tribunal under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, and the rules framed under it for welfare and protection of senior citizens in Uttar Pradesh.

The Allahabad High Court had granted three months' time to the state government to issue notification for establishment of tribunal and appellate tribunal, designate maintenance officer, establish old age homes, constitute district committee of senior citizens to give wide publicity in media and to sensitize the public of the state.

WINTER MARVEL



View of Trilokinath area after the town received fresh snowfall at Udaipur in Lahaul-Spiti, Thursday

Drone spotted over IB: BSF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Dec 10: A drone was spotted flying over the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's RS Pura sector, BSF officials said Thursday.

Alert BSF troops guarding the IB at a border outpost fired on the drone Wednesday night, forcing it to return back, the officials said. There have been instances of Pakistan, its army and intelligence agencies using drones along the IB and LoC to ferry weapons, ammunition, explosive material and narcotics into Jammu and Kashmir in the past six months.

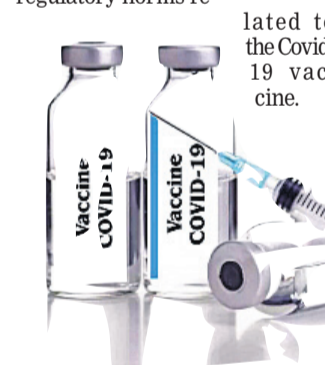
On November 29, alert security forces deployed on the International Border (IB) with Pakistan spotted a drone in Arnia sector of Jammu district. On November 21, drone movement was noticed in Mendhar sector along the Line of Control (LoC) amid a surge in ceasefire violations by the Pakistani Army, according to sources.

Two drones were spotted and crossed the IB in Samba sector on November 20. On June 20, a Pakistani drone loaded with a sophisticated rifle and seven grenades was shot down by the Border Security Force along the International Border in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

'No compromise on norms'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 10: Allaying the fear of the public, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan Thursday emphasised that no compromise has been made on scientific and regulatory norms re-



related to the Covid-19 vaccine.

The minister's assertion holds importance at a time questions are being raised on both the safety and efficacy of the vaccines which are being developed at a phenomenal rate at a time the world is struggling to find a silver bullet to end its pandemic woes. "With stringent oversight, we are sure that there is no compromise on scientific and regulatory norms, stretching from safety of the trials to the efficacy of the vaccine," said Harsh Vardhan, while addressing the World Bank's high-level inter-ministerial meet on vaccination. He, however, assured that vaccine will be available in the coming few weeks and the vac-

ination process will kick-start as soon as it is approved by the regulatory agency concerned, the Drugs Controller General of India. As many as eight Covid-19 vaccine candidates are under different stages of clinical trials and could be ready for authorisation in near future, including three indigenous vaccines.

These include Astrazeneca and Oxford University developed and Serum Institute of India manufactured Covishield, Covaxin by Bharat Biotech Ltd, ZyCoVd by Zydyus Cadila, Russian vaccine candidate Sputnik-V, NVX-CoV2373 by the SII, HGC019 by Gennova Biopharmaceuticals, and two unlabelled vaccines- Recombinant Protein Antigen based vaccine by Biological ELtd and Inactivated rabies vector platform by Bharat Biotech.

Assam NRC not final, HC told

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 10: The historic National Register Of Citizens (NRC) in Assam published in August last year was only a "supplementary list" and the final document is yet to come out, state coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma has told the Gauhati High Court.

In the "supplementary list" of the NRC, over 10,000 names were either wrongly included or excluded and necessary orders have been issued to delete nearly 4,800 "ineligible

persons" from the document, Sarma said in an affidavit to the high court.

The final NRC was released on August 31, 2019 by excluding names of 19,06,657 persons. A total of 3,11,21,004 names were included out of 3,30,27,661 applicants. The affidavit was submitted as per an order by the Gauhati High Court in relation to a writ petition by one Rahima Begam against a Nalbari district Foreigners' Tribunal order, declaring her a foreigner. "...The Supplementary NRC was already published by the LRPCs on

31st August, 2019, but the final National Register of Citizens is yet to be published by the Registrar General of India as per Clause 7 of the Schedule of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003," it said.

Sarma further stated that after the publication of the "supplementary list" of inclusion and exclusion on August 31 last year, some of the District Registrar of Citizens Registers (DRCR) formally requested the NRC state coordinator to "change results" of NRC with "proper reasons".

Man acquitted of mango theft after 12 years



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 10: It took 12 years for a man to get acquitted of the charges of stealing mangoes and attempting to kill the owner of the orchard.

Rashid Ali Beg, the owner of the orchard, had lodged an FIR at Malihabad police station in June 2008 alleging that Farid Pindari and Hafiz Abdul Rais had forcibly plucked mangoes from his orchard in Malihabad. Beg alleged that the two tried to kill him when he objected to their stealing mangoes.

In the FIR, attempt to murder charges under Section 307 of the IPC (Indian Penal Code) were levelled against Farid Pindari and Hafiz Abdul Rais.

During the course of the legal battle, Hafiz Abdul Rais died and the case against him was closed.

In the judgment delivered here earlier this week, the additional sessions judge P.C. Kushwaha acquitted Farid Pindari of the charges of theft of mangoes and attempt to murder. Kushwaha stated that the prosecution had failed to prove that Farid Pindari had forcibly stolen mangoes from the complainant's orchard or had tried to kill him. The investigating officer's (sub-inspector) report also pointed out that no gunshot was fired and no mangoes were stolen. The allegations were levelled due to personal enmity.

Farmer's son sells free winter clothes at Singhu border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Not everything comes with a price tag. Not love, not respect and not the sweaters and jackets that Shakeel Mohammed Qureshi gives away free to protect farmers protesting at the Singhu border from the biting cold.

Around 8 am every day Qureshi starts setting up his roadside stall, from where he sells locally-manufactured warm clothes for free to the farmers protesting at the Delhi-Haryana border against the Centre's three new contentious farm laws.

The 35-year-old man, whose father is a farmer in Uttar Pradesh's

Baghpat district, has distributed around 300 jackets and sweaters for free among the peasants. On an average, he used to earn a profit of around Rs 2,500 daily by selling the winter wear.

"My father is a farmer, too, so I know that their life is very tough," says Qureshi, who lives in Narela in north Delhi with his wife and children. "Farmers don't ask for much from the government, except a fair price for their produce." Unwilling to talk about the price, Qureshi says: "This is my contribution to a good cause. That's all."

Help has been pouring in from different quarters for the protesting



farmers at the border. While some individuals and NGOs have been or-

ganising langars (community kitchens) and distributing items of

daily need, others have set up free medical camps. Many have volunteered to clean utensils, collect garbage, charge mobile phones and wash clothes.

The farmers have been protesting at several border points into Delhi for the past two weeks over their demands to repeal the new legislations, which they claim would benefit the corporates and end the traditional wholesale markets and the minimum support price regime. The union leaders had rejected a government proposal on Wednesday to amend the new legislations and announced that they would intensify their agitation.

Most of the farmers have come prepared, but a few need support to keep fighting, according to Qureshi, who hopes to have a merchandise store of his own before he turns 40. His head held low, Qureshi smiles when a protesting farmer, who just got a free jacket from his stall, said: "The god will give you a fortune in return. You have a small shop, but a large heart."

As dusk settles, a group of Nihang Sikhs approached the Samaritan, but he has run out of stock. Assuring the band of armed Sikh warriors, Qureshi said: "I will be back with jackets for you tomorrow morning."

of the day quote

The Modi government is snatching the fundamental rights of the poor. It is a crime against humanity. For the better future of the country, we have to respect the rights of every class

Nowadays, there is a big trend to bulldoze democracy, crush fundamental rights, and muzzle the voice of the people. Our government is committed to uphold the human rights

As our country prepares to celebrate 75 years of independence in 2022 and takes its rightful place in the comity of nations, the new Parliament building will be an edifice that connects every Indian with the rich legacy and illustrious past because of its seamless proximity to the existing Parliament building that has witnessed the flowering of Indian democratic tradition over the last hundred years

SHORT TAKES

Two men killed

New Delhi: Two men were gunned down by at least three accused in north Delhi's Burari area on Wednesday evening. The two men, identified as Anuj and Anand, both in their late twenties, were rushed to the hospital but were declared brought dead. According to sources, the two men were murdered after a scuffle in C Block of Mukundpur in Burari. The police have identified the accused and multiple teams have been formed to arrest them.

Minor girl raped

Jalaun (UP): A 5-year-old Dalit girl was allegedly gang-raped by two minor boys in a village situated in Aata police circle area of Jalaun district in Uttar Pradesh, police said Thursday. The girl was allegedly lured away while she was playing near her house and then gang-raped on Wednesday by the boys living in Sanghi village. The girl's father claimed that three boys were involved in the crime but the police said only two were involved.

Woman ends life

Bhadohi (Uttar Pradesh): A 26-year-old woman allegedly committed suicide after consuming "sindoor" (vermillion) when her husband refused to take her along to Surat where he worked, police said. Station officer (SO) of Suryava police station, Pradeep Kumar, said, "Vikas Bind, a resident of Danpur village, married Saraswati Devi three years ago. Vikas used to work in Surat district of Gujarat and had come home during the lockdown. Four days ago, he left for Surat. Saraswati wanted to accompany her husband, but Vikas insisted that she stayed at home and looked after their two-and-half-year-old child," said Kumar.



The health and well-being of India's tribal population is of utmost importance to the government

HARSH VARDHAN
UNION HEALTH MINISTER

ROADS TO BE NAMED AFTER BIKRU MASSACRE VICTIMS

The eight police personnel who were martyred in the Bikru massacre on July 3 this year, will now have roads named after them in their native places



RAJNATH TARGETS CHINA AT ASEAN MEET

In his address at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), Rajnath Singh also said terrorism remains a major scourge for the region and the world

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: In a veiled reference to China's aggressive military behaviour, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Thursday said exercising self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoiding actions that may further complicate situation will go a long way in bringing sustained regional peace.

In his address at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), Singh also said terrorism remains a major scourge for the region and the world. The structures that support and sustain terrorism continue to exist, including in India's neighbourhood, he said in an apparent reference to terrorism emanating from Pakistan. He called for stronger commitment and need to strengthen international mechanism to fight terrorism, "jointly and vigorously".

Talking about key geo-strategic issues, the defence minister high-



lighted India's vision for an open and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific region based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations and peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue.

Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe was among those who attended the virtual meeting of the ADMM-Plus, a platform comprising 10-nation ASEAN (Association of

Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight dialogue partners— India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States.

"As we enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercising self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoiding actions that may further complicate the situation, will go a long way in bringing sustained

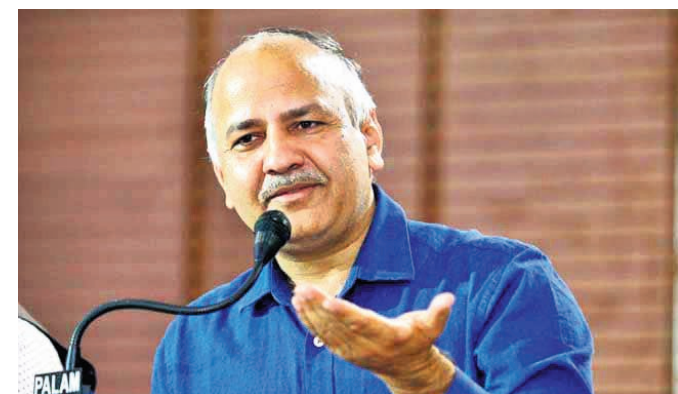
peace to the region," Singh said.

Singh's comments came amid the seven-month-long military standoff between India and China in eastern Ladakh, and Beijing's increasingly aggressive military behaviour in the South China Sea and Indo-Pacific region. A number of ASEAN member nations have territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea.

The defence minister also said the ability of the grouping to collectively respond to challenges based on the fundamentals of freedom, inclusivity and openness in the region will define its future. "Threats to the rules based order, maritime security, cyber related crimes and terrorism, just to name a few, remain the challenges that we need to address as a forum," he said.

The defence ministry, in a statement, said Singh also emphasised that the Indo-Pacific region confronts numerous traditional and non-traditional security threats.

Sisodia's house attacked by BJP goons, says AAP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: The AAP Thursday claimed that the house of Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was "attacked by BJP goons".

The Delhi BJP, however, refuted the allegations, saying their protest was peaceful. The BJP workers earlier staged a protest near Sisodia's residence over an alleged conspiracy to kill mayors and leaders of the party-ruled municipal corporations staging an indefinite dharna demanding payment of dues from the Kejriwal government.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also condemned the incident and wondered why the BJP was "getting so desperate by the day in Delhi". "I strongly condemn the systematic, organised and violent attack on Dy CM Manish Sisodia's home. The goons entered his house in police presence when he was away. Why is BJP getting so desperate by the day in Delhi?" he tweeted.

Addressing a press conference, AAP spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj alleged that the police did not stop the goons from entering Sisodia's residence and even removed the barricades around the house.

He also played a purported video of the outside area of Sisodia's residence where a group of people can be seen forcefully entering in-

side. "BJP goons attacked the house of deputy chief minister while he was not at home. The Delhi Police helped the BJP goons in this act," Bhardwaj added.

No immediate reaction was available from the city police. AAP leader Atishi called it a "black day" in Delhi's political history. "This is a black day in Delhi's political history that the Union Home Minister is now using his party goons and Delhi Police to attack the family of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in his absence from his residence," she said at the press conference.

Reacting to the charges, Delhi BJP vice president Ashok Goel Devraha claimed AAP leaders were trying to divert attention from the 'conspiracy' to kill BJP mayors and other corporation leaders. "We protested outside Sisodia's residence to make it clear that the BJP workers are capable of answering any form of challenge," he said.

The Delhi BJP had on Wednesday lodged a police complaint against Sisodia and AAP leader Durgesh Pathak, alleging that they were conspiring to kill leaders of the party-ruled municipal corporations. Pathak had rubbished the allegation, saying the BJP has a habit of mixing random audios with random videos to "defame and malign" the image of people.

COVID-19 TALLY NEARS 98 LAKH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 10: With 31,521 new coronavirus cases and 412 deaths in the past 24 hours, India's overall tally stood at 97,67,371 on Thursday, while the death toll reached 1,41,772, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said.

On Tuesday, the country had recorded 26,567 cases, the lowest spike witnessed in recent months. Till now 92,53,306 have recovered, while there are 3,72,293 active cases. The recovery rate stands at 94.74 per cent, and the fatality rate is 1.45 per cent.

Maharashtra continues to be the worst-hit state with 18,64,348 cases till date.

Over 72 per cent of the daily new cases were reported by 10 states and UT -- Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Gujarat.

BOOSTING TIES



Japanese Chief of Staff of Air Force, General Izutsu Shunji inspects the Guard of Honour at Air Headquarters in New Delhi, Thursday

Cong seeks report after poll loss

In a shocker to Rajasthan's ruling Congress, the opposition BJP swept 1,911 seats in the recently held Panchayat Samiti elections while the Congress managed to win 1,781 seats

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 10: Sensing a fresh trouble in the politically volatile state of Rajasthan, the Congress high command on Thursday sought a report from its state unit after the party lost the Panchayat polls to the BJP, sources said.

The Congress move comes in the wake of loss in Bihar, where the complacency on the part of the leaders was questioned. In Rajasthan, the party saw an internal crisis after Sachin Pilot raised a banner of revolt, though he came back after a truce was effected. Trouble, however, in the state seems to be far from over.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot is at the receiving end after the loss. Though he blamed Covid for the loss, Gehlot said, "In district council and Panchayat polls, the results were not to our expectation and from the past nine months our government was involved in Covid management and our priority was to save lives and livelihood of the people".

He said, "Due to corona we could



not publicise our work and the opposition misled the people but we will give a befitting reply to the opposition considering the feedback from the people." The Congress lost even in the state president Govind Singh Dotsara's area, and many party candidates from the constituencies of several Ministers also lost.

While reacting on the poll loss, Sachin Pilot told the media that "the government will complete the term", however the results should not be linked with farmers agitation and he will put his view to the party high command.

In a shocker to Rajasthan's ruling Congress, the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party swept 1,911 seats in the recently held Panchayat Samiti elections while the Congress

managed to win 1,781 seats. The Independents gained 425 seats, the Bahujan Samaj Party got three seats while the CPI-M captured 16 seats in the elections. The Rashtriya Loktantrik Party got 57 seats, according to the State Election Commission website.

Preempting any move from the rival camp, Gehlot has attacked his detractors in the party. While inaugurating a Congress office in Sirohi district recently, he had said that the state government was saved from a crisis as the senior leaders suspended the rebels within the party fold.

He also accused the opposition BJP of restarting the "game of thrones" again to topple his government. The rebel leaders, he was insinuating at, were former Pradesh Congress Committee chief and his former deputy Sachin Pilot, and the Tonk leader's loyalists, including Ramesh Meena and Vishvendra Singh. Meena and Singh were suspended and removed as state ministers when Pilot with his 18 MLAs went to Manesar in an open rebellion against the Gehlot leadership.

CJI'S MOTHER DUPED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Nagpur, Dec 10: The mother of all heist happened when Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde's mother was cheated of over Rs 2 crore. The shocking development came to light when Nagpur Police arrested one of two persons involved in the crime, top officials said. The prime accused Tapas Ghosh, 49, was nabbed while his wife, who is named in the police complaint, is under investigations, said Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar said.

He was produced before the court and remanded to police custody till December 16, while further investigations in the matter are underway, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone II) Vinita Sahu.

The DCP declined to reveal further details as the probe is still underway by a Special Investigation Team, under her supervision.

As per a complaint lodged in August with Sitabuldi Police Station by the CJI's mother Mukta Bobde, she is the owner of a hereditary property, Seadon Lawns, near the Akashwani Square which

was hired out for weddings and other functions.

As the manager of the property since over 12 years, Ghosh was paid a salary and commission on the rentals which he used to collect on her behalf.

Owing to the complainant's advanced age and frail health, the accused couple allegedly forged receipts of the income from the property and did not deposit the entire amounts collected.

The goings-on came to light during the pandemic lockdown when many customers cancelled their bookings but failed to get their refunds.

When the fraud came to light around four months ago, the Bobde family approached the police which set up a SIT and the subsequent probe unearthed the scam worth around ₹2.50 crore, sending the police and political circles in a tizzy.

Under DCP Sahu's supervision, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) is probing the matter from all angles, including the possible involvement of any more persons besides the couple.

India, Nepal to resume flight services

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: India and Nepal have decided to resume flight services under a bilateral air bubble arrangement, authoritative sources said on Thursday, in reflection of efforts to restore normalcy in ties that came under severe strain following a bitter border row.

Initially, the service will start with one flight daily from each side between Delhi and Kathmandu, they said. The decision to resume the flight service comes two weeks after Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla visited Kathmandu during which he held extensive talks with the political brass.

Nepalese Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali is likely to visit India in the next three weeks.

"India and Nepal have decided to open flights under a bilateral bubble arrangement, as we have done with several countries," said a source. The flights between the two countries were suspended following the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic.

"We had proposed to Nepal some time back and Nepal has cleared it now," said a source. It is not immediately known when the flight service will be started. The sources said Shringla, during his visit to Nepal on November 26 to 27 had highlighted the importance of people-to-people connectivity in sync with the special relationship between the two countries.

"We are starting the service with Indian and Nepalese nationals and holders of Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) cards of all nationalities, and all valid Indian visa holders except tourist visa," the source said.

From the Indian side, the flights will be operated by Air India which, in normal times, had a daily flight between Delhi and Kathmandu, the sources said.

Kanpur emerges as key centre for Covid vaccine trials

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Dec 10: Kanpur, which has witnessed a high virus load in the pandemic, is now emerging as a key centre for the trials of Covid-19 vaccines, being manufactured by various companies.

After successful human trials of two vaccines, one developed by Bharat Biotech and the other Russian Sputnik, the third vaccine -- Zydus Cadilla's vaccine ZyCoV-D -- would be given to a set of healthy volunteers in Kanpur. According to official sources,



nearly 40 healthy volunteers would be given doses of the vaccine at Prakhar Hospital, where 197 peo-

ple have already been given shots of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

The third trial would be carried

out under the supervision of Dr. V.N. Tripathi, the state's former Director General, Medical Education, who said that "A separate lab has been set up in the hospital. Work on listing the volunteers has begun."

According to the health department, Zydus had done trials on 20 people in Kanpur last month but the details were not shared. However, the process has been kept transparent for the third phase. Dr. Tripathi said the drug controller had given the approval and the vaccine stock would reach Kanpur soon.

The Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) earlier had short-listed Prakhar Hospital as one of two centres for human trials. Dr. J.S. Kushwaha, the head of Prakhar Hospital, said none of the volunteers who were administered the vaccine had complained of any side-effects so far.

Fifty-seven more people were given Covaxin in the third trial in Kanpur. The volunteers included the doctors and engineers who were examined by an ICMR team, which is staying in Kanpur during this phase.

Only 13 volunteers went for

doses at the Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Memorial (GSVM) Medical College, where the trial of Sputnik vaccine was going on. Seven others refused after learning that a Haryana Minister tested positive for Covid-19 even after he was given one dose of a vaccine.

Prof. Richa Giri, vice principal of the medical college, said, "There is no reason for them to be apprehensive. I think their fear stems from the social media posts on this issue. They need to realize vaccine is the only way we can defeat corona and they should be mentally prepared."

international

of the day quote

We are now in a second wave. We are seeing the pressure has built up in a number of provinces



ZWELI MKHIZE | SOUTH AFRICA HEALTH MINISTER

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



CARRIE LAM | HONG KONG CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Our view is that of course we have serious concerns about what is happening between India and Pakistan but these are pre-eminently matters for those two governments to settle and I know that he appreciates that point



BORIS JOHNSON | UK PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

SpaceX's starship prototype blasts off

Washington: A prototype of the future giant SpaceX rocket Starship -- which the company hopes will become its go-to for Mars missions -- crashed in a fiery explosion during a test launch along the Texas coast Wednesday. But the company line was upbeat as a livestream of the launch displayed the on-screen message "AWESOME TEST. CONGRATS STARSHIP TEAM!" "Mars, here we come!!" SpaceX founder Tesla's Elon Musk tweeted just minutes after the flight, explaining that a too-fast landing speed was to blame for the crash.

Quake shakes Taiwan's capital

Taipei: A strong earthquake off the eastern coast of Taiwan shook the capital city of Taipei Thursday night. There were no immediate reports of damage. Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau said the earthquake measured 6.7 and struck about 9:20 p.m. At a depth of 77 kilometers (48 miles). The US Geological Survey measured the magnitude as 6.2.

Senior BJP leader meets PM Oli

Kathmandu: Senior BJP leader and the party's head of the foreign affairs department Vijay Chauthaiwale called on Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli at his official residence here Thursday and discussed matters relating to Nepal-India relations, sources said. Chauthaiwale tweeted that he is visiting Nepal at the invitation of Finance Minister and the ruling Nepal Communist Party General Secretary Bishnu Poudel. Prime Minister's press advisor Surya Thapa said that it was a courtesy call by the Indian leader.

Imran, Bill Gates to work together

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates have agreed to continue working together on the shared objectives of combating the Covid-19 pandemic and eradicating polio in the country, according to an official statement. The statement from the Prime Minister's Office issued on Wednesday said that Khan held a telephonic conversation with Gates earlier in the day and exchanged views on the Covid-19 situation and polio eradication efforts in Pakistan, reports Xinhua news agency.

Common efforts needed to maintain good ties: China

The External Affairs Minister Wednesday said China has given India 'five differing explanations' for deploying forces at LAC and has 'significantly damaged their relationship'



observing the agreements signed between the two sides and committed to resolving the border issue through dialogue and we are committed to safeguarding regional peace and tranquillity at border areas," she said. "In the meantime, we are determined in safeguarding our territorial sovereignty," she said in response to a question at the briefing. Asked to elaborate on the common efforts needed to defuse the current standoff at the border, the spokesperson said,

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 10: Underlining that common efforts were needed to maintain good relations between China and India, a senior Chinese official Thursday said that Beijing is committed to resolving the border standoff through dialogue but was also determined to safeguard its territorial sovereignty.

LADAKH STAND-OFF

The comments by Jaishankar Wednesday during an online interactive session organised by Australian think tank Lowy Institute came against the backdrop of the over seven-month-long military standoff between India and China at the LAC in eastern Ladakh. "China and India are neighbours and the world's two biggest emerging markets and keeping good relations serves the fundamental interests of both countries and its people but it requires common efforts from both sides", Hua underlined at a regular Chinese foreign ministry briefing here. "The merits of the situation at the border area is very clear and the responsibility totally lies with the Indian side. China has been strictly

"like all sovereign states we are determined in safeguarding our territorial integrity. So on the Indian side, I think this is a serious question on what it should reflect upon." "There are challenges in bilateral relations but China's position and the policy on India hasn't changed," she said. As two major countries and emerging markets, "keeping good relations serves the fundamental interests of both and we will stay committed to safeguarding the peace and tranquillity in the border area," she said. The two countries have held eight rounds of Corps Commander-level talks to resolve the military standoff in eastern Ladakh. However the talks have not yielded any concrete outcome yet to ease the border tensions.

US records highest daily nCoV death toll

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 10: The US has set a new grim record of more than 3,000 COVID-19 related deaths in a single day, reflecting a bleak reminder of the pandemic's devastating toll, even as two coronavirus vaccine candidates appear to be on the verge of clearing the country's final regulatory hurdles.

According to The COVID Tracking Project, the US Wednesday reported as many 3,054 reported deaths - the highest single-day total to date.

The previous single-day record was May 7 at 2,769 deaths, it said. Overall, there were 1.8 million tests reported on Wednesday, 210,000 cases, and a record 106,688 COVID-19 patients in US hospitals, it said. The 7-day average for COVID-19 deaths are at an all-time high as deaths are rising throughout the country, it said.



So far more than 15 million Americans have been infected with COVID-19 and 286,249 people have lost their lives, according to Johns Hopkins University. The US, the worst-affected country by the coronavirus pandemic, is in the final

stages of approving at least two COVID-19 vaccines - one by Pfizer and BioNTech and another by Moderna.

The US Food and Drug Administration's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory

Committee is scheduled to meet Thursday to give emergency use authorisation to the Pfizer vaccine.

Within 24 hours of an emergency use authorisation (EUA) by the FDA, the vaccine could be shipped out to distribution sites across the United States to make it available to the Americans who need it the most, said Army Gen Gustave Perna, chief operating officer of Operation Warp Speed.

Perna said that he had given permission to distribute syringes and needles, alcohol wipes and dilutant, which is required in support of the Pfizer vaccine.

"We'll begin that today. The distribution will be completed by Friday, again only to set conditions. And if it sits there for another week or 10 days or whatever, then it does. But planning for success, we wanted to make sure that the states had all that they needed to have," he said.

NO-DEAL BREXIT

EU unveils back-up plans

AGENCIES

Brussels/London, Dec 10: The European Union's executive Thursday laid out contingency plans for a 'no-deal' Brexit at the end of the year to limit disruption to air traffic, and road and rail travel after talks between British and EU leaders failed to break an impasse.

The European Commission also proposed that Britain and the EU continue to offer reciprocal access to their fishing waters for up to a year, potentially easing tension around one of the most emotive sticking points in the trade negotiations. Britain told the EU earlier it should make significant concessions to break the deadlock

by the end of the weekend for clarity about the finale to the five-year-old Brexit crisis.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson to keep talking but there are significant points of difference that remain," Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told BBC TV, adding that both sides needed to take stock at the weekend. "Sunday I think is an important moment," Raab told Sky News. "You never say never in these talks, but I think we

do need to get some finality." Raab said the main points of contention - fisheries and commitments on a level playing field - were narrow in scope but they were matters of principle for Britain.

The UK government has called on Brussels to recognise "two basic points of principle that no other country in the world would accept in dealing with the EU or anyone else as an independent state". Unless the UK and EU are able to thrash out and ratify a deal by the end of this month, Britain will have left the 27-member economic bloc on January 1, 2021, with the prospect of tariffs and quotas on goods as both sides trade on World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms.

Bhutan Parl decriminalises homosexuality

REUTERS

Kathmandu, Dec 10: A joint sitting of both houses of Bhutan's parliament approved a bill Thursday to legalise gay sex, making the tiny Himalayan kingdom the latest Asian nation to take steps towards easing restrictions on same-sex relationships.

Sections 213 and 214 of the penal code had criminalised "unnatural sex", widely interpreted as homosexuality. Lawmaker Ugyen Wangdi, the vice chairperson of a joint panel considering the changes, said 63 of the total 69 members of both houses of parliament had voted in favour of amending the code to scrap the provision. Six members were absent.

"Homosexuality will not be considered as unnatural sex now," Wangdi told Reuters by phone from the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu, without giving details. The changes still need to be approved by the King of Bhutan to become a law. Rights activist Tashi Tsheten said he was "thrilled and really happy" over the parliamentary move, calling it a "victory" for the LGBT+ community. "I think the bill being passed on Human Rights Day itself is a momentous day for everyone in Bhutan," Tsheten, the director of LGBT+ group, Rainbow Bhutan, told Reuters. "I believe everyone who has stood up for the LGBT+ community in Bhutan is going to celebrate today as this is our victory." The move by the majority-Buddhist nation of 800,000 people comes after other Asian countries relaxed restrictions on the rights of the LGBT+ people. Neighbouring India removed a centuries-old colonial prohibition on gay sex in 2018, triggering celebration across the country.

In Nepal, authorities will count LGBT+ people for the first time in the national census next year to help sexual minorities gain better access to education and health schemes.

WFP to receive Nobel Peace Prize in online event

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, Dec 10: The World Food Programme (WFP) will receive its Nobel Peace Prize Thursday, in an event very different from the traditional pomp-filled celebration in the Norwegian capital because of the coronavirus outbreak.

In Oslo, the head of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen, will give a webcast statement, after which David Beasley, the UN agency boss, will give an acceptance speech from Rome, where it is based.

The body was given the prestigious award for efforts to combat hunger.

This year, 12 laureates were named across the six categories. All but the Peace Prize have been awarded over the past days at low-key ceremonies across Europe and the United States in the places where the winners live. A Nobel prize comes with a 10-million krona (USD 1.1 million) cash award — to be shared in some cases — diplomas and gold medals.

ADORABLE BOND



A baby orangutan is held by its mother at the Pairi Daiza wildlife park in Brugelette, Belgium

REUTERS

Can I stop wearing a mask after getting Covid vaccine?

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Dec 10: Can I stop wearing a mask after getting a COVID-19 vaccine? No. For a couple reasons, masks and social distancing will still be recommended for some time after people are vaccinated.

To start, the first coronavirus vaccines require two shots; Pfizer's second dose comes three weeks after the first and Moderna's comes after four weeks. And the effect of vaccinations generally aren't immediate. People are expected to get some level of protection within a couple of weeks after the first shot. But full protection may not happen until a couple weeks after the second shot. It's also not yet known whether the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines protect people from infection en-

tirely, or just from symptoms. That means vaccinated people might still be able to get infected and pass the virus on, although it would likely be at a much lower rate, said Deborah Fuller, a vaccine expert at the University of Washington. And even once vaccine supplies start ramping up,



getting hundreds of millions of shots into people's arms is expected to take months. Fuller also noted vaccine testing is just starting in children, who won't be able to get shots until study data indicates they're safe and effective for them as well. Moncef Slaoui, head of the US Vaccine development effort, has estimated the country could reach herd immunity as early as May, based on the effectiveness of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

Trump knocks Supreme Court's door against poll results

AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 10: President Donald Trump has approached the US Supreme Court against the results of last month's presidential election, which he alleges were rigged in favour of his Democratic challenger and President-elect Joe Biden.

Trump, a Republican, has been making unsubstantiated claims about widespread voter fraud and electoral malpractice in the presidential polls. State election officials have denied any such large-scale fraud.

Trump Wednesday moved to intervene in a Supreme Court case brought by the Texas attorney general Ken Paxton that demands that the 62 total Electoral College votes in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin be invalidated.

"We will soon be learning about the word 'courage', and saving our country. I received hundreds of thousands of legal votes more, in all of

the Swing States, than did my opponent. ALL Data taken after the vote says that it was impossible for me to lose, unless FIXED!" Trump said in a tweet, soon after which his campaign announced that he has filed a petition in the Supreme Court.

"Trump, in his personal capacity as a candidate for re-election as President of the United States, moved on Wednesday to intervene in the Texas v Pennsylvania, et. Al. Action at the United States Supreme Court," his campaign said.

A day earlier, the State of Texas filed a lawsuit in the Supreme Court seeking its intervention to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election in key battleground states that would tip the scales in his favour.

The Trump campaign said that the president intervened because his rights as a candidate are affected by the Defendant States' failure to follow and enforce state election laws during the 2020 election. "I'm honoured that the President asked me



to represent him in this matter. I think his intervention in this case strengthens an already very strong original action by the state of Texas," said John Eastman, Counsel of Record for Trump.

The Trump campaign has yet to produce concrete evidence of corruption or widespread fraud in court. Attorney General William Barr has said his department has yet to see proof that widespread

fraud occurred that would change the outcome. As many as 17 Republican attorney generals joined Trump and the State of Texas in challenging the election results in the Supreme Court. The brief states that the Texas "Bill of Complaint raises constitutional questions of great public importance that warrant this Court's review."

The battleground states flooded their people with unlawful ballot ap-

plications and ballots while ignoring statutory requirements as to how they were received, evaluated and counted, the Republican official alleged.

The lawsuit filed by Trump said that the public record demonstrates a ballot-counting process replete with chaos, confusion, and partisan bias.

The Supreme Court has not yet indicated whether it will hear the case. The high court dismissed a case a day earlier brought by Pennsylvania Republicans to nullify Biden's victory in the state.

Meanwhile, with West Virginia certifying its presidential election results, all 50 US states and the District of Columbia have now certified the outcome of the November 3 presidential polls, according to a media report Thursday.

President-elect Joe Biden, a Democrat, is projected to win 306 electoral votes, and incumbent President Donald Trump is set to win 232.



Tough reforms are very difficult in the Indian context, we have too much of democracy. You needed political will to carry out these reforms (mining, coal, labour, agriculture) and many more reforms still need to be done

AMITABH KANT | CEO, NITI AAYOG

INDIA TOPS VIEWERSHIP

Netflix has said that India has the highest viewership of films globally on its platform and consumption of content in genres like kids, non-fiction and Korean dramas is also witnessing a strong growth



of the day quote

As people are getting back to their normal lives and businesses, it is important for us to ramp up our testing for the coronavirus. The virus will be here for some time, it seems, and those who test more frequently will be able to contain the impact of COVID-19 better

RAKESH MISHRA | DIRECTOR, CSIR-CMMB



In times to come, I believe that the innovative technology and the manpower that India has, and the great depth of experiences that exist in Europe, provide great opportunity for both of us to make investment in each other's geographies

RITESH AGARWAL | FOUNDER AND GROUP CEO, OYO



We need liquidity in the market. India is an attractive destination for investments. Our MSMEs are doing excellent job. You (investors) can bring your technology to India, can make JVs, can invest in industry. It is a golden opportunity and a win-win situation for both the sides

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER



'India's economic recovery faster than expected'

ADB CUTS THE CONTRACTION FORECAST TO 8% FOR FY'21

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Thursday upgraded its forecast for the Indian economy, projecting 8% contraction in 2020-21 as compared to 9% degrowth estimated earlier, on the back of faster than expected re-

covery. Observing that the economy has begun to normalise, the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) Supplement said the second quarter contraction at 7.5% was better than expected.

The economy contracted by 23.9% in June quarter of the current fiscal on account of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The GDP forecast for FY2020 is upgraded from 9% contraction to 8%, with GDP in H2 probably reduced to its size a year earlier. The growth projection for FY2021 is kept at 8%," it said.



Highlighting that India is recovering more rapidly than expected, the report said the earlier South Asia forecast of 6.8% contraction is upgraded to (-) 6.1% in line with an improved projection for India. Growth will return in 2021-22, at 7.2% in South Asia and 8% in

India, it added.

Earlier this month, Reserve Bank (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das had said the economy is recuperating faster than anticipated and growth rate is likely to turn positive in the second half of the current financial year.

In the year as a whole, the economy is likely to contract by 7.5%, which is an improvement over RBI's previous projection of 9.5% contraction, Das had said while unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy review.

Observing that the prospects of growth have brightened with the

progress on the vaccine front, Das said, the economy was likely to record a growth of 0.1% in Q3 and 0.7% in Q4.

With regard to inflation, ADO said, it is expected to ease in the coming months, and the 4% update projection for 2021-22 is maintained.

In India, supply chain disruption brought food inflation to an average of 9.1% in the first 7 months of 2020-21, pushing headline inflation to 6.9% in the same period, it said. As a result, ADO revised India's inflation from 4.5% to 5.8% for the current fiscal.

Ather Energy's e-scooter to hit the streets of capital



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: As part of phase 2 of expansion, Ather Energy, India's first intelligent electric scooter manufacturer, announced the launch of the Ather 450X in Bhubaneswar. With this launch, the company officially makes its foray into the Odisha market.

The Ather 450X is an upgrade from its predecessor Ather 450. The scooter is powered with a 6kW PMSM motor, a new 2.9 kWh lithium-ion battery, and comes with 4 riding modes. Ather 450X can go from 0 to 40 kmph in just 3.3 sec in Warp mode, making it the quickest scooter in the 125cc category and the perfect choice to navigate through city traffic.

The Ather 450X will also charge 50% faster than before at 1.5km per minute, making it the fastest charging rate in the electric two-wheeler category. It comes in three new colors; Grey, Green, and White.

Chief Business Officer of Ather Energy Ravneet Singh Phokela said: "This expansion is the result of the strong demand from the consumers, dealerships and also, the test ride requests that we have received since the launch of Ather 450X. We aim to introduce Ather products across the country and fulfill the needs of consumers by providing a premium offering."

By the end of Q1, 2021, Ather 450X will be on the roads of 27 cities in phase 1 and 16 additional cities will be covered in phase 2.

Walmart to triple exports from India to \$10bn by 2027

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: Walmart Thursday announced that it will triple its exports of goods from India to \$10 billion each year by 2027. In a statement, Walmart said that its new export commitment is expected to provide a significant boost to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in India, alongside ongoing efforts such as the Flipkart Samarth and Walmart Vriddhi supplier development programmes.

"The expansion in sourcing will include helping develop hundreds of new suppliers in categories such as food, pharmaceuticals, consumables, health and wellness, and general merchandise, along with apparel, homeware and other key Indian export categories," it said.

"We see huge potential for Indian suppliers to grow their businesses by leveraging the unique scale and global distribution opportunity Walmart provides," Doug McMillon, President and CEO of Walmart Inc said. Kalyan Krishnamurthy, CEO of Flipkart Group said: "Flipkart is proud to work with thousands of Indian brands, MSMEs and artisans, with a focus on making them



India is already one of Walmart's top sourcing markets, with annual exports worth about \$3 billion

successful. We provide a platform that allows them to reach the pan-India market and refine their all-important branding, marketing, logistics and compliance capabilities for the global market, too."

To accelerate its India exports, Walmart will strengthen development of the supply chain ecosystem in India, both by boosting existing exporters and by expanding the nation's pool of export-ready businesses.

The statement said that Walmart has sourced goods from India for more than 20 years, supporting local suppliers to help upgrade their operations and meet international standards, develop new product lines and build new capabilities in packaging, marketing, supply chain management and more.

India is already one of Walmart's top sourcing markets, with annual exports worth about \$3 billion. India-made apparel, homeware, jewellery and other popular products currently reach customers in 14 markets, including the US, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the UK, through Walmart's Global Sourcing office in Bangalore, which opened in 2002.

Tata rejects Mistry's offer as 'nonsense'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: The Tatas in the Supreme Court Thursday opposed as "nonsense" the Shapoorji Pallonji Group's proposal that its 18.37% stake in the Tata Sons, which it claims to be worth ₹1.75 lakh crore, be swapped with the shares in the Tata group's listed companies.

The share-swap separation proposal of the SP group was rejected by the Tata group before a bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde which is hearing the final arguments on the cross appeals filed by Tata Sons and Cyrus Investments against appellate tribunal NCLAT's order. The NCLAT had restored Cyrus Mistry as the executive chairman of the over \$100 billion salt-to-software Tata conglomerate.

The SP group is seeking pro-rata shares in Tata group's listed companies in lieu of its 18.37 stake in Tata Sons Private Ltd (TSP), the holding company of group firms. "It is nonsense. This kind of relief cannot be granted," senior advocate Harish Salve told the bench, which also comprised Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian. He said that accepting such an



offer could spill over to other Tata group's listed firms where the SP group would be again holding minority stakes.

On the third day of the hearing, senior advocate CA Sundaram, appearing for Cyrus Investment, commenced submissions after Salve concluded his arguments.

Sundaram referred to legal provisions and said, "The whole conduct by which Tata Sons was made a private limited company showed that minority shareholders (SP group) was being sidelined."

"The act of converting the company from public to private was to prejudice me because the protection afforded by virtue of being public were taken away," he said. The bench then sought to know, "You will have to show us what were the precise actions which caused prejudice or oppression to you (SP Group)."

Anti-trust probe initiated against ACC, Ambuja Cements

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has started an investigation against cement manufacturing majors including ACC Ltd and Ambuja Cements over anti-competitive behaviour.

Both Ambuja Cement and ACC said in regulatory filings that the CCI has initiated an investigation against cement companies in India, including Ambuja Cements and ACC Ltd.

"Ambuja Cements is of the firm view that it has acted and continues to act in compliance with competition laws and are fully cooperating with the investigation and providing all necessary information to the authorities," the company said. It added that Ambuja Cements has a long-standing commitment to fair competition as reflected in its Code of Business Conduct and Ethics.

Similarly, ACC said that it has been in compliance with competition laws and is cooperating with the investigation and providing all necessary information to the au-



Both the firms said in regulatory filings that the CCI has initiated an investigation against cement companies in India, including Ambuja Cements and ACC Ltd

thorities. "ACC has a long-standing commitment to fair competition as reflected in its Code of Business Conduct," it said.

Shares of ACC on the BSE closed at ₹1,636, higher by ₹20.20 or 1.22 per cent from its previous close.

Ambuja Cements' shares on the BSE declined 1.8 per cent to close at ₹248.35 per share.

Coal India e-auction sale rises 77% during Apr-Nov

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) Thursday said it has registered a 77% growth in e-auction sales, under five windows, at 68.3 million tonnes (MT) during the April-November period of the ongoing fiscal.

The upsurge in the booked or allocated quantity of coal was close to 30 MT, in absolute terms, compared to 38.6 MT booked during the same period a year ago, CIL said in a statement.

Indicating increased appetite from non-power consumers, exclusive auction for this sector booked 17.4 MT, which is 25.5% of the total allocated quantity during the referred period.

Compared to 4.8 MT booked by non-power consumers during April-November last fiscal, the growth is more than a three-and-a-half folds or 262%.

E-auction sales for November not only witnessed improved volume



bookings at 9.4 MT, clocking 23.7% growth last November, but CIL could also net 30% premium over the notified prices.

This is a big leap from 13% premium the auctions fetched in October when CIL for the first time in the present fiscal introduced add on over the notified price, after a six month hiatus, to gauge the market response.

Considering the market response to e-auctions, there is a strong possibility that the bookings could go over 100 MT in the current fiscal. "Special spot auction for coal im-

porters' also gained positive response with 3.3 MT booked in November with a premium of 21%.

The quantity is twice that of 1.6 MT booked in October, the first occasion CIL introduced this window, when the premium fetched over notified price was 14%.

"For now the focus remains on volume expansion in e-auction sales rather than add-ons over the reserve price. Going forward additions will be pliable based on subsidiary wise and grade wise demand," a senior executive of the company said.

Satellite-based narrowband-IoT now a reality in India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 10: BSNL, in partnership with Skylotech India, Thursday announced a breakthrough in satellite-based NB-IoT (Narrowband-Internet of Things), in pursuance of PM Narendra Modi's vision of a Digital India — starting with fishermen, farmers, and construction, mining and logistics enterprises.

With this solution, India will now have access to a ubiquitous fabric of connectivity for millions of yet unconnected machines, sensors and industrial IoT devices.

This new 'Made in India' solution, which is indigenously developed by Skylo, will connect with BSNL's satellite ground infrastructure and provide PAN-India coverage, including the Indian seas.

The coverage will be so vast that it will not leave any dark patch within the boundary of India, from Kashmir and Ladakh to Kanyakumari, and from Gujarat to the Northeast.

PK Purwar, CMD, BSNL, said: "The solution is in line with BSNL's vision to leverage technology to provide affordable and innovative telecom services and products across customers segments."

He further added: "Skylo would also help provide critical data for the logistics sector to enable effective distribution of Covid-19 vaccine in 2021 and will be a big contributor in service to the nation."

Parthasarathi Trivedi, CEO and co-founder, Skylo, said: "For centuries, industries, including agriculture, railways and fisheries, have been operating offline, and have not had



the opportunity to take full advantage of the latest advancements in AI and IoT until today. This is the world's first satellite-based NB-IoT network and I am proud to launch this capability in India to transform lives and our domestic industries."

BSNL Board, said, "Successful POCs have already been conducted by BSNL and Skylo in India and we will soon approach various user groups before the New Year begins."

This breakthrough announcement is very timely because it comes during the ongoing Indian Mobile

For centuries, industries have been operating offline, and have not had the opportunity to take full advantage of the latest advancements in AI and IoT until today. This is the world's first satellite-based NB-IoT network and I am proud to launch this capability in India to transform lives and our domestic industries

PARTHASARATHI TRIVEDI, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, SKYLO

Congress 2020. This new technology supports the Department of Telecom and NITI Aayog's plan of bringing indigenous IoT connectivity to India's core sectors. Examples of where this technology has already

been tested successfully include Indian Railways and fishing vessels, enabling connected vehicles across India.

A small, smart, incredibly rugged box, the Skylo 'User Terminal' interfaces with sensors and transmits data to the Skylo Network and into people's hands. The accompanying data platform provides an immersive and visual experience for industry-specific applications on mobile or desktop.

It gives the users the ability to take immediate and appropriate action, no matter where they are. This new digital machine connectivity layer will serve as a complement to smartphone-centric mobile and Wi-Fi networks, and covers India's full geography to bring online new applications for the first time.

REAL SOMEHOW MAKE IT

Los Blancos avoid early exit in Champions League as they beat Gladbach, who also join the Spanish giants in the knockouts

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Dec 10: Karim Benzema scored two first-half goals as Real Madrid beat Borussia Monchengladbach 2-0 to avoid an early exit in the Champions League.

Madrid needed a victory to guarantee advancement and ended up winning Group B to reach the knockout round for the 24th straight season.

Gladbach still advanced to the last 16 for the first time in the Champions League era after finishing level on points with Shakhtar Donetsk but with a better head-to-head record. Shakhtar drew 0-0 with Inter Milan, eliminating the Italian team.

Madrid had struggled in the group — having conceded nine goals in its first five games — but the 13-time European winner finished with 10 points, two more than Gladbach.

Madrid looked in control from the start at the empty Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium in the Spanish capital. Benzema opened the scoring with a ninth-minute header after



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: Gladbach players celebrate after sealing a knockout berth in CL despite losing their match against Real Madrid, Wednesday

a cross by Lucas Vazquez, and added to the lead with another header in the 32nd, this time after being set up by Rodrygo.

The victory was key for Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane, who had been under pressure following a series of poor results in the Champions League and the Spanish league.

That pressure had already eased after a 1-0 win at Sevilla

Saturday, which ended the team's three-match winless streak in the league.

Gladbach were making only their third appearance in the group stage in the Champions League era. It was a European Cup finalist in 1977, losing the final to Liverpool.

Madrid was boosted by the return of captain Sergio Ramos, who had been sidelined because of a muscle injury. Eden Hazard remained out because of a muscle problem.

Luka Modric had a goal disallowed for offside in the 43rd and Vazquez hit the woodwork in the 79th. The visitors threatened only a few times on counterattacks.

Real Madrid hosts Atletico Madrid in a Spanish league derby on Saturday. Madrid is six points behind Atlético, which leads the league and has a game in hand.

Heartbreak for Inter

MILAN: Inter Milan and Shakhtar Donetsk were both eliminated from the Champions League after drawing 0-0 at San Siro Wednesday in their final group game. Inter's Lautaro Martinez went closest when he hit the crossbar early on but the Nerazzurri became the only Italian team not to progress. Atalanta advanced earlier Wednesday, joining Juventus and Lazio in the round of 16. Inter are out of all European competition after finishing bottom of the group, while Shakhtar will go into the Europa League. The Ukrainian side finished level on points with second-place Borussia Monchengladbach but had a worse head-to-head record.

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SALAH SCORES REDS' QUICKEST CL GOAL

Midtjylland hold Liverpool

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Herning (Denmark), Dec 10: Liverpool failed to build on their quickest ever goal in the Champions League, drawing 1-1 at tournament newcomer FC Midtjylland in their final group game.

Mohamed Salah became Liverpool's leading scorer in Champions League play when he pounced on a loose back-pass to run through and poke the ball through the legs of the goalkeeper after just 55 seconds. It was his 22nd goal in the Champions League, one more than Steven Gerrard.

Already qualified as Group D winners, Liverpool rested a number of key players — though Salah played the whole game — and Midtjylland took advantage by taking the game to the English champions in the second half.

After Evander struck the crossbar with a fierce shot, Alexander Scholz earned Midtjylland their second point of the first group-stage campaign by converting a penalty following a foul on Anders



Mo Salah (with beard) celebrates his goal with his teammates, Wednesday

ATALANTA PROGRESS

AMSTERDAM: Substitute Luis Muriel put Atalanta into the knockout stage of the Champions League, scoring in the 85th minute to secure a 1-0 win over 10-man Ajax and clinch second place in Group D. Remo Freuler won the ball in midfield and quickly passed to Muriel who rounded goalkeeper Andre Onana and slid the ball into the net. Ajax finished third in the group and has to settle for a Europa League spot.

Dreyer by Liverpool goalkeeper Caoimhin Kelleher.

Both teams had goals disallowed in final minutes, Midtjylland for offside and Liverpool for a handball against Sadio Mane.

Midtjylland finished in last place, five points behind Ajax, which lost 1-0 to Atalanta on Wednesday as the Italian side joined Liverpool in the last 16.

Aguero scores in Man City victory

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, Dec 10: Sergio Aguero returned from his latest injury to score a poacher's goal in Manchester City's 3-0 win over Marseille in the Champions League, a result which ended the French club's hopes of a third-place finish and Europa League qualification.

Making just his fifth appearance of an injury-hit season, Aguero scored 11 minutes after coming off the bench when he poked in a close-range finish in the 77th after Marseille goalkeeper Steve



Mandanda only parried out a header from a corner.

That added to a clinical strike by Ferran Torres in the 48th and Raheem Sterling added a third in 90th as City — already qualified as the winner of Group C — finished on 16 points from five wins and a draw. That's the most points City has

earned in a group-stage campaign.

Marseille started the night in last place and needed to better the result of Olympiakos, which hosted Porto, to beat the Greek team to third spot and keep alive their European campaign.

Porto won 2-0, but Olympiakos finished ahead of Marseille courtesy of a superior head-to-head record. Aguero showed the kind of instinctive finishing City has been missing at times this season, especially in the Premier League where Pep Guardiola's team has made a slower-than-expected start.



KARIM BENZEMA

Neymar hat-trick fashions PSG win

REUTERS

Paris, Dec 10: Neymar bagged a hat-trick as PSG topped Champions League Group H with a 5-1 home victory over Istanbul Basaksehir Wednesday, a day after the game was suspended amid an alleged racist incident.

The PSG and Basaksehir players, as well as the three field referees, took a knee before kickoff one day after both teams walked off in protest after the Turkish side had accused the assistant referee of using a racist word against their assistant coach Pierre Webo.

Neymar struck three times and Kylian Mbappe scored his first goals in the competition in a year as PSG, who had already qualified for the last 16, advanced from the group stage with 12 points, ahead of RB Leipzig thanks to their better head-to-head record against the German side.

Webo, who had been sent off, had his red card suspended pending a UEFA investigation into the incident and the Cameroonian sat on the bench with the rest of the team's staff.

Neymar opened the scoring in the 25th minute with a splendid curled shot from outside the area that went into the top corner. A sharp counter-attack then led Mbappe to play through Neymar, who doubled the French champions' lead with a cross shot in the 38th.



Neymar is congratulated by other PSG scorer Kylian Mbappe

Mbappe made it 3-0 three minutes before the break with a penalty awarded after keeper Mert Gunok had brought down Neymar. Mitchell Bakker had followed up and tapped in but he was ruled offside following a VAR review and referee Danny Makkelie gave PSG the spot-kick.

France striker Mbappe, 21, became the youngest player to score 20 goals in the Champions League. Neymar added the fourth five minutes into the second half with a powerful strike from just inside the area.

Basaksehir had little to offer but they reduced her arrears in the 57th

thanks to a powerful Mehmet Topal volley. But PSG restored their four-goal advantage when Mbappe tapped in from Angel Di Maria's pass on 62 minutes.

Third-placed Manchester United will play in the Europa League last 32 after picking up nine points.

UNBEATEN BAYERN THROUGH

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Munich, Dec 10: Defending champion Bayern Munich finished their group stage unbeaten with a comfortable 2-0 win over Lokomotiv Moscow in the Champions League.

Goals from Niklas Sule and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting saw the hosts finish with 16 points from six games in Group A. That's seven points more than Atletico Madrid, who secured second place with a 2-0 win at Salzburg.

The Austrian team needed a win against Atletico to progress to the knockout stage and will

Atletico march on

SALZBURG (AUSTRIA): Yannick Carrasco scored late to seal a 2-0 win for Atletico Madrid's at Salzburg that sent the Spanish team into the Champions League knockout stage. The Belgian forward's 86th-minute goal ensured Atletico finished second in Group A, seven points behind defending champion Bayern Munich. Atletico broke the deadlock through Mario Hermoso in the 39th. Yannick Carrasco sent in a free-kick after Joao Felix had been fouled by Zlatko Junuzovic and Hermoso rose to deflect it in past goalkeeper Cican Stankovic.

have to settle for a Europa League place after finishing third in the group. Bayern were already assured of top spot after four games, and their 15-match winning run was ended by Atletico in their 1-1 draw on the fifth match-day.

Bayern broke the deadlock in the second half when Lokomotiv goalkeeper failed to stop Sule from making the breakthrough in the 63rd. Douglas Costa delivered a corner that should not have been given and the defender was unmarked to head it in. Gnabry set up Choupo-Moting to seal the result with a rising shot in under the crossbar in the 80th.

10-man East Bengal hold out for a draw

AGENCIES

Goa, Dec 10: A 10-man East Bengal managed to hold Jamshedpur FC to a goalless draw in their Indian Super League (ISL) match at the Tilak Maidan, Thursday.

The Red and Golds registered their first point this season after four matches. Jamshedpur had plenty of chances to score but failed to convert and turn the point into three.

Robbie Fowler made four changes to the East Bengal lineup. Sankar Roy, Eugeneson Lyngdoh, Mohammed Rafique and Jeje Lalpekhlua replaced Debit Majumder, Surchandra Singh, Wahengbam Angousana and Balwant Singh.

Owen Coyle, on the other hand, made just one change to the Jamshedpur starting XI which won 2-1 against ATK Mohun Bagan. Aniket Jadhav came in for



Goalie Sankar Roy pulls off a save for East Bengal against Jamshedpur FC

Jackichand Singh on the left flank. East Bengal received a major blow in the 25th minute when

Eugeneson Lyngdoh was sent off for a high-footed challenge on Alex Lima. It was a harsh decision for the

Kolkata club as Lyngdoh caught the ball before brushing his boot against Lima's leg.

Stephen Eze came agonisingly close to breaking the deadlock in the 38th minute when he attempted a header off Aitor Monroy's dangerous delivery from a corner but the crossbar denied the centre-back a goal.

Jamshedpur completely dominated proceedings in the second half as they created multiple goal scoring opportunities but credit to the East Bengal backline who stood firm on their ground nullified every single Jamshedpur attack.

The Men of Steel too were down to 10 men after Laldinliana Renthlei was sent off after a second booking for a challenge on Jacques Maghoma in the 90th minute.

East Bengal remained at the rock bottom position while Jamshedpur climbed up to the fifth position.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: India's much-anticipated Day/Night Test against England will be played in Ahmedabad from February 24 next year and the city will also be the venue of one more Test and five T20Is at its newly-constructed Motera Stadium, the BCCI announced Thursday.

The two other venues that have been allotted matches as per BCCI's rotational policy are Chennai, which will host the first two Test matches (starting February 5), and Pune that will host the three ODIs (March 23 to 28).

BCCI secretary Jay Shah Thursday announced Motera as the venue for the day/night Test during the Gujarat Cricket Association's Indoor Academy inauguration. The match will be

SCHEDULE		
FORMAT	DATE	VENUE
1st Test	Feb 5-9	Chennai
2nd Test	Feb 13-17	Chennai
3rd Test	Feb 24-28	Ahmedabad
4th Test	Mar 4-8	Ahmedabad
1st T20I	Mar 12	Ahmedabad
2nd T20I	Mar 14	Ahmedabad
3rd T20I	Mar 16	Ahmedabad
4th T20I	Mar 18	Ahmedabad
5th T20I	Mar 20	Ahmedabad
1st ODI	Mar 23	Pune
2nd ODI	Mar 26	Pune
3rd ODI	Mar 28	Pune

India's second pink ball Test at home after the Bangladesh game at the Eden Gardens last year.

"The BCCI has restricted the tour to just three venues keeping in mind the current pandemic situa-

tion prevailing in the country," the statement read.

"Both Boards have worked closely to put together an exciting series that promises to provide high octane action between two powerhouses of world cricket," Shah added.

A BCCI source explained the rationale behind Pune and Chennai getting matches. "As per our rotational policy, Pune and Chennai were due to get matches long back. With this series, they would get a chance to host their pending games."

"Also after a lot of deliberation, BCCI's operations team found that these are the three appropriate venues to create bio-secure environment for two teams," the official said.

It was understood that a successful hosting of England series would pave the way for a good and successful IPL at home after it had to be taken to UAE this year.