



FESTIVE SPIRIT

Actor Shilpa Shetty says decorating the Christmas tree together with son Viaan is her favourite Christmas tradition

LEISURE

P2

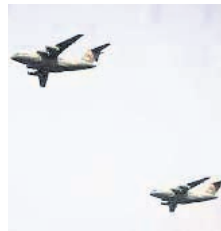


MONETISING SOLAR POWER

Govt schools in Delhi are eyeing money by selling electricity generated by the rooftop solar systems

TWO STATES

P7



SHOW OF STRENGTH

China is carrying out joint air force exercises with Pakistan in response to the Indo-Pacific Quad exercises

INTERNATIONAL

P10

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 252 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY, DECEMBER 14 | 2020

12 PAGES | ₹4.00

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Govt has not relented a bit. PM says he is committed to helping us.

SHORT TAKES

24X7 RTGS facility becomes available

Mumbai: The Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS) for high-value transactions will become available round-the-clock from 00:30 hours Monday onwards, making India one of the few countries in the world to operate the system 24X7. In October, the RBI had announced that RTGS will be available round-the-clock on all days of the year. "RTGS facility becomes operational 24X7 from 12.30 am tonight. Congratulations to the teams from RBI, IFTAS and the service partners who made this possible," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said in a tweet.

TRP scam: Republic TV CEO arrested

Mumbai: Republic Media Network's CEO Vikas Khanchandani was arrested by Mumbai police following a raid at his residence here Sunday morning. Khanchandani was arrested in connection with the fake TRP rating scam case against Republic TV. The arrest comes just a day before a Mumbai court was to hear an anticipatory bail petition by Khanchandani and the media group's Chief Financial Officer, Sivasubramanian Sundaram.

Two terrorists killed in J&K

Jammu: Two terrorists were killed and another was captured Sunday in a gunfight with security forces in the higher reaches of Surankote in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said. The terrorists are believed to have infiltrated into this side from across the Line of Control (LoC) about three days back and were heading for south Kashmir's Shopian district when they were intercepted in a snow-bound area along the Mughal Road in the afternoon, the officials said.

Foundation Day celebration plan

Bhubaneswar: The BJD Sunday announced celebrating its 23rd Foundation Day December 26 across the state from block-level to the urban areas of the state. The party has also planned to hold special meetings of their executive members and the state council where several new members of the organisation will also take part. Party's vice president Debi Prasad Mishra said, "Under the leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the BJD has emerged as one of the strongest regional parties in the country." P3

WEATHER			
	BHUB	CTK	
MAX	31.4°C	31.4°C	 Forecast
MIN	17.5°C	16.6°C	
Humidity	63%	66%	Dry weather likely
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Protesting farmers intensify stir

LEADERS OF 32 FARMERS' UNIONS TO OBSERVE 9-HOUR HUNGER STRIKE TODAY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 13: After 'Bharat Bandh' called earlier this month, the protesting farmers Sunday declared a wider day-long movement, urging its leaders to undertake a hunger strike from wherever they are protesting.

The announcement comes after a meeting of farmers here at Singhu border gave their nod to the decision taken by farmer representatives of 32 different unions Saturday for holding the hunger strike December 14 (Monday) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Earlier, it was decided that the farmer leaders will hold the hunger strike only on Singhu border at Delhi-Chandigarh route – one of the major protest site where thousands of farmers have been camping under open skies from November 26 seeking rollback of three farm laws enacted by the government in September during Monsoon Session of Parliament.

Addressing a press briefing here at Singhu, Bhartiya Kisan Union's (BKU) Haryana president Gurnam Singh Chathuni said "all the leaders would be carrying out hunger strikes wherever they are leading the protest".

Bharatiya Kisan Union's (BKU) national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said: "The hunger strike would be carried out tomorrow till 5 p.m. but the farmers will have to take care that no disturbing element comes in our movement".

Tikait, who represents the farmers from western Uttar Pradesh, advised that



Social activist Medha Patkar addresses as farmers block Rajasthan-Haryana border during their protest against the new farm laws at National Highway 48 in Rewari district, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

all the younger ones shall learn how agitations are carried out. Opening a way to begin government-farmers talk, the farm leader, meanwhile, said "if the government sends us any proposal, we would carry out discussion and take a decision on the same".

Sarva Hind Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh's Shivkumar Kakka, however, clarified that that farmers are still adamant on the issue that they will not end the ongoing protest till the government repeal the three laws.

He also accused the government of obstructing the way farmers' coming to Delhi, saying "our trolleys are being stopped at Morena and other cities of Madhya Pradesh".

Stressing that the whole agitation is still being run under 'Sanyukt Kisan Morcha' banner, the leader said all the associations are working here and no one has left. "All the decisions taken here are not by majority but maturity and unanimity".

Giving detail about one farmer leader Bhanu Pratap, who has approached Supreme Court and is about to end the protest, the farmer leaders here at Singhu said he was not "our part and he has no relation with this movement".

Doab Kisan Samiti leader Jagbir Singh also accused the government of stopping farmers' trolleys coming from Uttarakhand. He said that crowd was swelling up each day at Ghazipur bor-

SC to hear plea seeking removal of farmers

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear December 16 a plea seeking a direction to authorities to immediately remove the farmers who are protesting at several border points of Delhi against three new farm laws, saying commuters are facing hardships due to the road blockades and the gatherings might lead to an increase in the number of Covid-19 cases. According to the apex court website, a bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde and justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian will hear the plea filed by law student Rishabh Sharma, who has also sought directions to authorities to open the roads at Delhi's borders, shift the protesters to the allotted place and provide guidelines on social distancing and use of masks at the protest site in order to curb the spread of Covid-19.

der on Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border—the third major front of farmers' protest where farmers have blocked National Highway 24.

"The more they (the government) will try to suppress, the more we will accumulate," said Jagbir Singh, adding "the government says farmers are our brothers but they are doing nothing for us". Punjab Kisan Union leader Rudu Singh said it is a movement of the people of India because their business would get destroyed completely because of these laws. "We want to save the middlemen..."

IN SPORTING MOOD



Tourists enjoy skiing after the town received fresh snowfall near Nehrukund in Manali, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

Conspiracy to close Pari murder case, alleges suspect

Saroj Sethi, a suspect in the case, told the media that he has been tortured by police officials to 'confess' to the crime, though he is 'innocent'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Dec 13: The murder case of Pari, a minor girl from Nayagarh, is turning murkier with each passing day as a college student Sunday alleged that there is a conspiracy to close the case file, a report said.

The explosive revelation has come from Saroj Sethi, a native of Jadupur village and a student of Plus III first year Arts in a local college. Sethi, who is under the SIT scanner for 'killing' Pari. He alleged that efforts are being made to frame him as the killer.

Talking to the local media, Sethi said pressure is being built on him and this is hampering his studies. He alleged that he has been tortured and beaten by police officials to 'confess' the crime, though he is 'innocent'. According to Sethi, the SIT head has prepared a plan to frame him in the



Saroj Sethi

murder case. The SIT head is allegedly threatening him and has even offered him ₹5 lakh to 'confess' the crime. However, the veracity of the charges against SIT head can only be established after a proper investigation.

Sethi has alleged that he is being unnecessarily harassed for speaking the truth. According to Sethi, a day before Pari's kidnapping on July 13, he had informed her parents that he had seen the little girl collecting

berries under a jamun tree near his house. As a result, he was called to the Nayagarh Sadar police station for interrogation July 25 – the day when Pari's body was recovered.

During interrogations, SIT chief Arun Bothra reportedly informed Sethi that they are in possession of evidence and asked him to admit that he had killed Pari. Bothra allegedly threatened him to confess on committing the murder failing which they will frame him by matching the DNA, finger print and blood samples.

Meanwhile, Pari's parents Soudamini and Ashok Sahu have also alleged that efforts are on to destroy evidence in the murder case. They alleged that the sack from which the body was recovered has been changed. The sack which is in police station has been changed with a new sack as part of a move to destroy the evidences in the case.

Angul farmers bid adieu to potato farming

LACK OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND COLD STORAGES HAVE COMPELLED FARMERS TO GIVE UP POTATO FARMING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Dec 13: Even five years after the launch of 'Potato Mission' in the state, there has not been any headway in increasing the output of this kitchen essential in Angul district, allegedly for lack of government support and cold storages. Consequently, many farmers are gradually giving up potato farming in the region.

According to a report, not a single cold store has been set up in this district, while farmers alleged that when preservation facilities are not at hand, their produce is bound to rot.

The 'Potato Mission' was implemented by the state government in 2015-16 to make the state self-sufficient in tuber production. In fact, the mission was taken up after neighbouring West Bengal stopped supplying potatoes few years back, leading to an acute shortage of the vegetable.

Initially, ₹ 267.05 was pumped in and it was proposed that the scheme would continue till 2023-24. Over a hundred cold stores were to be set up under the mission to enable farmers to preserve their produce. The government had assured to promote private cold stores with subsidies. After mission was put in fast track, farmers had taken up potato farming in hundreds of acres in the district.

However, after harvesting, farmers faced lots of problems in preserving them. A private cold store was set up at Kuo, but it is of no use for farmers as its capacity is too less.

In the absence of preservation facilities, farmers were forced to adopt distress sale of the tubers, thus incurring huge losses. They had to sell their produce to outsiders at low prices, dashing their hopes of earning profits.

Faced with such difficulties, many farmers have now switched



to farming other crops.

The government had approved setting up of cooling gammers (small cold stores) – three in Angul block, two in Chhendipada and one each in Pallahada, Kaniha and Kishorenagar. These cooling gammers helped farm-

ers to preserve their produce for a week, but they alleged that the government was not giving subsidies on electricity bills.

Soundarya Sahu, a potato farmer from the region, said that the cost of preserving potatoes in the private

cold stores is too high. Given the cost of production and preservation, farmers would not be able to make even their production costs.

Farmers like Dillip Pradhan (Angul) and Tikan Mahalik (Banrpal) say, "Lack of preservation facilities have compelled us to give up potato farming. It involved high cost. Vegetable farming is more profitable." Meanwhile, Padmalochan Das, deputy director of the Horticulture, Angul, said that cold stores are under the Horticulture department, but they are not operational due to shortage of staff.

On the other hand, Satyananda Dalabehara, owner of Durga Cold Store, said that his cold store is running at a loss. "It has been difficult to repay bank loans, electricity bills and salaries of the staff. In the last five years, the cold store has failed to get produce preservation for even one per cent of its capacity. Farmers are not cooperating," he alleged.

2 Maoists killed in Malkangiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: Two Maoists, including a woman, were killed in an exchange of fire between security personnel and the Red rebels in Malkangiri district Sunday, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Special Operation Group personnel launched a combing operation in Gajalmamudi area of 'Swabhimani Anchal', a remote part of the district, earlier in the day, DGP Abhay told the media here.

As the security personnel cordoned off the area, Maoists opened fire at them. In retaliatory firing, two Maoists were killed on the spot, while the others managed to flee the area. The SOG personnel have recovered two guns and Maoist ar-

ticles from the spot. Later, the security personnel intensified combing operations in the area to flush out Left Wing extremists (LWE) from Swabhimani Anchal, the DGP said.

One of the deceased, a woman in uniform, appeared to be holding an important position in the outlawed organisation, while the other, who has been identified as D Ramesh, was a CPI (Maoist) area commander.

"The state government is committed to free the Swabhimani Anchal from Maoists, and we urge them to surrender," the DGP said.

It is worth mentioning here that, a woman Maoist was killed in a gunfight with security personnel in Kandhamal district, December 11.

New rules for cheque payments from January 1

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 13: A few months back the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) made a decision to launch the 'positive pay system' for cheque. The new rule will be effective from January 1, 2021. As per the new rule, it may be necessary to reconfirm the details of the cheque, especially for payments above ₹50,000. In the August MPC, the RBI governor Shaktikanta Das made an announcement in this connection keeping in focus consumer safety and also to reduce fraud cases as well as abuse vis-à-vis cheque payment.

Precisely speaking, the 'Positive Pay' is basically an automated fraud detection tool that corroborates particular information relevant to the cheque that is presented for clearing. Such details include payee name, cheque number, cheque date, account number, amount and other details.

Before the new rule comes into effect, it is important that you are aware of a few important things related to cheque payments from January 1, 2021.

■ The idea of 'Positive Pay' entails reconfirming important details related to cheques worth ₹50,000 and above.

■ This process makes it mandatory for the issuer of the cheque to electronically submit specific details related to the cheque via Internet banking, SMS, mobile app, ATM and others.

■ The facility for the Positive Pay will be developed by the National Payments Corporation of India in CTS and it will be made available to the participant banks. On their part, the banks will make it available for their account holders who would be issuing cheques worth ₹50,000 or above.

■ However, availing the Positive Pay facility will solely be the account holder's discretion. However, banks may also make it mandatory for large value cheques.

■ Last but not the least important, the CTS grids will accept only cheques that are Positive Pay complaint in case of any dispute. In addition, the banks may also employ similar arrangements for all cheques (cleared/collected) that are even outside CTS.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
You will be indecisive today, which is not usually the case with you. Ganesha says this could lead you to indulge in speculation, which is not so bad unless you risk all your money in it. Besides, when it comes to matters of the heart, you must exercise a great deal of caution.

TAURUS
This day you are going to be particularly conscious of your beliefs and principles. You will be very proud and sensitive, and are not likely to brook any adverse comment or criticism. Anyone who dares to question or deride them will get a fitting response from you. Ganesha, however warns you to be more tolerant of others' views and beliefs.

GEMINI
You will become more emotional and sensitive today. Health, diet, career, job and such things will be on your mind and will give rise to mental stress and worry. You need to take care of your health and hygiene, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Today, you will put your heart and soul into whatever task you take up. And, that's a great thing to do, says Ganesha. Don't lose heart though, if despite the best efforts, the results of your efforts are not too forthcoming. Feeling dejected is only going to hamper your progress.

LEO
You will give importance to your work and your style of functioning to get a promotion in the office. You will also increase the amount of work you put in. While the fruits of your labour may not be immediately available to you, in a very short time you can expect to make more gains than you expected to.

VIRGO
You are renowned for your leadership qualities and today they will be much appreciated for the way you manage your team. You will get a long-due promotion, and will come in for some extra cash. Ganesha says you received all this by wisely balancing work and home, so be careful not to slip up on this front.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will put everything aside to pay more attention to your outward appearance and your beauty as you will be more aware about it. People will get attracted to your beauty today. You will be able to share your own ideas and thoughts with people, at the same time you will learn about their views and from their experiences.

SCORPIO
Socially, you enjoy being in limelight as all the eyes are focused on you. However, beware of evil eyes that may not have good intentions towards you. You are a good soul and never hurt anyone. But, at times, it's important to know your foe's weakness to be on the safer side.

SAGITTARIUS
You are like a new hope for your company and you are assigned with many challenging projects, today. And your hard work and efforts are appreciated when you handle the projects successfully. If you are fortunate enough, you may also gain incentives very soon, predicts Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
Practical and creative, you are able to utilise your talents in the best possible manner. You will smartly solve family issues, without favouring or hurting anybody, says Ganesha. You'll like to play the role of a peace maker, as it gives you satisfaction from within. A

AQUARIUS
You are an excellent team player and your performance reaches a new high when you are a part of a group. Be an active member of your group, express your opinions, share your knowledge and see how your team becomes the winning team, says Ganesha.

PISCES
Today you will feel like sharing you innermost feelings with those that you are close to. You will find yourself communicating better and this will result in attracting intellectual people towards you. You will get an opportunity to work with very educated and well established people.



ANNA KENDRICK'S TWITTER ACCOUNT GETS HACKED

Actress Anna Kendrick became the latest victim of social media hacking as her official Twitter account was hacked for a brief period. Starting around 5:26 pm, a series of tweets were sent out to Kendrick's over 7 million followers Saturday using offensive language and racial slurs, reports [hollywoodreporter.com](#).

MUSIC STAR CHARLEY PRIDE DIES FROM CORONAVIRUS

Country music star Charley Pride has died from complications related to Covid-19. He was 86. Pride, credited for being the first modern Black superstar of country music, died on December 12 in Dallas, Texas. His publicist shared the news of his demise, reports [variety.com](#).



Swargare Lockdown leaves viewers in split



A scene from play *Swargare Lockdown*

POST NEWS NETWORK

BHUBANESWAR: Ranga Pancham, a production-oriented theatre workshop conducted by city based drama troupe Pancham Veda in collaboration with Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC) came to an end Sunday.

Sixteen young artistes, who had been learning nuances of acting from the experts over the last 15 days, staged a hilarious play *Swargare Lockdown* (Lockdown in Paradise) on the final day of the event. The play conveyed the message that Covid-19 has not only made people's life miserable on this planet, the gods are also wary of the pandemic and taking all precautions to protect themselves in heaven. The production managed to tickle the funny bones of the audience.

Written by Narayan Sahoo, the play was designed by Gajendra Nayak. Odisha Natya Sangh president Haren Sahoo directed the

play while its music was composed by Binay Dash.

The concluding ceremony was attended by Kendrapara MLA Shashibhusan Behera, State Information Commissioner Dilip Bisoi, Odisha Sangeeta Natak Akademi Secretary Prabodh Rath,

THEATRE WORKSHOP CONCLUDES

theatricians Narayan Sahu and Prasanna Mishra among others.

The meeting was presided over by troupe's working president Haren Kumar Sahoo while the chief guest Behera gave away the certificates to the participants.

Among others, Pancham Veda's secretary Prakash Maharana, members Abhimanyu Sethi, Surendra Nath Gouda and Rajkishore Sahoo played important roles in organising the event. Playwright Sahu and workshop director Nayak were felicitated by the troupe.

Lucky Ali's surprise performance goes viral

Mumbai: A video of Indipop singer Lucky Ali has gone viral surprising his fans with a performance of his hit song *O Sanam* in Goa, leaving social media users in awe of the well-known singer.

The video has been shared by actress Nafisa Ali Sodhi on her official Instagram account.

Nafisa, who is currently residing in Goa, shared the video in which the singer is seen treating his fans with another soulful rendition of *O Sanam*. "Lucky Ali's live and impromptu performance at Arambol. At the Garden of Dreams @officialluckyali #goa," she wrote on the social media while sharing the video.

The 62-year-old singer is dressed in casuals as he plays the tunes of his hit song on his guitar. The small crowd was seen cheering for him and some

were seen capturing the live moment.

At one point in the video, he pauses after singing the line nazron se ab na humko giraana, to which the whole crowd completes by saying toh bhool na jaana in unison.

IAN S



It's a great time to be a performer: Mallika

Mumbai: Comedian Mallika Dua feels it is a great time to be a performer with blurring boundaries between mediums, and said she is happy to be part of the current wave in the industry.

"Not many people know that I have studied acting and I am essentially an actor before anything else. It's just that we like to slot people between villains vs this or that. At the heart of it, we are all performers and that is what I like to do and every time I get acting opportunities and it satisfies me and shows that I am a significant part of the project, I say yes to it," Mallika said.

"This is what happened in Indoo Ki Jawani. When the film was narrated to me, I was laughing so much and had a smile on my face throughout. I loved the fact that it was a story about a woman, backed by two women producers," she added.

IAN S



Shilpa reveals her favourite Christmas tradition

Mumbai: Actress Shilpa Shetty has started prepping her home for Christmas! Shilpa revealed Sunday that decorating the Christmas tree together with son Viaan is her favourite Christmas tradition.

Shilpa shared a Boomerang video on her verified Instagram account Sunday where her eight-year-old son Viaan can be seen biting a candy cane while she stares at him in surprise.

"Viaan thought the candy cane was yum. Whoever said it was easy being a mum. Decorating the tree together is our favourite tradition; 'Tis the time to be jolly... fa la la la... la la la la..." the actress wrote on Instagram.

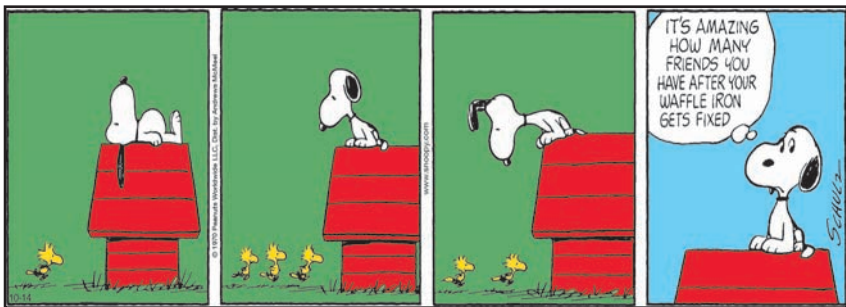
On the work front, Shilpa is all set to return to the screen after 13 years with two releases, *Hungama 2* and *Nikamma*.

Directed by Sabbir Khan, the action-packed romantic comedy film *Nikamma* also features Abhimanyu Dasani and Shirley Setia.

IAN S

FUN post

PEANUTS



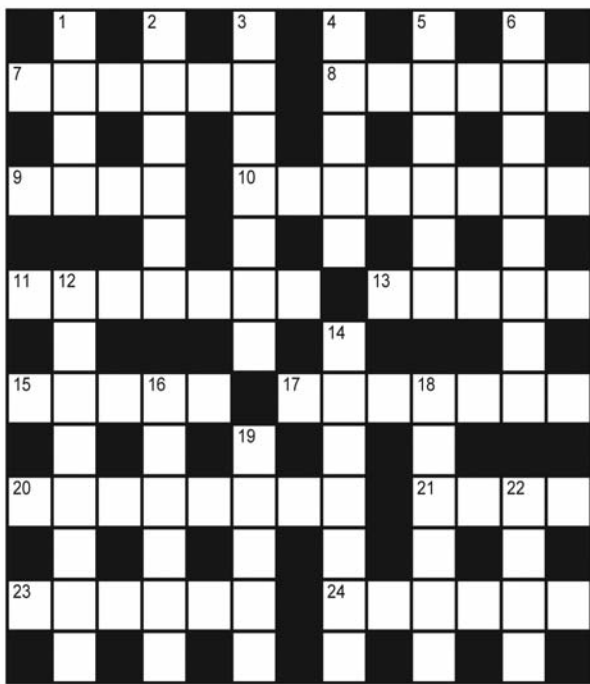
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



Copyright ©2020 PuzzleJunction.com

Across

- 7 "Have I been here before?" (4,2)
8 Fix
9 Canine tooth
10 Ghent natives
11 Light lager
13 Pile up
15 Timeworn
17 Wrack

Down

- 1 Epsilon follower
2 Guffaws
3 Mishandles
4 Practice
20 Cites
21 Strip of wood
23 Japanese attire
24 Gives way

- 5 Orthopedic device
6 Acme
12 Fearless
14 Sports uniforms
16 Embrocation
18 Card carrier
19 Up and down toys (2-3)
22 Shipshape

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

L	I	A	I	S	O	N	R	O	B	E	C
I	C	P	O	E	A	C					
L	O	T	T	E	R	I	E	S	B	A	H
A	C	S	E	T	Y	A					
C	R	E	S	T	E	N	S	I	G	N	S
C	R	S									
A	R	C	H	E	S	H	A	Z	A	R	D
F	E										
R	A	N	C	O	U	R					
I	T	C	O		H						
C	A	R									
A	I	R	E								
A	C	H	E								

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

5 fresh Covid deaths in state

Odisha's coronavirus caseload mounts to 3,23,757 with detection of 393 fresh cases in 24 hours

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: State's Covid-19 caseload climbed to 3,23,757 Sunday after 393 people tested positive for the virus, while five more fatalities pushed the death toll in Odisha to 1,807, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

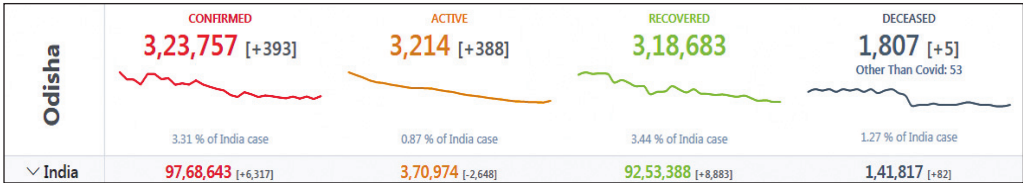
Of the fresh cases detected from 27 of the 30 districts, 228 were reported from different quarantine centres and the remaining are local-contact cases.

Angul district recorded the highest of 47 new infections followed by Sundargarh (44) and Khurda (39). Three districts—Gajapati, Koraput and Subarnapur—did not register any coronavirus case during the last 24 hours, said the official.

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

The deaths were reported from Khurda, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh districts. A total of 53 other Covid-19 patients have also died due to comorbidities, the official pointed out.

Khurda district, comprising state Capital Bhubaneswar, alone accounted for 310 fatalities followed by Ganjam (245), Sundargarh (155),



Numbers vis-à-vis national data



FILE PHOTO

IN NUMBERS

Angul recorded the highest of 47 new infections followed by Sundargarh (44) and Khurda (39)

The deaths were reported from Khurda, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh

Khurda accounted for 310 fatalities followed by Ganjam (245), Sundargarh (155), Cuttack (137) and Puri (110)

Odisha has thus far conducted over 63.78 lakh sample tests for Covid-19 including 33,079 Saturday

The positivity rate stands at 5.08 per cent

line workers and to people above 50 years of age. It will be followed by those younger than 50 years of age with associated co-morbidities based on evolving pandemic situation. Finally, the remaining population will be vaccinated based on disease epidemiology and vaccine availability.

TEDx session at IIM Sambalpur

The theme for TEDxIIM Sambalpur 2020 was 'Explore the Unexplored'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Dec 13: IIM Sambalpur has conducted its first TEDx session within five years of its commencement. The theme for TEDxIIM Sambalpur 2020 was 'Explore the Unexplored'. The virtual session saw 10 speakers share their life stories in front of the audience. The session began with an inaugural ceremony by Chief Guest Padma Shri TV Mohandas Pai, Chairman and Co-Founder, Aarin Capital, Chairman of Manipal Global Education, a member of the boards of the NSE India. The inaugural programme also witnessed a welcome address by Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal, Director, IIM Sambalpur.

While delivering the welcome address, Mahadeo Jaiswal, Director, IIM Sambalpur, said, "IIM Sambalpur was set up in the year 2015 by the Government of India and it has been our vision to nurture responsible leaders with an entrepreneurial mindset with three core values of Inclusion, Innovation and Integrity. The strategic theme 'Explore the Unexplored' is based on 3Ds of Digitalisation, Decarbonisation and Democratisation of business, hence, we would like to align ourselves with this ideal which is very com-



Padma Shri TV Mohandas Pai addresses the session

plimentary and contemporary."

He further added, "IIM Sambalpur has already started experimenting and we want to explore the whole entrepreneurial journey within the classroom with our students and faculty. We want to integrate learning, research and application of that research within the classroom."

Chief Guest Padma Shri TV Mohandas Pai, Chairman of Aarin Capital, Chairman of Manipal Global Education, a member of the boards of the NSE India, added, "When we think of a management institute, we primarily think of an institute that teaches its students how to run enterprises. In order to run an enterprise, we need processes, management theories, marketing strategies and an art of managing people in a structured manner."

Parents' association gheraoes S&ME Minister's residence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: Several parents and guardians under the banner of 'Organisation of Parent Associations' Forum' (OPAF) Sunday gheraoed the residence of School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash here alleging the state government of filing a 'fake' affidavit with the Orissa High Court in connection with a case relating to waiver of fees by private schools in the wake of the pandemic.

In its affidavit December 2, the state government had informed the Orissa High Court that it has no control over the private schools operating in Odisha. "The state also informed the HC that there are many government-run schools in Odisha, but parents are still enrolling their wards to private-operated schools," said an agitating parent.

OPAF general secretary Mitarani Sahoo claimed that the state government has a policy to regulate the fee structure of the private English medium schools. "The Odisha Education Act resolution, dated September 23, 1996 is still in vogue and gives the state a power to regulate the fees charged by the schools," Sahoo pointed out.

The association also alleged that DAV Public Schools, Odisha Zone I and II and Association of Orissa ICSE Schools have filed a false counter affidavit with the HC contending that the 'state government



The forum members gherao the Minister's residence

The state government has a policy to regulate the fee structure of the private English medium schools. The Odisha Education Act resolution, dated September 23, 1996 is still in vogue and gives the state a power to regulate the fees charged by the schools

MITARANI SAHOO | GENERAL SECRETARY, ORGANISATION OF PARENT ASSOCIATIONS' FORUM

policy of regulating the fee structure of private English medium schools' has lost its significance after introduction of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education

SHOWING SOLIDARITY



Members of Sikh community hold a demonstration at a gurdwara in Shikharpur area of Cuttack, Sunday, to support the farmers' agitation against the new farm laws

OP PHOTO

OPSC to conduct exams online

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 13: The Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) has planned to conduct certain recruitment examinations online in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

The OPSC is all set to conduct the examination for Insurance Medical Officers through online mode December 20.

"A private agency has been roped in to assist OPSC in conducting



the examination for Insurance Medical Officers through online mode. We will hold online exami-

nation for some other posts if the December 20 examination is conducted without any glitches. Our plan is to conduct online examinations for objective papers," said OPSC secretary Ashok Kumar Dash.

Dash further informed that the examination for Insurance Medical Officers would be conducted at two centres in Bhubaneswar. "Admit cards and photos of the candidates would be verified thoroughly to check impersonation," Dash added.

Staff crunch cripples Livestock Aid Centres

Of the total 211 Livestock Aid Centres in Cuttack district, 114 centres do not have attendants

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 13: Livestock Aid Centres in Cuttack district are facing severe manpower crunch.

The shortage of attendants, livestock inspectors and veterinarians in the district is causing difficulties in meeting vaccination and other targets, sources said.

Of the total 211 Livestock Aid Centres in Cuttack district, 114 centres do not have attendants. Livestock attendants usually play a crucial role in field survey and other works at the village level, sources added.

Moreover, 36 posts of livestock inspectors out of the total 96 in the district are lying vacant. Similarly, altogether 59 veterinarian posts have been sanctioned for Cuttack. At present, the posts of 15 veterinarians are lying vacant.

"The post of Sub Divisional Veterinary Officer (SDVO) has been lying vacant at Banki for last several months. The vacancy has affected file work with regard to the milk farmers of the locality. The state government is fixing targets for vaccination and other programmes. But, staff crunch has become a hurdle in this regard," said a source.

Some social activists, meanwhile, claimed that staff crunch at Livestock Aid Centres is also af-

36 posts of livestock inspectors out of the total 96 in the district are lying vacant

Altogether 59 veterinarian posts have been sanctioned for Cuttack

At present, the posts of 15 veterinarians are lying vacant

The post of Sub-Divisional Veterinary Officer (SDVO) has been lying vacant at Banki for last several months

fecting rehabilitation of migrant workers who have returned to their native places in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

"The district administration has planned to rehabilitate around 20,000 returnees by encouraging them to take up poultry, fishery and animal husbandry. But, the manpower shortage has affected the rehabilitation work," said a social activist.

When contacted, Chief District Veterinary Officer Keshab Chandra Pradhan said, "There are certain restrictions on fresh recruitments due to the pandemic. We are trying to fill up the vacant posts of Class-IV employees at the Livestock Aid Centres after receiving a special approval in this regard from the state government."



Bhubaneswar Music Circle in association with Bhubaneswar Development Authority holds a Hindustani music programme at Indira Gandhi Park in the Capital City, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Saffron's mega push for 3 new farm laws

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Sunday announced organising special conventions in the state to aware the people of the state on the new farm laws and termed the protesting farmers 'misled' by Left parties and the Congress.

BJP leader Pradeep Purohit said, "The BJP will do conventions in four places of the state—Bargarh, Balasore, Jaipur and Cuttack. The discussions will be done on farm loans and will brief the people on how the benefits of 'one nation, one market' will benefit the people. Many farmers taking part in the stir have started understanding the real facts and are mollified."

He also said, "Few farmers' organisations backed by Congress party, Leftist parties are trying to mislead the country on the new farm laws. False narratives have been created in the country about



A pic of one of the protests underway in the country against the new farm laws

abolition of mandis and MSP. Our party will go to several parts of the state to create awareness on the matter."

"The Union government has planned to aware the citizens. Vested interests are trying to brainwash them (farmers) and defame the Narendra Modi government," he said.

The leader said that in the BJP-sponsored conventions, farmers would take part in the meeting. "Our farm units are discussing the issue. What should the government do? Should we focus on the farmers at large or address the few farmer leaders who are misguided. This is a historic law," he said.

The leader also blamed the Odisha

The BJP will do conventions in four places of the state—Bargarh, Balasore, Jaipur and Cuttack. The discussions will be done on farm loans and will brief the people on how the benefits of 'one nation, one market' will impact the people for good

PRADEEP PUROHIT | BJP LEADER

government for not taking care of the farmers. He said, "The Odisha government has never stood with the farmers. It tried to give farmers money under the KALIA scheme. But are the farmers now getting the money? It was used before elections. But the state is reluctant to give the benefits of the PM Kisan Scheme to the people of Odisha. Farmers are infuriated with the state government."

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

Cops intensify search to trace missing girl Swati

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Dec 13: Already burdened under the Pari death case, the police in Nayagarh district are firing on all cylinders to trace three-year-old girl Swati who went missing from Budhipatana village under Sarankul block in Nayagarh district Friday.

Swati was last seen at about 2.00 pm Friday while playing near her house. Thereafter, she went missing. After all the efforts of her family members to trace her turned futile, they lodged a missing report at the Rajsunakhala police outpost.

Meanwhile, two police teams from the outpost and Ranpur police along with the Sarankul sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) visited the minor girl's village. The officials interacted with the family members and the villagers. While a sniffer dog is being pressed in the search operation, a fire personnel team is learnt to have been camping at the village and carrying out search operations in ponds and wells

The way Swati went missing has reminded the people of Pari going missing and later being found dead. Pari was also playing near her house at Jadupur village when she went missing June 14. Later, June 23, her skeletal remains were re-



FACT FILE

A sniffer dog has been pressed into service while a fire personnel team is learnt to have been camping at the village and carrying out search operations in ponds and wells

The way Swati went missing has reminded the people of Pari going missing and later being found dead. Pari was also playing near her house at Jadupur village when she went missing June 14

A SPECIAL INVESTIGATION TEAM (SIT) LED BY SENIOR IPS OFFICER ARUN BOTHRA IS INVESTIGATING THE CASE AFTER THE HARASSED AND DISTRESSED PARENTS OF THE VICTIM ATTEMPTED SELF-IMMOLATION IN FRONT OF THE ODISHA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY NOVEMBER 24

covered from a spot only 50 metres away from the place where she went missing. The case created ripples in the state after the harassed and distressed parents of the victim attempted self-immolation in

front of the Odisha Legislative Assembly November 24 when the winter session was underway

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by senior IPS officer Arun Bothra is investigating the case.

Organic farming pays dividends to tribal farmers



POST NEWS NETWORK

Makangiri, Dec 13: Tribal farmers living in some parts of Makangiri district have resumed organic farming, which is turning out to be profitable for them. Given the growing awareness and demand for organic crops, more and more farmers are keen to adopt organic farming, a report said.

For the last several years, they had been raising cereals and vegetables by using chemical fertilizers. They had given up the traditional system of nurturing plants – use of cow dung, alluvial soil of rivers and sedimentary silt of ponds. Crops raised this way were tasty and free from harmful elements.

Reports said as people are keen on buying organic food, many tribal farmers have realised the demand for the crops and started farming in traditional ways at Matapakka.

They also sow indigenous seeds instead of high yielding varieties.

Muka Jartami, a young farmer of Matapakka, has led this farming in the area. In his farmland, he has grown over 500 chilli plants

TRADITIONAL WAY

As people are keen on buying organic food, many tribal farmers have realised the demand for the crops and started farming in traditional ways

The farmers sow indigenous seeds instead of high yielding varieties

The farmers adopt traditional system of nurturing plants – use of cow dung, alluvial soil of rivers and sedimentary silt of ponds

with use of cow dung, alluvial soil and stream water. His efforts have paid dividends.

“Within a month since planting the saplings, each chilli plant bore over a half a kg chilli. The plants have grown luxuriantly with natural manure,” Muka asserted.

The farming was done on experimental basis. Now, he plans vegetable and paddy farming in the organic way.

He noted that use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in crops lead to deadly diseases in people. “Traditional system of farming is safe for healthy life,” the farmer observed.

Farmers forced to sell paddy to middlemen

POST NEWS NETWORK

Muniguda, Dec 13: Five mandis have opened in Muniguda block of Rayagada district, but farmers have alleged that they are unable to sell their paddy as tokens are not issued to them.

The farmers who have harvested their paddy have to face a lot of problems. Middlemen are taking advantage of this situation. They are buying paddy for Rs 800 to Rs 1300 per quintal from farmers, who are unwilling to bear delay in procurement. About 2307 farmers have applied for paddy selling at Muniguda and Ambadola Large Area Multi-Purpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS). Only 103 of them have got tokens till December 11. The farmers demanded early redressal of the token problem.

Alert man saves woman from jumping into river

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Dec 13: The presence of mind and timely action of a man Saturday afternoon deterred a woman from jumping into a river. The woman was attempting to jump into Baitarani River from a bridge under Panikoili police limits in Jajpur district for reasons yet to be known.

The woman climbed a parapet of the bridge all of a sudden when she was noticed by the man who was passing by the road. The woman was about to jump into the river from the bridge.

Apprehending the likely mishap, the man immediately swung into action and averted the incident.

MAHA COPS ARREST GANJAM SAMITI MEMBER FOR RAPE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hinjilicut, Dec 13: Maharashtra Police arrested a samiti member of Kanchuru panchayat under this block in Ganjam district on the charge of raping and defrauding a woman from Maharashtra, late Saturday night.

The accused was identified as A Sudam. On the basis of a complaint filed by a woman at Manipada police station in Maharashtra, a two-member team of Maharashtra police with the help of Hinjili police picked up the samiti member from his Sadhapur residence.

A case has been registered against Sudam under Sections 376, 420, 406, 504 and 506 of CrPC and Section 34 of IPC at Manipada police station.

The police said Sudam allegedly established a physical relationship with the woman on the pretext of marriage and duped her of lakhs of rupees.

Sudam was taken to the Hinjili police station first and later produced before the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) and taken on a transit remand by the Maharashtra police.



Young artists take part in an art work shop organized by a local outfit near Nelson Mandela Chhak in Sambalpur Sunday

HONING SKILLS

Bargarh Dhanu Yatra gets cancelled due to pandemic

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Dec 13: COVID-19 pandemic has played spoilsport for organisation of the world-famous open-air theatre Dhanu Yatra. Even though the mega event was scheduled to be held from January 18, 2021, it has now been cancelled owing to COVID-19.

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

The festival's main attraction is King Kansa who sitting on the back of a caparisoned elephant moves around the town. During the 11-day festival, the town of Bargarh turns into Mathura Nagar, the kingdom of Kansa and Ambapali – on the outskirts – gets decorated and



christened as Gopapur while the Jeera river which flows between Bargarh and Ambapali is called the Yamuna.

In fact, the plot of the festival is based on the mythological story of Lord Krishna slaying his uncle Kansa. It begins with Kansa de-

THE FESTIVAL'S MAIN ATTRACTION IS KING KANSA WHO SITTING ON THE BACK OF A CAPARISONED ELEPHANT MOVES AROUND THE TOWN

throning Ugrasena and ends with the death of Kansa and coronation of Ugrasena as the king.

During the festival, the entire town is bedecked with festoons of colourful papers, flowers and lights. It is the occasion when people of this district working outside return to their families to enjoy the festival with their near and dear ones. Denizens of Bargarh and thousands others across Odisha this year will have to give the festival a miss amid fears of a second wave of COVID-19.

Gutkha worth ₹15L seized, eight people held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Dec 13: Malkangiri police arrested eight persons on the charges of illegal transportation of a huge quantity of gutkha here Saturday.

The police seized 124 bags of gutkha of different brands worth around Rs 15 lakh and an auto-rickshaw from the accused.

The accused persons have been identified as Bishnu Behera (32), T. Satyanarayan Subudhi (40), P. Bala (32), Debendra Kumar Tripathy (31), Premanand Pradhan (30), Sanatan Mahakud (42), K. Trimal Prusti (32) and Sushant Pradhan (30).

According to reports, a team of Malkangiri police conducted raid after receiving information about illegal transportation of a huge quantity of gutkha from Malkangiri bus-stand to Kalimela.



During the raid, the police apprehended two persons – Bishnu Behera, auto driver, and T. Satyanarayan Subudhi, owner of gutkha bags.

As the duo failed to produce bills, licence and documents supporting possession and transportation of the consignment, the police seized the gutkha packets and

the auto-rickshaw.

Similar raids were conducted in five more places leading to seizure of huge quantities of illegal gutkha and arrest of six more people.

“The gutkha bags were supplied from Berhampur and Jeyapore to Malkangiri. The seized gutkha packets will be worth 15 lakh,” said a police official.

Coast Guard uses aircraft in ‘Operation Oliva’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, Dec 13: The Indian Coast Guard has pressed into service an aircraft for ‘Operation Oliva’, the coastal patrolling as part of its annual mission to ensure the safe mid-sea sojourn of breeding Olive Ridley sea turtles in Odisha.

In joint coordination with the state forest department, the turtle conservation programme is in full swing to keep watch and vigil on illegal fishing along the turtle concentration zone, said a Coast Guard official.

The Coast Guard has chalked out a proactive plan for these marine animals' conservation. With round-the-clock vigil, the coast guard has been able to provide adequate protection to the endangered species, an official said. The CG aircraft will keep a tab on illegal fishing in Gahirmatha marine sanctuary, Dhamra, Devi and Rushikulya river mouths, he said.

Meanwhile, the coast guard has organised interactive sessions with the marine fishermen communities



to sensitise them on the pros and cons of the legal embargo on fishing during Olive Ridelys' nesting season. The patrol exercise for surveillance on trespassing sea-worthy trawls is on as turtles perish in large numbers after getting hit on trawl propellers. Besides breeding animals get entangled in fishing nets and are asphyxiated to death, he said.

The coast guard is always on alert to check trespassing of vessels. The patrol vessels engaged by the forest and fisheries department often seek CG ship assistance in the event of emergencies. The op-

eration to save turtles is being carried on in a coordinated manner, they said.

“We are always ready to help the forest and fisheries department for the safety of these delicate marine species,” they added.

The CG patrol in turtle congregation sites would remain in force till the marine turtles finish laying eggs on nesting beaches, added the CG official.

There is an increase in the awareness level among the fishermen communities. As a result, unlawful sea fishing activity has dropped

The Coast Guard has chalked out a proactive plan for these marine animals' conservation. With round-the-clock vigil, the coast guard has been able to provide adequate protection to the endangered species

The coast guard has organised interactive sessions with the marine fishermen communities to sensitise them on the pros and cons of the legal embargo on fishing during Olive Ridelys' nesting season

down considerably this time since the enforcement of prohibition on sea fishing from November 1 within the 20 km radius of Gahirmatha marine sanctuary and river mouths of Odisha.

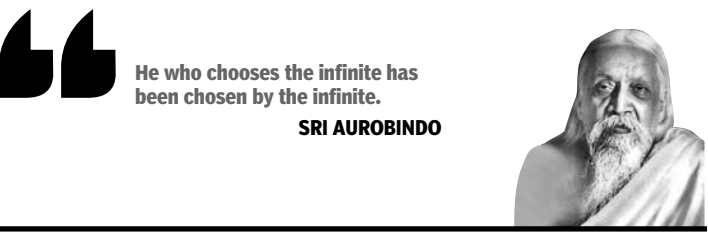
Since November 1 when the turtle protection patrolling was undertaken, the forest department has arrested more than 70 sea-going fishermen and eight sea-worthy trawls were seized on the charge of infringement of provisions of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1982, said forest officials.

PLAYMATE



With no mates around, a child playing with a fowl near his house in Nabarangpur

OP PHOTO



Steadfast China

The tirades launched against China in the past few days by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat are an admission by the government that Chinese aggressive posturing along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh has indeed reached a critical stage. This is contrary to the denial mode the Narendra Modi government has preferred to retain. In fact, the responses by Jaishankar and Rawat come across as pathetic pleas to contain China. It betrayed nervousness when Jaishankar said at a FICCI programme that “the events” along the LAC in eastern Lakadh are “very disturbing” and that what has happened there is not in China’s interest. It smacks of puerile foreign policy to decide for China what is “in its interest” or what is not. China knows its own interests better than anyone else and it has been pursuing them along Indian borders with shrewdness mixing aggression with its strategic-economic-diplomatic maneuverings bringing into its orbit Pakistan, Nepal and even Bhutan. India under the BJP-led government has all this while been sleeping, neglecting the neighbours. It has turned the heat exclusively on Pakistan as its main foreign policy plank to tailor it to its domestic-electoral politics of communal divide.

Jaishankar complained at the FICCI programme that these events have raised some very “basic concerns” as the “other party” has not abided by agreements on respecting the LAC. Two days back, he had told the Australian think tank, Lowy Institute, during an interview that China had been equivocating on the issue. Immediately thereafter, the Chinese foreign office spokesperson Hua Chunying retorted that it was India which had violated bilateral agreements. Her categorical response was that the merit of the situation at the border area is very clear and the responsibility totally lies with the Indian side. According to her, China has been strictly observing the agreements signed between the two sides and is committed to resolving the border issue through dialogue and safeguarding regional peace.

Jaishankar was candid enough to admit that the real danger is that the goodwill which was so carefully developed will dissipate. But he also said that India is being tested and will meet the national security challenge. India’s foreign minister’s claim that goodwill had been developed probably refers to events such as Xi Jinping and PM Modi sitting on a swing at Ahmedabad or walking on the beach at Mahabalipuram. These kinds of bonhomie do not hold any meaning in a brutal world of diplomacy. Jaishankar’s claim was probably intended to please the powers that be but as a career diplomat, he must be aware that his mouth speaks where his heart does not agree.

In another summit on December 10, Rawat urged like-minded countries to build dissuasive deterrence against China’s attempts to establish hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region. The irony is when India is looking for strategic partners to take on China, the latter has gone ahead with mobilising hundreds of thousands of soldiers along the LAC and positioned its other military and non-military wherewithal along Indian borders. Not only military, China’s hostile policy towards India is dictated by its ambitious economic agenda of One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative that links Pakistan and many other countries in India’s neighbourhood. China has remained steadfast in its global as well as neighbourhood policies. Its aggressiveness towards India, both militarily as well as economically, has not altered during the past few decades. What has changed is the image India has been demonstrating to the world lately. India, projecting an image of a divided society within and a foreign policy blueprint that only depends on personal rapport and pats on the back of PM Modi, has lost out on all initiatives. Individual to individual relations do not hold any significance in a diplomatic whirl where power struggles between nations, especially after CoVID-19 related economic debacles, are taking huge tolls.

WISDOM CORNER

Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

The more violent the storm, the quicker it passes.
PAULO COELHO

Superstition is the religion of feeble minds.
EDMUND BURKE

WORDSWORTH

Wassail

In Saxon times you would have used the original form of this word, was hail, to greet or say goodbye to somebody; it literally meant “be in good health.” By the twelfth century, it had become the salutation you offered as a toast, to which the standard reply was drinc hail, “drink good health.” Hail is an older form of hale, healthy, which is now mainly confined to the set phrase hale and hearty and is also closely connected with hail meaning “to salute, greet, welcome.” The toast seems to have come over with the Danes; by the twelfth century the Norman conquerors of Britain regarded was hail as one of the most characteristic sayings of the country. Later on, the word came to be used also for the drink in which the toast was offered, especially the spiced ale or mulled wine that was drunk on Christmas Eve or Twelfth Night. In the western counties of Britain, the tradition grew up on Twelfth Night of toasting the good health of the apple trees that would bear the crop from which next year’s cider would be made. Pieces of bread soaked in cider might be placed in the crooks of trees, guns were fired to ward off evil spirits, and special songs were sung.

Water war

This is a term devised by environmentalists for a type of conflict (most probably a form of guerrilla warfare) which has not yet occurred, but which they predict will happen through an acute shortage of water for drinking and irrigation. About 40 per cent of the world’s populations are already affected to some degree, but population growth, climate change and rises in living standards will worsen the situation: the UN Environment Agency warns that almost 3 billion people will be severely short of water within 50 years. Experts point to the disaster of the Aral Sea, which has already lost three-quarters of its water through diversion for irrigation of the rivers feeding it. Possible flash points have been predicted in the Middle East, parts of Africa and in many of the world’s major river basins, including the Danube.

Water poverty

Humans can, at a pinch, make do without a lot of things, but they must have water. Some people in developing countries have access only to water that is unfit to drink. In other countries, even some prosperous ones such as the oil-rich nations of the Middle East, there isn’t enough water for their populations. The term water poverty for the lack of access to potable water isn’t new: it’s on record as far back as 1950 in reference to the problems of Texas farmers during a prolonged drought. But it has become widely used only in the past decade. A report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation used the term to describe the state of four million British low-income households who struggle to pay their water bills.

LOL

Drummer problems

A musical director was having a lot of trouble with one drummer. He talked and talked and talked with the drummer, but his performance simply didn’t improve. Finally, before the whole orchestra, he said, “When a musician just can’t handle his instrument and doesn’t

improve when given help, they take away the instrument, and give him two sticks, and make him a drummer.” A stage whisper was heard from the percussion section: “And if he can’t handle even that, they take away one of his sticks and make him a conductor.”

FOCUS GERMANY

WHO WILL SUCCEED MERKEL?

German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has ruled the 71-year-old Federal Republic for a total of 50 years. When she steps down next fall after 16 years in office, it is safe to assume that another Christian Democrat will succeed her. Who will it be?

Within the next few weeks, the CDU will hold its 33rd party convention, and choose a new leader. Whoever it is will most likely be anointed as the CDU’s candidate for chancellor when Merkel steps down, and there is little doubt that the CDU will come out on top in next September’s general election, whereupon it will take the lead in forming the next government.

The three men vying for the party’s top job are not household names abroad. The first (going in alphabetical order) is Armin Laschet, the minister-president of North Rhine-Westphalia and a longtime party workhorse whose charisma does not match his competence.

Next is Friedrich Merz, who led the CDU caucus in the Bundestag two decades ago, until he was driven out by Merkel as she prepared her own run to the top. After slinking off to the private sector and making oodles of money, he is pushing for a comeback.

The third contender is Norbert Röttgen, the chairman of the Bundestag’s Foreign Affairs Committee. He served a brief stint as environment minister under Merkel until she fired her then-fair-haired boy.

Laschet is Merkel’s unspoken favourite, if only because the other two have accounts to settle with ‘Mutti’ (mom), whose path to power is strewn with the corpses of not-so-steely rivals. Owing to COVID-19, we don’t yet know when and how the CDU will choose its next leader. But whether it meets physically or virtually, the party will decide this month on a convention date in mid-January.

There is no real front-runner: Merz commanded 27 per cent support in one recent poll, but he was

trending downward. Röttgen had 16 per cent and is enjoying a slight uptick. Laschet trails both, and the 21 per cent of respondents checking ‘None of the Above’ have added to the uncertainty.

An obvious question is what each of the candidates stands for. But this is not easy to answer in such a boringly – and perhaps fortunately – centrist political system. The German far left and far right together can claim only around 20 per cent in the polls. Most voters opt for the major parties (above all, the CDU), which operate like supermarkets, offering a little of something for everyone, with no surprises or disruptions.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century – from Kaiser Wilhelm II to the Führer – Germany was the most ‘interesting’ country in the world. Internally, it was a political volcano, and a deadly threat to its neighbourhood. Today, as a result of two catastrophic world wars, it is about as aggressive as a sloth, with its politics hovering between stable and staid.

So, the CDU beauty contest is nothing like the rollercoaster of the Democratic Party’s presidential primary in the United States this year, where Senators Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts pushed a hard-left course. Nor does Germany have a Donald Trump on

the scene. The country’s politics is ‘continuity über alles.’

And so, Laschet is running on his experience as minister-president of the most populous of Germany’s 16 states – an advantage Merz and Röttgen lack. His unspoken message amounts to ‘four more years of Merkelism’: no sudden lurches in domestic or foreign policy.

Meanwhile, Merz, who began his campaign holding up the right end of the CDU table (more Atlanticism and free-market economics), has been carefully balancing his cadences. He, too, wants “no rupture,” but he also believes that Germany has “slowed down too much.” So, let’s have it both ways.

Röttgen, the youngest of the three, sounds like the boldest. Touting his credentials as a foreign-policy expert, he wants to be tougher on Russia and China than the other two. But take heart: under his leadership, there would be “neither total continuity, nor a break” with the Merkel era.

Thus, stability will continue to be the name of the German game. There is no right-wing outlier like France’s Marine Le Pen or Italy’s Matteo Salvini, nor is there any radical leftist like Britain’s Jeremy Corbyn, the former leader of the Labour Party. Whereas the US and the UK essentially have two-party governments, Germany, like most of continental Europe, governs

through multiparty coalitions that don’t swing radically to and fro with every election.

In any case, whoever wins the CDU race in January and becomes chancellor in September will have to govern in tandem or even in a threesome. Buoyed by the pandemic, which has favoured the powers that be, the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), will presumably secure around 35 per cent of the vote. A bit to the left, the Greens may pick up around 20 per cent, making them a natural coalition partner for the CDU/CSU.

This balance-of-power arrangement promises continuity, which is not particularly exciting. We in the media might soon look back wistfully at Trump, who, for all his grating flaws, was the most entertaining leader of the twenty-first century. But in these troubled times – with COVID-19 not yet vanquished, and the economy still sinking – sluggish centrism is not the worst outcome for Europe’s anchor power.

In addition to the three declared CDU contenders, there are two dark horses who, instead of going the conventional route – first chairman, then candidate chancellor – are playing a waiting game. Maybe the party will get bored with the trio of Laschet, Merz, and Röttgen, and will want somebody who is in the public eye daily. One is Minister of Health Jens Spahn, a hard-working politico who, thanks to COVID-19, is constantly in the news. The other is CSU leader Markus Söder, a man of burning ambition who tirelessly works the interview and talk-show circuit. But none of these five candidates would engineer a revolt against Mutti and her legacy. The next German chancellor, it is safe to predict, will be Merkel without the Angela.

The writer, a fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, serves on the editorial council of the German weekly Die Zeit.

SPECTRUM MEDIA

Prevent death of independent journalism

A story too good to fact-check is the tale of the boiled frog. Rather than being dropped directly into boiling water – from which it would instantly jump – the frog is slid gently into a pot of comfortably warm water; and the heat is turned up. By the time the frog realises that the water has gotten too hot, it is too late, and it is boiled alive. Independent journalism may now be confronting a similar scenario.

The water temperature around journalists has been rising for the last 15 years. But the heat has recently been turned up. For example, in 2019 alone, the number of unwarranted detentions of journalists increased by 12 per cent, to a total of 389. Almost half are being held in three countries: China, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

Popular protests are particularly risky for journalists. At demonstrations in Algeria, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Venezuela, journalists have been routinely intimidated, harassed, and attacked. In the United States, journalists covering the protests against police brutality and systemic racism, led by the Black Lives Matter movement, have faced indiscriminate attacks at the hands of law enforcement. The US Press Freedom Tracker counted more than 900 press-freedom violations so far this year, including

more than 177 physical attacks. Women often face an added layer of psychological intimidation, including open threats of sexual assault. In a recent survey, a shocking 75 per cent of female journalists in Kenya reported such threats. Perpetrators include individual misogynists and networked groups intent on suppressing women’s voices, as well as state-linked agents seeking to undermine press freedom and censor critical journalism carried out by women.

The COVID-19 crisis has compounded the challenges facing journalists by constraining their ability to do their jobs. Part of the problem is restrictive measures ostensibly aimed at containing the virus: Freedom House recently highlighted 91 countries with emergency laws and regulations that hamper independent journalism. These range from relatively mild, such as limiting questions at press conferences, to suspending newspapers’ publication and blocking websites.

There is also an economic dimension to the challenge. Traditional news media have been under intensifying pressure for decades, their business models upended by digital technologies. Now, the COVID-19 crisis has decimated economic activity in much of the world, weakening business revenues and forcing layoffs.

Newsrooms have not been spared. In a survey of 165 independent news media organisations asking how COVID-19 has affected them, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that more than 50 per cent expected a drop in revenue of 20 per cent or higher in 2020. One-fifth reported an overall decline in audience reach this year. Those hit hardest are those that are advertising-based, as well as newspapers and local media. Respondents’ top reported priority is securing funding to cover operational costs. Local and regional media, especially in emerging economies, have fared the worst. But media in rich economies are hardly exempt. In the Netherlands, for example, total advertising income across all media organisations declined by 22 per cent year on year during the first wave of the pandemic. Hundreds of freelance journalists are now fully dependent on government support.

In this sense, the COVID-19 crisis could deal a fatal blow to independent journalism. But there is still time to make sure that it doesn’t. For starters, governments must immediately end the impunity that perpetuates and possibly even encourages attacks on freedom of expression. Democratic countries must begin treating attacks on journalists as attacks on their very

democracies – and prosecuting those attacks accordingly, with heavy criminal penalties. And all governments should be held accountable when pandemic-related restrictions are used as a pretext to silence journalists.

Furthermore, policymakers must take action, both at the national and multilateral level, to ensure independent journalism’s economic survival. For example, they can create systems that guarantee public funding for independent media, preferably through dedicated funds financed by a digital tax. The European Union could lead the way here, with an EU-wide fund. Democratic governments more broadly should seize the opportunity afforded by the upcoming World Press Freedom Conference to kick-start progress globally.

Independent journalism is indisputably a public good. By reporting on the events shaping our world and exposing criminal wrongdoing and ethical indiscretions, especially by those in power, journalists enable informed debate, strengthen accountability, and protect people’s rights and interests. We must not wait until it’s too late to recognise the importance of their work.

The writer is Director of Free Press Unlimited.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Chittaranjan Barik, JAGATSINGHPUR

Rajani moment?

Sir, All eyes are on superstar Rajinikanth, who has announced his party would contest all the 234 seats in the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. Rajini has cleverly cultivated a goody-goody image for himself in Tamil films after an initial struggle which saw him don villainous roles. The multilingual Rajini is seen as a clean and pious man. His uncountable movie roles as a common man taking on the establishment have kept him people’s good books. He should hope to cash in on the people’s goodwill. The man who ruled Tamil cinema for decades together has deciphered the fact that he is no MGR or Jayalalthaa, whose demigod statues were unreplicable as much as they were unbeatable. All that is passé now. The popular cine star has to play the caste politics with aplomb. His team selection has to be flawless. Rajini has disclosed his ‘spiritual’ bent of mind that has sent tongues wagging. Then there is the eternal issue of coalition politics. Can he juggle with his new equations as astutely as he was known to do with his signature cigarette flip? But a veteran actor of his standing need not be told that not everything in politics is rosy and the profession requires meticulous planning and timely execution. The biggest advantage for Rajini is that the political situation in Tamil Nadu is quite fluid. The people of the state are peeved over the corrupt ways and lust for power of politicians belonging to both the AIADMK and the DMK. The ‘brand Rajini’ of reel life should do encore in real life. Common man is yearning for a change, and that change may indeed arrive in the form of Rajinikanth in May 2021.

Sanapathi Bhat, AKOLA (MAHARASHTRA)

Schools monetise solar power

GOVT SCHOOLS IN DELHI EXPECT TO EARN ₹8.5 CRORE AND SAVE ₹8.8 CRORE ON BILLS

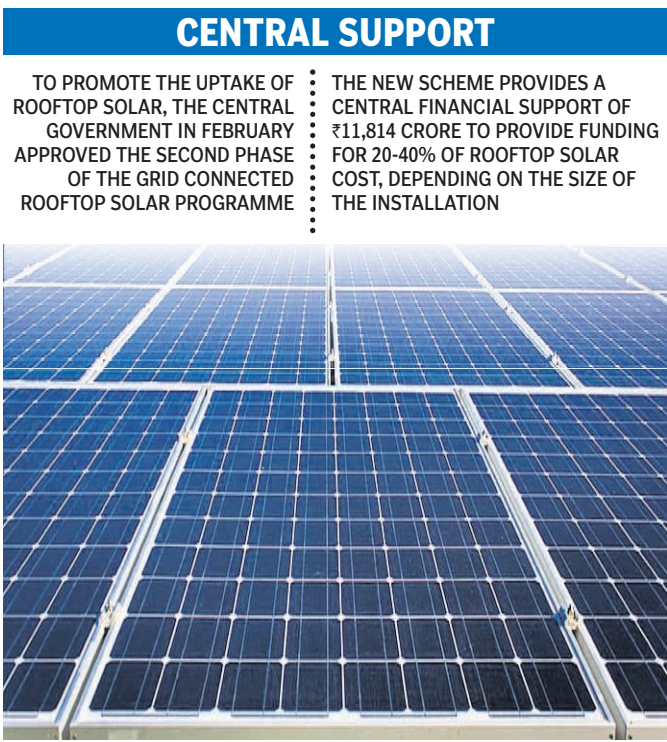
AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 13: Government schools in Delhi are eyeing substantial income, apart from significant reduction in electricity bills, as they start earning money by selling electricity generated by the rooftop solar systems installed on their buildings.

The projects are being built under the Central government scheme for solarising government buildings, where the Centre pays 25% of the capital cost upfront. Government schools in Delhi are eyeing substantial income, apart from significant reduction in electricity bills, as they start earning money by selling electricity generated by the rooftop solar systems installed on their buildings.

Under the Centre's scheme for government building solarisation, the Delhi government has developed over 21 mega-watt (MW) of solar rooftop plants on 150 government schools. These are expected to save about ₹8.8 crore on their electricity bills cumulatively each year, apart from earning ₹8.5 crore from selling power.

The rooftop plants are being installed under the 'Resco' model, wherein solar projects are built and operated by the developer using its



own capital, taking the financing burden off from the schools. The developer will get ₹3.13 for every unit of electricity being generated by the rooftop plants from the schools. The rate is 65% lower than the electricity tariffs paid

CENTRAL SUPPORT

TO PROMOTE THE UPTAKE OF ROOFTOP SOLAR, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN FEBRUARY APPROVED THE SECOND PHASE OF THE GRID CONNECTED ROOFTOP SOLAR PROGRAMME

THE NEW SCHEME PROVIDES A CENTRAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF ₹11,814 CRORE TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR 20-40% OF ROOFTOP SOLAR COST, DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE INSTALLATION

by the schools to the power distribution companies (discoms).

For any surplus power generated, the discoms would buy the electricity from the schools at ₹5.65 per unit. As consumers globally are gradually becoming 'pro-

sumers' — those who produce energy, consume a part of it and also give a part to the grid — Delhi schools are taking up this opportunity to generate green energy and improve their finances.

One kilowatt (kW) of rooftop solar installation needs about 10 square metres of shadow-free surface area. Among the Delhi schools, the largest rooftop solar plants have been set up in West Vinod Nagar (195 kW), Rohini (170 kW), Rouse Avenue (150 kW), East Vinod Nagar (146 kW) and Rajokari (127 kW). Incidentally, West Vinod Nagar currently houses the largest solar rooftop plant on a government school in the country.

"Our projects would cumulatively save 63,000 tonne of CO2 over the life of the projects, and contribute significantly to Delhi's and India's rooftop solarisation targets," said Sharavan Sampath, CEO of Oakridge Energy, which is one of the major developers in the government school solarisation tender and has installed solar units in the West Vinod Nagar school.

Out of the total solar capacity of 36,910 MW, only 3,402 MW currently comes from rooftop solar. The government aims to have 40,000 MW of rooftop solar capacity by 2022.

TRP SCAM

REPUBLIC NETWORK'S CEO HELD IN MUMBAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 13: Mumbai Police arrested Republic Media Network's Chief Executive Officer Vikas Khanchandani Sunday morning in connection with the alleged TRP (Television Rating Points) rigging scam, a police official said.

Khanchandani was arrested from his residence here by the police's Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU), he said. He will be produce before a court for further remand, the official said.

The police began a probe into the alleged scam after ratings agency Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) filed a complaint through Hansa Research Agency about rigging of TRP by some channels.

TRP, measured by recording viewership data at sample households, is crucial for attracting advertisers.

The BARC engaged Hansa to install and maintain barometers which record TV viewership data at sample households.

It was alleged that some of these families were being bribed to tune into certain channels to ramp up their TRP.



THE POLICE BEGAN A PROBE INTO THE ALLEGED SCAM AFTER RATINGS AGENCY BARC FILED A COMPLAINT THROUGH HANSA RESEARCH AGENCY ABOUT RIGGING OF TRP

EARLIER, KHANCHANDANI AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SIVASUBRAMANIAN SUNDARAM MOVED SESSIONS COURT, MUMBAI SEEKING ANTICIPATORY BAIL IN THE FAKE TRP SCAM CASE

In a charge sheet filed recently, the police alleged that an official of Hansa paid money to sample households to tune into Box Cinema, Fakt Marathi, Maha Movie and Republic TV.

The Republic TV has denied any wrongdoing. The police have arrested a total of 13 persons in the case so far.

Earlier, Khanchandani and Chief Financial Officer Sivasubramanian Sundaram moved Sessions Court, Mumbai seeking anticipatory bail in the fake TRP scam case registered by the Mumbai police apprehend-

ing arrest.

An internal report was prepared by Hansa Research Group along with the Vigilance Team of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) investigating malpractices by some channels in obtaining fake Television Rating Points.

Relying on the report, an employee of Hansa Research filed a complaint and an FIR was registered for offences punishable under Sections 409, 420, 120 B, 465, 468, 406, 174, 179, 201, 204, 212 and 34 of the Indian Penal Code.

GOYAL'S REMARKS

Conduct surgical strike, says Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nashik, Dec 13: Taking a dig at the BJP over Union minister Raosaheb Danve's claim that China and Pakistan were behind the ongoing stir of farmers in Delhi, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut has asked the Centre to conduct a surgical strike in this regard.



Probe if charges are true: Athawale

A day after Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said the farmers' agitation has been "infiltrated by Leftist and Maoist elements", Union minister Ramdas Athawale said it is important to inquire if such people have entered who have no relation with the farmers' protest. Addressing a press conference in Maharashtra's Nagpur city on Sunday, Athawale, head of the Republican Party of India (A) which is an ally of the BJP, also said Union minister Raosaheb Danve's claim of China and Pakistan being behind the farmers' protest is "not the government's stand".

Farmers have been protesting at the borders of Delhi since over the last two weeks demanding a repeal of the three agri laws enacted by the Centre in September this year, claiming that they would eliminate the Minimum Support Price (MSP) cushion.

The government has ruled out scrapping the legislations. Danve had stirred a controversy with his remarks that China and Pakistan were behind the protests being staged by cultivators, inviting sharp reactions from various quarters.

The BJP is saying that Pakistan and China are behind the farmers' agitation in New Delhi. Defence Minister belongs to the BJP. The BJP should conduct a surgical strike in this regard, Raut told reporters on Saturday.

He said the agitating farmers

hailing from Punjab and Haryana have stood their ground despite the use of force by the Union government.

If the Union government takes two steps backward for the welfare of farmers, it will not lower its value. The government should retreat and hold discussions on the farm laws in the Lok Sabha again and re-introduce these laws as per the expectations of the farmers, Raut added.

Alleging that the Central government was using the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to trouble political opponents, Raut backed Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik who was recently questioned by the Central agency in connection with an alleged money laundering case in Mumbai.

ROUGH WATERS



Young men during kayaking in the morning hours, at Juhu Beach in Mumbai, Sunday

Gambhir sets processing deadline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: East Delhi BJP MP Gautam Gambhir has claimed that the entire garbage dump at Ghazipur landfill site will be processed by December 2024, even as the environment committee of Legislative Assembly expressed displeasure over the speed of work.

About 3,000 metric tonnes (MT) of legacy waste at Ghazipur landfill site is being processed daily. So far about 3 lakh MT of legacy waste has been processed at the dump site, Gambhir said in a statement.

"Fifty per cent of legacy waste will be processed by March 2023, 75 per cent by March 2024 and 100 per cent

GHAZIPUR LANDFILL



of legacy waste will be processed by December-2024," he said.

In a meeting of the Delhi Assembly's environment committee earlier this week, its chair and AAP MLA Atishi had expressed displeasure over the current speed of work.

The meeting was attended by the commissioners and other offi-

cials of the East and North Delhi Municipal corporations.

The environment committee had on Wednesday asked the municipal commissioners of East and North Delhi to submit their plans and timelines by this coming week to reduce the height of landfill sites to the ground level. Atishi had "pulled up" the two municipal corporations for having "no plan whatsoever" to deal with landfill site fires and the resulting air pollution in Delhi, the committee had said in a statement.

The commissioners had appeared before the committee addressing the issue of fire incidents at Delhi's Ghazipur (East Delhi) and Bhalsawa (North Delhi) landfill sites.

'Those who give dough can also have pizza'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: A group of five friends set out from Amritsar on a cold Saturday morning. They didn't have much time to organise a regular langar, so they collected 'regular-sized' pizzas from a Haryana mall and set up a stall at the Singhu border.

Around 400 pizzas were distributed within minutes as a huge crowd, including the protesting peasants and residents from nearby areas, queued up.

The 'pizza langar' has since hogged headlines and garnered compliments from different quarters, and also brickbats from a certain section.

"The farmers who gave the dough for pizzas can also afford to have one themselves," says Shanbir Singh Sandhu, who organised the 'pizza langar' with his four friends for the peasants protesting at the Delhi-



Haryana border against the contentious agri-marketing laws.

"We didn't have much time to organise a regular lentils-chapatti langar.... So we came up with this idea," says Sandhu, who is himself a farmer and an economics student at Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar.

The farmers have been protesting at several border points into Delhi for over 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. Sandhu's friend, Shahnaz Gill,

underscored that people get bored eating the same thing everyday. "We thought we should bring them (farmers) something else to keep their spirits up," he said.

The 21-year-old student of agriculture says this is

first time they have organised a 'pizza langar', expressing happiness that people have appreciated their efforts.

However, Sandhu says it is unfortunate and totally unacceptable that some people were ridiculing

farmers having pizzas.

"Few people just cannot digest that a farmer can have a car, wear good clothes and have a pizza. The farmer has moved on from dhoti-kurta to jeans and T-shirt," the 25-year-old student says. "It's about time these people grew up."

One of the reasons for organising a 'pizza langar' was to change the public perception about farmers, he adds.

Gill says no one has the right to comment on what a farmer should eat or wear.

"People have been calling us 'so-called farmers'. Before making any such comment, they should come and meet us first, he says. "They will get to know that our thinking is much better than theirs."

The five friends have decided to organise another such langar, which they say will be better and bigger.

It can be pizza or burger or something else, too, Sandhu says.

BETTER DEMAND

THE MADGYAL BREED SHEEP, INHABITANTS OF JAT TEHSIL IN SANGLI, ARE TALLER, LARGER AND HAVE A HIGHER GROWTH RATE THAN OTHER BREEDS

THE STATE'S ANIMAL HUSBANDRY DEPARTMENT IS ALSO MAKING EXTENSIVE EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE MADGYAL BREED'S POPULATION BEYOND ITS ORIGIN

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, SELLERS GAINED REAL PROFITS JUST BECAUSE OF SARJA. A LAMB BRED BY THIS SHEEP IS SOLD BETWEEN ₹5 LAKH TO ₹10 LAKH



tensive efforts to increase the Madgyal breed's population beyond its origin, an official told PTI.

This sheep breed derives its name from the Madgyal village in Jat tehsil of Sangli.

Babu Metkari, a shepherd having a flock over 200 sheep in Atpadi tehsil of Sangli, was surprised when a buyer at a fair recently offered to buy one of his Madgyal sheep for ₹70 lakh, though he did not wish to sell his prized possession.

This sheep's real name is Sarja, but it was re-christened 'Modi' after people likened him to Prime

Sarja is far superior in terms of qualities, appearance and ability to reproduce.

We have been into the live-stock rearing business for two to three generations but in the last two years, we gained real profits just because of Sarja.

A lamb bred by this sheep is sold between ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh, he claimed.

Metkari said in the last last two years, he has earned good money because of this sheep.

The Madgyal sheep are taller, larger, have a higher growth rate and are considered ideal for meat production.

of the day quote

Government's door is always open to have conversation with farmers on their issues. The procedure is continuously moving forward. The government is keeping proper monitoring of the current situation and ongoing developments

Prakash Javadekar | Union Information and Broadcasting Minister

Every place in Goa, which is linked to the historically significant events including the liberation of the state from Portuguese rule in 1961, will be identified, spruced up and conserved for posterity

Pramod Sawant | Goa CM

The BJP may hatch a conspiracy to assassinate West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, if it fails to win elections

Subrata Mukherjee | TMC Leader

SHORT TAKES

Body found

Patna: A mutilated body of a teenager was found in Patna's Azimabad locality, a Patna City police official said Sunday. The deceased identified as Anshu Kumar Sahani (18), resident of Sandalpur under Bahadurpur police station here, went to meet his girlfriend on Saturday evening and did not return home.

Gold seized

Chennai: Chennai Air Customs Sunday said it had seized 463 grams of gold valued at Rs 23.6 lakh from rummaging Indigo Airlines flight from Dubai and also from a passenger who had come by that flight on Saturday. In a statement issued here, the Commissioner of Customs, Chennai International Airport, said based on an intelligence input the Indigo Airlines flight which arrived from Dubai was rummaged.

PIL filed

Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh): A public interest litigation (PIL) petition has been filed before the Allahabad High Court challenging the constitutional validity of Uttar Pradesh government's ordinance against religious conversions. The court is yet to admit the plea. An advocate, Saurabh Kumar, has moved the court stating that the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, is both morally and constitutionally invalid.

Two held in UP

Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh): Two persons have been arrested for allegedly raping a seven-year-old girl in a village under the Budhana police circle. The minor had gone missing for some hours, after which her family started searching for her. She was found unconscious and bleeding on the roof of a nearby house, late on Friday night.

Man, mother murdered

Prayagraj: A man and his 55-year-old mother were found murdered at their home in Saray Deena village in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj district on Sunday. The deceased have been identified as Dharma Devi and her son Surendra Pasi. SP (Trans Ganga) Dhawal Jaiswal said that initial police investigation revealed that an alleged land dispute was the reason behind the killing of the mother-son duo.



Ministers have described the protesters against the farm laws as Khalistanis, agents of Pakistan and China, Maoists, and 'tukde-tukde' gang. If you exhaust all these categories, it means there are no farmers among the thousands of protesters. If there are no farmers, why is the government talking to them?

P Chidambaram | Congress Leader

NADDA COVID POSITIVE

BJP President JP Nadda Sunday said that he has tested positive for coronavirus and is isolating at home



BTC POLLS

BJP dumps Assam ally, backs new one

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati/New Delhi, Dec 13: Assam's ruling BJP will support its new ally UPPL to take power in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) as the results of the elections to the 40-member autonomous body threw up a fractured mandate even as the saffron party made big gains.

The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) had fought against each other in the BTC polls despite ruling Assam together along with the Asom Gana Parishad. Accompanied by Finance and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Sunday announced that student leader-turned-politician Pramod Boro, President of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), would be the new chief of BTC.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP President J.P. Nadda congratulated Sonowal, Sarma and Assam party chief Ranjit Kumar Das for the party's success in the BTC polls, which were held in two phases on December 7 and 10 and result declared on Saturday and Sunday. The BJP, which heads Assam's ruling coalition, has emerged as the major winner as the party has won in nine seats this time. It had managed just one seat in the last BTC polls in 2015.

The BPF, which has been ruling the BTC ever since 2005 after the tribal autonomous body was constituted in 2003 as a political solution to Bodo agitation for a separate state, has won 17 seats this time while UPPL got 12 seats. The opposition Congress and Gana



Activists of United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) celebrate after forming their government in an alliance with BJP in Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), at Baganpara in Baksa district of Assam, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

Suraksha Parishad managed to get one seat each.

Shah, greeting the Assam Chief Minister and BJP leaders, said: "NDA secured a comfortable majority in Assam BTC election. Congratulations to our ally UPPL, CM Sarbananda Sonowal, state President Ranjit Kumar Das, Himanta Biswa Sarma and state BJP unit. I thank people of Assam for their continued faith in PM Narendra Modi's resolve towards a developed North East."

Nadda, in a tweet, said: "Congratulations to NDA partner UPPL and Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal, Astate President Ranjit Kumar Das, senior minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for securing clear majority in Assam BTC election. The result shows the faith of

people in the leadership and policies of Hon PM Narendra Modi Ji."

Sonowal said: "My cabinet colleague and NEDA (North East Democratic Alliance) convenor Himanta Biswa Sarma has already said the UPPL, BJP and GSP will form the council together. Pramod Boro would be the Chief Executive Member and his deputy will be from the BJP."

"The people in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) have shown they want peace, stability and development. Possibly for the first time, the BTC elections were held in a very peaceful and democratic manner besides the participation of all sections of people overwhelming," he said after the meeting with leaders of all winning parties.

Renowned Sanskrit scholar no more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mangaluru, Dec 13: Renowned Sanskrit scholar Vidyavachaspati Bannanje Govindacharya died at his residence at Ambalpady in Udupi Sunday due to age related illness, family sources said.

He was 85. A propagator of 'Madhwa' ideology and a great orator, Govindacharya had been conferred the Padma Shree in 2009.

He was well-versed in Veda Bhashya, Upanishad Bhashya, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas and has written commentaries on Veda Suktas, Upanishads, Shata Rudriya, Brahma Sutra Bhashya, and Gita Bhashya.

He had authored around 150 books and translated several texts from Sanskrit to Kannada. Some of them are Bana Bhatta's novel 'Bana Bhattana Kadambari', Kalidasa's 'Shakuntala' and Shudraka's 'Mrichakatika.'

Govindacharya had also translated several historical novels to Kannada. He also wrote notes on the chapters of Hindu text Upanishad.

He was one of the greatest exponents on Madhva philosophy and was best known for his pravachanas, which are very popular among Tuluvas and Kannadigas across the world.

2 terrorists killed, another held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Dec 13: Two terrorists were killed and another was captured on Sunday in a gunfight with security forces in the higher reaches of Surankote in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said.

The terrorists are believed to have infiltrated into this side from across the Line of Control (LoC) about three days back and were heading for south Kashmir's

Fadnavis takes a dig at MVA govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 13: Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly Devendra Fadnavis Sunday accused the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government of running away from a debate on its "failures on all fronts".

Addressing a press conference here on the eve of the two-day winter session of the state Assembly, Fadnavis claimed it is "actually a one-day session which includes only six hours for the passage of supplementary demands".

Fadnavis said the BJP decided to boycott the government's customary tea party on the eve of the session to protest against the ruling dispensation's "failure" to respond to every strata of the society.

The brief session, curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is being held against the backdrop of the MVA government completing a year in office and its encouraging performance in the just held elections to half-a-dozen seats of the Legislative Council (one of them bypoll).



Fadnavis said the government refused the opposition's demand to hold the winter session for two weeks and also refused to announce that the budget session next year would be held in Nagpur.

"The government has failed on all fronts, including handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, helping farmers affected due to cyclone, heavy rains and floods. The farmers' Diwali festival (this year) was in darkness," he alleged.

The coronavirus infection is on a decline in rest of the country, except Maharashtra, he claimed. The COVID-19 death toll in Maharashtra has crossed 48,000, which accounts for 35 to 40 per cent of the national tally, the former state chief minister said.

BEATING THE CHILL



A leopard keeps himself warm near a heater, set outside an enclosure by zoo authorities during winter, at Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

PM to visit Kutch Tuesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Dhordo in Gujarat's Kutch Tuesday to lay the foundation stones of several development projects in the state.

The projects include a desalination plant, a hybrid renewable energy park and a fully automated milk processing and packing plant, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement on Sunday. Modi will also undertake a visit to the White Rann and later, witness a cultural programme.

Harnessing its vast coastline, Gujarat is taking a significant step towards transforming seawater to drinking water with the upcoming desalination plant at Mandvi in Kutch, the PMO said, adding that with a 10 crore litre per day (100 MLD) capacity, the plant will strengthen Gujarat's water security by complementing the Narmada Grid, the Sauni network and the treated wastewater infrastructure.

It will be an important milestone for sustainable and affordable water resource harvesting in the country, it said.

Gangrape survivor marries accused in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amroha (Uttar Pradesh), Dec 13: In a bizarre incident, a rape survivor has ended up marrying one of the six persons accused of gangraping her in a moving car, within days of lodging an FIR against the accused.

Police came to know about the wedding after the 'nikahnama' was circulated on social media Saturday, a day after the wedding. The FIR was lodged Friday at the Didauli police station in Amroha though the complaint had been submitted a week ago.

Amroha Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Ajay Pratap Singh said the wedding was solemnized in Moradabad, as indicated by the nikahnama. The police had already filed a case. "We will now summon the survivor to come and record her statement on the basis of which further action would be initiated," he added.

The victim, in her complaint, had said that she was in a relationship with a neighbourhood youth, Mubeeb Ahmed. He al-

legedly raped her on the pretext of marriage and when she insisted on marriage, he filmed her in a compromising position. He threatened to upload the video on social media.

On October 21, Ahmed allegedly called the survivor to the bus stand and when the girl reached there, he and a friend arrived in a car and allegedly abducted her. They took turns to rape her in the car while driving around and filmed the act, the girl had claimed.

Later, the duo handed her over to their friends. They also gangraped her in another moving car on the way to Ghaziabad. Then, they threw her out on the road, threatening her with dire consequences if she informed anyone about the incident.

The victim returned home with the help of an autorickshaw driver. A month later, she narrated her ordeal to her parents and then went to lodge her complaint with the police. The FIR under relevant sections was registered at the Didauli police station on Friday against Mubeeb Ahmed and his friends.

Drastic rise in obesity among kids under 5 yrs in 20 states: Survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) has found a drastic rise in obesity among children under five years of age in 20 of the 22 states where the study was conducted, with experts attributing it to lack of physical activity and unhealthy food habits.

According to the NHFS-5, several states and Union Territories, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Mizoram, Tripura, Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, have registered several folds increase in the percentage of obesity among children below five years of age in comparison to NFHS-4 conducted between 2015 and 2016.

Only Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu registered a drop in the number of over-



weight children under five years of age, the data showed. About 13.4 per cent children under the age of five were found to be obese in Ladakh which was highest among the 22 states and Union Territories surveyed, followed by Lakshadweep at 10.5 per cent, Mizoram 10 per cent, Jammu and Kashmir, and Sikkim 9.6 per cent each.

Not just children, rise in obesity has even been recorded in adults in the latest survey in comparison to NFHS-4. According to the survey data, 16 states and Union Territories registered a rise in obesity among women while 19 states and UTs recorded an increase in obesity among men.

Kerala and the Andaman and

Healthcare experts have attributed the rise in obesity to unhealthy food choices and lack of physical activities among children and even adults

Nicobar Islands recorded the highest percentage of obesity among women at 38 per cent. Also, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep recorded the highest percentage of obesity among women at over 40 per cent.

Men and women were counted as obese whose body mass index was found to be over or equal to 25.0

kg/m2 while children's obesity was counted in terms of weight-for-height.

Healthcare experts have attributed the rise in obesity to unhealthy food choices and lack of physical activities among children and even adults. Sheila Vir, a public health nutrition expert and founder director of Public Health Nutrition and Development Centre, said there is also lack of awareness on what are good food habits.

Also, high-fat and high-sugar foods are easily available and so there is higher consumption of it, she said. "We have a double burden of undernutrition, malnutrition and overnutrition occurring together. So, I think what to feed a child is what we are going wrong in," Vir said.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, she also raised concern over

the rise in obesity. "There might be an increase in obesity among children in view of COVID-19 pandemic as after closure of schools, there was lack of physical activity among children and even in adults in some cases," she said.

Dr. Khan Amir Maroof, Professor at Department of Community Medicine, University College of Medical Sciences and GTB Hospital termed the rise in obesity a "very disturbing sign".

"Obesity is a manifestation of what is rapidly changing in our environment. Of late, we see trends which increase the risk of developing obesity. Environmental factors, such as availability and consumption of junk foods, poor complementary feeding, lack of outdoor activity, and increased screen time on may be the reason for this trend," he said.

of the day quote

The country will always remember the valour of the security personnel who laid down their lives during the terror attack on Parliament

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

India is not only on track to achieve its Paris Agreement targets, but to exceed them beyond expectations

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

There was a fairly serious negotiation between India and the Trump administration on resolving the outstanding trade issues as well as to clinch a trade deal

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Voter IDs found dumped

Thane: Over 100 voter IDs have been found dumped in Mharal area of Ulhasnagar in Thane district, officials said Sunday. A district official said 117 Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC), which seem to be old ones with black-and-white photographs, were found on Saturday and the spot where they were dumped falls under Ulhasnagar Assembly segment.

Pakistan violates ceasefire

Jammu: Pakistani Rangers opened fire on forward posts and villages along the International Border (IB) in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said Sunday. The firing from across the border in Pansar border outpost area in Hiranagar sector started around 10 pm on Saturday, drawing strong and effective retaliation from the Border Security Force (BSF), the officials said.

CoBRA officer hurt in IED blast

Sukma: An officer of the CRPF's elite CoBRA unit was injured on Sunday when an IED planted by Maoists exploded while it was being defused by security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, a police official said. The incident took place between Pallodi and Kistaram villages around 10.40 am when a team of 208th battalion of the CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) was out on a demining operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraaj P said.

12 injured

Fatehpur: Twelve passengers of an Uttar Pradesh Roadways bus was injured when it was hit by a truck Sunday in this district, police said. The incident occurred around 4.30 am at Pilkhani Morh and both the vehicles fell on the roadside, SHO of Kalyanpur police station Anoop Singh said.

Girl raped

Mahoba (UP): A 13-year-old boy has been apprehended for allegedly raping a 9-year-old girl in Uttar Pradesh's Mahoba district, police said Sunday. The girl was playing outside her home on Friday evening when the boy, who lives in the neighbourhood, took her to a nearby place on the pretext of playing with her. He allegedly raped her and fled from the spot, according to an officer.



Even if the West Bengal government opposes the implementation of CAA we (Centre) will go ahead in implementing it. If the state supports the implementation it will be fine

KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA | BJP LEADER

COVID TALLY REACHES 98.5L

With 30,254 new Covid cases and 391 deaths in the past 24 hours, India's overall tally stood at 98,57,029 Sunday, while the death toll touched 1,43,019, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said



FARMERS' PROTEST: KEJRI TO FAST TODAY

Kejriwal said he will hold one-day fast Monday in response to a call given by the agitating farmers and urged his supporters as well as the people of the country to join in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said he will observe a day-long fast Monday in response to a call given by farmers protesting against three new farm laws, and appealed to the BJP-ruled Centre to shun ego and scrap the legislations.

Addressing a virtual press briefing on Sunday, the Chief Minister asked the Centre bring a Bill to guarantee minimum support price (MSP) for agricultural produce.

Kejriwal said he will hold one-day fast Monday in response to a call given by the agitating farmers and urged his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) volunteers, supporters as well as the people of the country to join in.

"I want to appeal to the central government to put an end to their ego. The governments are formed by the public, the public is not formed by the governments. The three farm laws should be immediately repealed and a Bill should be brought to guarantee MSP to farmers," he said.

The chief minister said the Centre should immediately accept all demands of the farmers who have been protesting on Delhi's borders for the past two weeks. Kejriwal expressed anguish that some central ministers and BJP leaders were labelling protesting farmers as "traitors and anti-nationals".



"I want to ask them, if so many ex-servicemen, national and international sportspersons, singers and celebrities, lawyers and traders supporting and joining them, are all anti-national?" he questioned.

The BJP should not think wrongly that only a few farmers from Punjab and Haryana and only a few people are in this movement. Kejriwal compared the "defaming" of the farmers protest with the Anna Hazare's movement of which he was a top leader.

"I could not help but reminisce the days of Anna Hazare Ji's movement. The Congress government defamed us as anti-nationals. What Congress did to our movement, the BJP is doing the same to the farmers protest," he said.

The chief minister claimed that even the middle-upper class people were against the farm laws and believed it will lead to price rise. "Until now, hoarding in this country was a crime, but under the Centre's new farm laws any person can hoard any amount of grains and it is no longer considered a crime.

"This also means that there will be high inflation. People can hoard till the time the inflation rate doubles every year. For instance, the prices of wheat grains will double from ₹20 this year to ₹40 next year, and then ₹80, and then ₹160, and so on," he added.

15 injured in blast

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Unnao (Uttar Pradesh), Dec 13: At least 15 people, including eight children, suffered serious burn injuries when an LPG cylinder caught fire at a house in Unnao district.

The incident took place on Saturday evening in the Salempur Karowan village under the Kotwali police station. Superintendent of Police Unnao, Suresh Rao A. Kulkarni, said, "The incident took place at the house of one Manoj Sonker where a leakage from an LPG cylinder led to a fire. Several fire tenders were pressed into the service to douse the blaze. The injured were immediately rushed to the district hospital, where doctors have said that the condition of two is critical.

The family members of Sonker and several others from the neighbourhood, who tried to rescue them, suffered burn injuries and are undergoing treatment at the district hospital. The police said that a major disaster in the area was averted as the house inmates were evacuated in time.

Woman, daughter marry at same wedding ceremony

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gorakhpur (UP), Dec 13: In a unique event, a 53-year-old mother and her 27-year-old daughter tied the knot at a mass wedding ceremony held under Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojna in Gorakhpur. The woman, Beli Devi, whose husband Harihar died 25 years ago, married her husband's younger brother Jagdish, 55, at the ceremony where 63 couples, including a Muslim couple, tied the knot.

Beli Devi's youngest daughter, Indu, also got married in the same



ceremony that took place last week. Jagdish is a farmer and was unmarried till now.

"My two sons and two daughters are already married so with the marriage of my youngest daughter, I decided to marry my brother-in-law. All my children are happy," Beli Devi told reporters.

Indu was married to 29-year-old Rahul. "My mother and uncle took care of us and I am very happy that now they will look after each other," said Indu. Senior district officials were present at the mass wedding event.

PAYING HOMAGE



Home Minister Amit Shah pays tribute to the martyrs of 2001 Parliament attack on its 19th anniversary, at Parliament House, in New Delhi, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

Why new Parl, Haasan asks PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 13: MNM chief Kamal Haasan Sunday demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi spell out the rationale behind constructing a new Parliament building for about ₹1,000 crore "when half of India is hungry due to coronavirus pandemic triggered loss of livelihoods".

Seeking to liken the proposed construction of the new edifice to the centuries old Great Wall of China, he claimed that 'thousands of people perished' during its construction, but the dragon nation rulers said the wall was to 'guard' the people.

"To protect whom is a new Parliament building being constructed at a cost of ₹1,000 crore when half of India is hungry due to the coronavirus pandemic triggered loss of livelihoods," the Makkal Needhi Maiam leader asked in a tweet.

"Answer honourable elected Prime Minister," he said hours before kick starting the first phase



of his campaign for the Assembly polls from Madurai in southern Tamil Nadu. Assembly elections are due during April-May 2021 in Tamil Nadu.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for a new Parliament building on December 10. He also performed the ground-breaking ceremony

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for a new Parliament building December 10

for the structure, which is expected to be completed by 2022.

Speaking to reporters before leaving for the temple town, Haasan alleged that the authorities had at the last minute not granted permission for MNM to campaign within urban areas, though they had got the nod to go ahead in 'many places'.

Asked about the focus of his party's campaign, he said would be ushering in a complete transformation in Tamil Nadu. "There is no doubt about degeneration in the state... people know that well and there is no point lamenting. MNM will talk about what needs to be done now," he said, apparently targeting the two Dravidian parties, AIADMK and DMK, who have in turn ruled the state since 1967.

BJP MLA FORCIBLY TAKES BABY FROM SHELTER HOME

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh), Dec 13: BJP MLA Rajesh Mishra has landed in controversy after he took away a baby from a child shelter without any paperwork or permission, attended his son's wedding and turned the baby back the following day.

The incident took place last week, but came to light on Saturday evening when a child shelter official spoke out. The child, in this case, is the 'miracle baby' who was rescued after being buried alive in an earthen pot in the cremation ground in October last year.

Superintendent, Primrose Edmond, of the Warne Baby Fold, a shelter in Bareilly, said, "Last Sunday, BJP legislator Rajesh Mishra came and took the baby with him without any paperwork or permission. He went to his son's wedding, took photos with her without any Covid-19 precautions and re-

turned her to the centre a day later."

Primrose further said, "No one is allowed to take the baby away. Only parents registered with the Central Adoption Resource Authority can adopt and then take the child. I was not in a position to say no when he took her because of his political influence."

The MLA said he only meant to take care of the baby. "I have always been concerned about her. She was sick that day. I got a call that she was getting seizures. So, I went to the hospital with 20-25 men straight from my son's wedding. I got her medicines and then came back to the wedding."

Mishra had taken photos, holding the baby at the wedding, and neither the child nor he wore a mask. His son also posted two photos of the one-year-old in which he was holding her up, and another in which his father is carrying her.

Those at the wedding said he had introduced the baby as his

Villagers strike gold during temple renovation in TN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kancheepuram (TN), Dec 13: Villagers stumbled upon 'ancient gold' during the renovation of a temple near here and it was seized by authorities and deposited with the government treasury Sunday despite locals protesting against the action, officials said.

During renovation of the Lord Shiva temple off Uthiramerur taken up by the villagers themselves, 'gold items' said to be weighing over half a kg were found beneath the steps leading to the sanctum sanctorum a few days ago.

On receiving information, officials reached the temple and wanted the gold to be handed over to the government.

While devotees and local people declined to part with it as they wanted to place the gold again at the very same spot after completion of renovation, authorities were firm on taking it, the officials said.

After talks failed, officials deployed adequate number of police personnel at the village and amid people's protests, they seized the find, packed it in a box and sealed it before taking it away. According to the villagers, the temple was many centuries old and believed to belong to the Chola era.

"Placing some gold beneath the temple steps is an auspicious mark and this practice is in vogue since times immemorial," a local said.

Since the gold belonged to the temple, authorities had no right to seize or retain it, they contended and blocked policemen and officials from taking the precious metal.

Asked whether they have verified the find (if it was gold and whether it was centuries old), Revenue Divisional Officer Vidya said 'it looked like gold'.

On aspects like weight and if the gold was in the form of coins or ornaments, she said that a complete assessment could not be carried out in view of protests by the people. 'We only have a count,' she said adding the gold was an 'assortment' including one that appeared to be a kind of a 'waist chain'.



Prime Minister's subtle goal-post shift

If you thought the Prime Minister will hang his boots and hand over the reins of power once he turned 75 years to a successor, you may be in for some surprise. Reason being that Modi has subtly shifted his goal-post from 2022 to 2029. An indication of changing

goal-post came at a virtual function last week wherein he said that a lot of work has been done during the past six-and-half years. But for India's growth in the next nine years is important. Modi had said on several occasions in the past that by 2022 when India celebrates its 75th anniversary of Independence, farmers' income will be doubled and all will have pucca houses and many more tall promises. In fact, when he came to power in 2014, he had promised that farmers' income will be doubled within the next five years. But later, he shifted it to 2022. Now he is talking that the next nine years are crucial for India's development. Two things clearly emerge from his statement; one that he will be around until 2029 and second, he is working hard to win the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

What went wrong with Ahmed Patel?

The sudden demise of Ahmed Patel has left a void in the Congress at a juncture when the party needed him most. It is not as if he didn't see ups and downs. He suffered a setback when Ambika Soni became the political secretary to Sonia Gandhi replacing him. It's a different matter that he was back soon. When Rahul took over as party chief, Patel was subtly sidelined again. However, Sonia Gandhi was wise enough and retained him as her chief political adviser until his death. It's a different matter that Rahul Gandhi also found virtues in him later. It, however, remains a mystery as to why he chose to travel all the way to Faridabad's

Metro Hospital in October for treatment when he first tested COVID positive. Later, he was shifted to Apollo hospital and finally brought to Medanta in Gurugram. Three hospitals in two months did not prove lucky to him.

Amarinder singing different tune

Even as Rahul Gandhi was blasting the Modi government on the farm laws, Congress Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh paid a surprise visit to Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence, December 3. The party had no clue of the meeting. However, Amarinder Singh dropped another bombshell when he appealed to the farmers to find out an amicable solution rather than taking to streets. Surely the public

stand taken by Amarinder Singh was not in tune with the party line. It is said that Amarinder Singh is doing a tight rope walk with his son-in-law facing a case relating to sugar mill sale and his son getting ED notice. He also wants to take advantage of Akali Dal-BJP rift and chart his own course. Obviously, the Congress central leadership is watching helplessly.

Fund crunch

The government is facing a huge fund crunch and now resorting to cut expenditure on various welfare schemes. It wants dividends pay-outs from PSUs to shore up its budgeted receipts for FY21. The government wants to go for a killing by asking for staggering ₹66,000 crore. As FY21 hurtles towards closure, the government has turned so

desperate for cash that it asked the PSUs last month to pay not only higher dividends but also share their quarterly profits without waiting for the full year.

A promotion with demotion

It's strange that Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha got a demotion while he was promoted as new Chief Information Commissioner. He was holding the rank of the Supreme Court judge as Information Commissioner. But the moment he was promoted as CIC, he was demoted to the rank of a Cabinet Secretary. He will lose salary and pension. Interestingly, his four old colleagues will hold SC judge-rank, while three new colleagues will be in the rank of secretary.

of the day quote

Unless the pandemic outbreak can be contained now, it has come to the critical point of considering escalating social-distancing measures to the third level



MOON JAE-IN | SOUTH KOREA'S PRESIDENT

I've got to repeat the most likely thing now is of course that we have to get ready for WTO-terms, Australia terms



BORIS JOHNSON | UK PRIME MINISTER

As far as our indigenous coal goes, we have decided to produce energy either by coal to liquid or coal to gas so we do not have to burn coal to produce energy



IMRAN KHAN | PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Trump supporters rally in Washington

Washington: Thousands of supporters of President Donald Trump returned to Washington for weekend rallies to back his desperate efforts to subvert the election that he lost to Joe Biden. Sporadic fights broke out between pro-Trump and anti-Trump demonstrators after sundown Saturday. WRC-TV reported that four people were taken to a hospital with stab wounds, and the Metropolitan Police Department told the station that 23 people were arrested.

China's Chang'e-5 returning to Earth

Beijing: A Chinese space capsule bringing back the first moon rocks in more than four decades has begun its return to Earth. The Chang'e 5 lunar probe left the moon's orbit Sunday morning by activating four engines for about 22 minutes, the China National Space Administration said in a social media post.

25 injured in explosion in Pak

Islamabad: At least 25 people were injured in an explosion in a busy market near a police station in Pakistan's garrison city of Rawalpindi Sunday, officials said. City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Mohammad Ahsan Younas said that it was apparently a hand grenade attack in the Ganj Mandi area of the city.

Fresh threat

Ottawa: Health Canada has warned people allergic to any of the ingredients in the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine not to receive it. In a notification Saturday, the federal health policy agency said it issued the warning after following up on the two reports of anaphylactoid reactions to the vaccine in the UK. Xinhua news agency reported. The reactions occurred December 8 and the two persons had a history of severe allergic reactions and carried adrenaline auto injectors.

Blame game

Baku/Yerevan: Clashes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region have killed four Azeri servicemen in recent weeks, Azerbaijan's defence ministry said Sunday, in the first report of casualties since a Russian-brokered ceasefire accord. Separately, authorities in Armenia said six of their servicemen had been wounded in what they described as an Azeri military offensive that took place Saturday.



Every opportunity to reach a deal between the European Union and Britain is highly welcome

ANGELA MERKEL | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

PAK INCREASES VACCINE FUNDS

Pakistan has increased the funds allocated for purchasing COVID-19 vaccine to USD 250 million from the earlier approved amount of USD 150 million



China, Pakistan fighter planes play war games

The war games, merely 200 km from the Indian border, are taking place just a week after Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe visited Pakistan to sign an MoU for closer military cooperation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad/New Delhi, Dec 13: China is carrying out joint air force exercises with Pakistan in Sindh as part of the sabre-rattling in response to the Indo-Pacific Quad exercises in which the Indian Navy participated recently.

The war games, merely 200 km from the Indian border, are taking place just a week after Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe visited Pakistan to sign an MoU for closer military cooperation. The exercises, named 'Shaheen' or Falcon-IX, are underway at the newly operational Bholari air base near Karachi.

According to the Nikkei Asia magazine, the Pakistan Air Force released a video showing the wide range of military aircraft on display in the exercise, which will last until late December.

China has sent its fourth-generation Shenyang J-11 air superiority fighters and Chengdu J-10 multirole jets. Pakistan, meanwhile, is flying a mix of third-generation Chinese-made Chengdu F-7 interceptors, French Dassault Mirage 5 attack planes and the new multirole JF-17 Thunder jointly produced by China and Pakistan.

No American equipment, such as the F-16, has been deployed, the Pakistanis said. China's Defence Ministry said the drills will "deepen practical cooperation between the



two air forces". Pakistan's air force, has become increasingly dependent on China as the US has cut off military hardware supplies to Islamabad due to its links with Islamic militant outfits.

At the opening ceremony on December 9, Air Vice Marshal Ahmed Sulehri, the deputy chief of Pakistan's air staff, said the exercises "will further enhance inter-operability of both air forces, thereby fortifying brotherly relations between the two countries".

Major Gen. Sun Hong, the assistant chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, said they "will improve actual level of combat training and strengthen cooperation". China's military build-up on the Ladakh border has forced India to counter the move to protect its territorial rights and go in for a rethink about the country's security arrangements and military exercises. This has rattled both China

tween the Chinese and the Pakistanis, the timing, location and size are significant.

The Indian military has been aware of the possibility of a two-front war with China and Pakistan and chief of defence staff, Gen. Bipin Rawat, has stated that the Indian defence forces are prepared to face such a challenge if need be.

Analysts like retired Rear Adm. Sudarshan Shrikhande, India's former chief of naval intelligence, think that the exercise is reflective of China and Pakistan's larger strategic posture toward India.

"The issues of growing coherence and collusion between China and Pakistan have become concerns for India," Shrikhande told Nikkei Asia. Both China and Pakistan have also been jolted by the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on Geospatial Cooperation signed in October between the US and India which allows New Delhi access to American satellite military intelligence for better weapon accuracy.

According to Nikkei Asia, even as Pakistan's military continues to draw closer to China, it still wants to maintain cordial ties with the US, with which it has often partnered since joining the US-led alliance against the Soviet Union during the Cold War; an arrangement which helped it both gain Washington's favour and provide benefits in return for decades.

FOR A CAUSE



Demonstrators gather behind a banner reading Total Withdrawal Global Security, during a protest in Bayonne, southwestern France

PTI PHOTO

Protesters deface Gandhi statue in US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 13: A violent group of Khalistani separatists has desecrated Mahatma Gandhi's statue outside the Indian embassy here in the US during a demonstration by Sikh-American youths in support of farmers protesting against the recently enacted agriculture laws in India.

Hundreds of Sikhs from in and around Greater Washington DC area, Maryland and Virginia, along with many from other states like New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio and North Carolina, on Saturday undertook a car rally to the Indian embassy in downtown Washington

DC, where they gathered to express solidarity with the protesting Indian farmers.

However, the peaceful protest

FARMERS' STIR

was soon hijacked by the separatist Sikhs who were carrying Khalistani flags with anti-India posters and banners. During the protest, many of the pro-Khalistan Sikh youths flashing kirpans jumped on the statue of Mahatma Gandhi and pasted a poster over it. The group raised anti-India and pro-Khalistan slogans.

The Indian embassy condemned the "mischievous act" by hooligans masquerading as protesters. "The

statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza in front of the embassy was defaced by Khalistani elements on 12 December 2020. The Embassy strongly condemns this mischievous act by hooligans masquerading as protesters against the universally respected icon of peace and justice," it said in a statement.

The embassy said it has lodged a strong protest with the US law enforcement agencies and also taken up the matter with the Department of State for an early investigation and action against the culprits under the applicable law. This is for the second time that Gandhi's statue has been desecrated by miscreants this year.

AFTER FIRES, AUSTRALIA GETS READY FOR FLOODS

REUTERS

Sydney, Dec 13: Just days after bushfires threatened an Australian World Heritage site, thousands were bracing for floods on the sub-tropical east coast Sunday, with beaches closed and the authorities urging people to sandbag their homes.

With as much as 475 millimetres (18.7 inches) of rain in the previous 24 hours, the Bureau of Meteorology issued a "severe weather warning" for the border area between New South Wales and Queensland states, a heavily populated area that includes the Queensland state capital Brisbane. A week earlier, nearby Fraser Island was evacuated due to bushfires, dashing hopes that wetter weather would make seasonal fires less catastrophic than last year. Scientists attribute the erratic weather in the early Australian summer to a La Nina pattern - which typically features strong rain - combined with climate change. Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island, is now under the flood warning, which includes urging drivers to avoid roads

where waters were already rising. "These are dynamic weather systems and you should always expect the unexpected," bureau senior flood hydrologist Justin Robinson told a news conference. The warning comes soon after Queensland opened its border to the neighbouring state after months of closure due to COVID-19. The authorities urged people travelling for end-of-year holidays to exercise caution since they may not be familiar with flood-prone areas. "It isn't a time to take a chance and drive through those floodwaters," said New South Wales emergency services commissioner Carlene York. "Be aware of your surroundings and where you might be parking your caravan or you may be driving." Emergency services had rescued four people, including some from cars trapped on flooded roads, and received about 700 calls for help, she said. At the heavily populated Gold Coast, south of Brisbane, the authorities closed beaches due to dangerous surf, while the emergency services set up several locations where people could stock up on sandbags.



Deadline near: Is there hope left for Brexit deal?

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brussels, Dec 13: Facing yet another self-imposed Brexit deadline Sunday, the chief negotiators from the European Union and United Kingdom were making last-ditch efforts to bridge differences on a trade deal that have proved insurmountable for the best part of the year.

The EU's Michel Barnier and Britain's David Frost were already meeting just after dawn Sunday to try to reach a middle ground. But so far, the UK Hasn't backed down from its insistence on trading with the 27-nation bloc with as few restraints as possible, and the EU isn't yielding on its demand to accept trade only if Britain respects

the rules of the bloc.

"There is still I think a long way to go," British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said early Sunday.

Britain left the EU January 31, but remains in its economic structures until a transition period ends December 31. Expectations are that the deadline day will be capped with a contact between British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen late Sunday.

Whether it's a negotiating ploy or not, Johnson has publicly said the UK would still thrive mightily if there is no deal and it was "very very likely" that negotiations on a new relationship that will take effect January 1 will fail.



If the talks break down Sunday, both sides will have less than three weeks to prepare for the chaotic and costly no-deal exit at the end of the year. Without a deal UK will trade with the bloc on World Trade

Organisation terms — with all the tariffs and barriers that would bring.

To jumpstart the flagging talks, negotiators have imposed several deadlines, but none have brought the

sides closer together on the issues of fair trading standards, legal oversight of any deal and the rights of EU fishermen to go into UK Waters. While both sides want a deal on the terms of a new relationship, they have fundamentally different views of what it entails.

The EU fears Britain will slash social and environmental standards and pump state money into UK Industries, becoming a low-regulation economic rival on the bloc's doorstep, so is demanding strict "level playing field" guarantees in exchange for access to its markets. The UK Government claims the EU is trying to bind Britain to the bloc's rules and regulations indefinitely, rather than treating it as an independent nation.

Xi announces more commitments by China

THE US AND CHINA ARE THE TOP TWO POLLUTERS OF THE WORLD

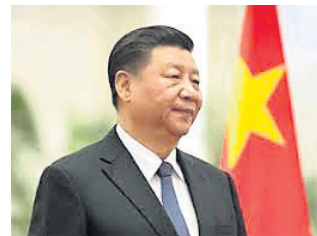
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 13: President Xi Jinping has announced further commitments by China for 2030 to contribute more to tackle the global climate challenge and called for a new approach by the international community to climate governance, underscoring the importance of green recovery.

According to the 2030 Climate Target Plan, the European Commission has proposed to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030, increasing the European Union's ambition on reducing greenhouse gases and setting Europe on a path to becoming climate neutral by 2050.

Xi, addressing the Climate Ambition Summit on Saturday via a video link as the world marked the 5th anniversary of the historic Paris climate agreement aimed at curbing global warming, said that China has made important contributions to adopting the landmark Paris agreement and active efforts in its implementation.

The summit was co-hosted by the United Nations, the United Kingdom and France in partnership with Chile and Italy, and brought



together global climate leaders -- across governments, business and civil society -- to ramp up climate ambition and help deliver on the Paris Agreement.

Referring to his announcement in September that China would scale

up its nationally determined contributions and adopt more vigorous policies and measures, Xi announced China's further commitments for 2030 to tackle the global climate challenge. He said that China will lower its carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by over 65 per cent from the 2005 level, increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 25 per cent, increase the forest stock volume by 6 billion cubic meters from the 2005 level, and bring its total installed capacity of wind and solar power to over 1.2 billion kilowatts, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Students missing after attack on school in Nigeria

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lagos (Nigeria), Dec 13: Hundreds of Nigerian students are missing after gunmen attacked a secondary school in the country's north-western Katsina state, police have confirmed.

The Government Science Secondary School in Kankara was attacked Friday night by a large group of bandits who shot "with AK 47 rifles," Katsina State police spokesman Gambo Isah said in a statement. Police engaged the attackers "in a gun duel which gave (some of) the students the opportunity to scale the fence of the school and run for safety," Isah said. About 400 students are missing, while 200 are accounted for, Isah said. The school is believed to have more than 600 students. "The police, Nigerian Army, and Nigerian Air Force are working closely with the school authorities to ascertain the actual number of the missing and/or kidnapped students," said Isah. It is the latest attack on a school by gunmen in Nigeria.

The most serious incident occurred in April 2014, when members of the Jihadist group Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from their school dormitory in Chibok, in northeastern Borno State.

Lanka records highest annual elephant deaths



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Colombo, Dec 13: Sri Lanka has recorded the highest annual elephant deaths and second-highest human deaths in the world due to the human-elephant conflict, the island-nation's Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) reported.

In discussions held by the COPA recently, it was revealed that Sri Lanka has been ranked second in reporting the highest number of human deaths due to the human-elephant conflict in the world, while India holds the first rank, Xinhua news agency reported.

COPA Chairman Tissa Vitharana said that even though the average number of elephant deaths due to the human-elephant conflict in Sri Lanka is 272 per year, 407 elephants had died during the past year.

of the day quote

The trend in global markets will be guided by developments in Brexit deal talks and updates on the expected US stimulus package

VINOD NAIR | HEAD (RESEARCH), GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) is looking to enter the diesel segment once again next year as the vertical continues to draw a lot of customers especially in the SUV segments

RC BHARGAVA | CHAIRMAN, MSI

We are expanding our network and are aiming to reach 300 touchpoints by the end of this year and will now focus on expansion in tier-IV and upcountry markets

TAE-JIN PARK | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KIA MOTORS INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Foreign investors stock up equities

New Delhi: Excess liquidity, attractive valuations and weakness in the US dollar propelled foreign investors to flock to the Indian stock market in a big way with the highest-ever net inflow of ₹1.4 lakh crore in 2020, but they also dumped debt securities worth a record amount amid pandemic-driven stress in the economy. The foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net outflow of a little over ₹1 lakh crore in 2020 so far.

Policy decisions 'a big positive'

New Delhi: The recently-announced WANI framework for public Wi-Fi networks will speed up broadband proliferation, especially in rural areas, and scheme along with the series of other policy measures like PLI for telecom augurs well for the sector and Digital India road map, a top official of Sterlite Technologies (STL) has said. Anand Agarwal, Group CEO of Sterlite Technologies said that the government's thrust would be "complementary" to the move to connect over six lakh villages.

Hiranandani Grp to invest ₹8.5K cr

New Delhi: Hiranandani group, one of the country's leading realty firms, will invest around ₹8,500 crore over the next three years to develop data centres and industrial parks across various cities as it is bullish on growth prospects in these two verticals, a top company official has said. In an interview with PTI, Mumbai-based Hiranandani group founder and chairman Niranjan Hiranandani said the real estate market has recovered quite a lot.

140 arrested for GST invoice fraud

New Delhi: GST authorities have arrested as many as 140 persons, including five chartered accountants, in about a month's time on charges of issuing fake invoices, and have now trained their guns on entities transporting under-valued goods. In its nationwide drive against fake invoice frauds, the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) have also unearthed cases of GST evasion by way of transporting under-valued and unaccounted goods, they added.



India's current macroeconomic situation is very uncertain and the country's GDP could contract closer to 10 per cent in the current fiscal

PRONAB SEN | FORMER CHIEF STATISTICIAN

AUTO-POPULATED GSTR-3B RETURN ENABLED BY GSTN

Businesses will now get complete auto-populated monthly sales return form GSTR-3B, GST Network said. "For ease of taxpayers, now the system will auto populate GSTR-3B (monthly) on the basis of details filed," GSTN said



Progress of various schemes reviewed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman took stock of progress made under various schemes under the three Aatmanirbhar Bharat Packages (ANBP) to help revive economy hit hard by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

Following announcement by the Prime Minister, Sitharaman presented the details of the ₹20.97 lakh crore ANBP 1.0 in a series of press conferences from May 13-17. It was followed by Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package 2.0 on October 12 and the third tranche November 12.

Sitharaman Friday conducted a comprehensive review of ANBP with the Secretaries of various Ministries and Departments concerned over three days, the Finance Ministry statement said on Sunday.

Sharing details of the progress made by various schemes under the ANBP, the statement said, banks have sanctioned loans worth ₹2,05,563 crore to about 81 lakh accounts under the ₹3-lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for the MSME sector that was impacted by disruptions caused due to the coronavirus pandemic.

While 40 lakh MSME accounts have received ₹1,58,626 crore till



December 4, ₹3 lakh crore collateral-free guaranteed loans – budgetary provision of ₹4,000 crore made for the Scheme in First Supplementary Demand for Grants for FY 2020-21.

Announcing Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0 last month, the Finance Minister had said that ₹2.05 lakh crore sanctioned and ₹1.52 lakh crore disbursed under ECLGS 1.0.

As part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan 3.0 (announced on November 12), ECLGS Scheme has been extended through ECLGS

- AS PART OF THE AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ABHIYAN 3.0, ECLGS SCHEME HAS BEEN EXTENDED THROUGH ECLGS 2.0 FOR THE 26 STRESS SECTORS
- THE LOANS PROVIDED UNDER ECLGS 2.0 WILL HAVE A FIVE-YEAR TENOR, WITH A 12-MONTH MORATORIUM ON REPAYMENT OF PRINCIPAL

2.0 for the 26 stress sectors and health care sector with credit outstanding of above ₹50 crore and up

BIZ BUZZ

Startup develops tech for faster sero survey

NEW DELHI: Indian IT startup Thalamus Irvine claims to have developed an Artificial Intelligence and IoT-based solution to complete a sero survey with 1 crore samples of COVID-19 cases within a week. The Delhi-based company has partnered with state-run ITI to host its data and also done a proof of concept with the public sector firm. "We have developed an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based system to analyse samples tested for COVID-19 within a few microseconds. We connect our AI-Internet of Things (IoT) platform, Garuda, with our partner device that analyses data in real time. Through our technology, we can conduct sero survey with 1 crore actual samples in a week," Thalamus Irvine chairman Rishabh Sharma told PTI.



EPFO likely to credit 8.5 pc interest for 2019-20



NEW DELHI: Retirement fund body EPFO is likely to credit 8.5 per cent rate of interest for 2019-20 in the employees' provident fund (EPF) accounts of around six crore subscribers in one go by the end of December. Earlier in September this year, the Employees Provident Fund Organisation had decided to split 8.5 per cent interest into two installments of 8.15 per cent and 0.35 per cent in its trustees meet headed by Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar. A highly placed source told PTI that the Labour Ministry has sent a proposal to the Finance Ministry to give concurrence to credit 8.5 per cent rate of interest on EPF for 2019-20 earlier this month.

Thermal coal imports at major ports dip 17 pc

NEW DELHI: Disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact cargo movement in India, with thermal coal imports at 12 major ports falling by 17.22 per cent year-on-year to 48.16 million tonnes (MT) in April-November, according to the ports' body IPA. Coking coal handling dropped by 14.71 per cent to 31.51 MT during the April-November period of the current fiscal. Coal volumes at the 12 major ports declined for the eighth straight month in November 2020, according to the Indian Ports Association (IPA). These ports had handled 58.17 MT of thermal coal and 36.95 MT of coking coal in April-November period of the previous financial year.



Average time spent on smartphone up 25% to 6.9 hrs

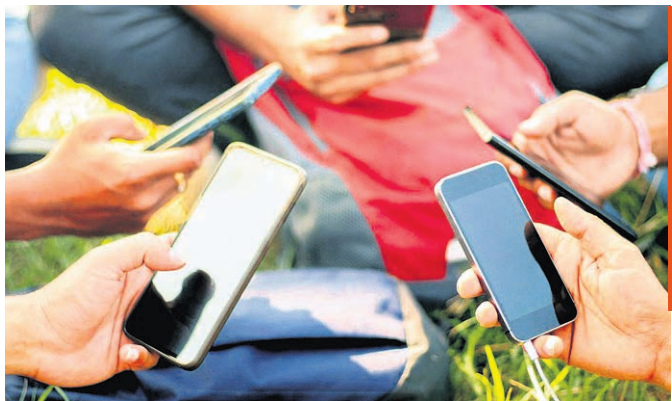
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Average usage of smartphones by Indians is estimated to have gone up 25 per cent to almost 7 hours a day as people depend on these gadgets for work-study from home and entertainment amid the pandemic, a report said.

The study, commissioned by handset maker Vivo and conducted by CMR, said the average time spent on smartphones in a day has been on the rise with average usage growing 11 per cent to 5.5 hours in March 2020 (pre-COVID) from about 4.9 hours on average in 2019.

This has grown by another 25 per cent to 6.9 hours April onwards (post-COVID), the report titled 'Smartphones and their impact on human relationships 2020', said.

The report noted that since lockdown, Indians have been spending



more time on their smartphone for work from home (75 per cent increase), calling (63 per cent rise), and OTT (over the top services like Netflix, Spotify etc) that has seen 59 per cent growth in time spent on smartphones.

There has also been a 55 per cent increase in time spent on social

media, and 45 per cent rise in time spent gaming on smartphones.

Interestingly, the average duration of clicking pictures and taking selfies has increased from 14 minutes to 18 minutes in a day.

The study comprised 2,000 respondents aged 15-45 years across top eight cities (four metros,

- ### LOCKDOWN EFFECTS
- Indians have been spending more time on their smartphone for work from home (75 per cent increase), calling (63 per cent rise), and OTT
 - There has also been a 55 per cent increase in time spent on social media, and 45 per cent rise in time spent gaming on smartphones

Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Pune) with 70 per cent male and 30 per cent female participants. Speaking to PTI, Vivo India Director Brand Strategy Nipun Marya said the company commissioned a similar study last year as well on smartphones and their impact on human relationships.

We all know smartphones are a great tool, especially in a COVID situation where we would have been rendered almost unproductive with-

Govt re-invites bids for four coal blocks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: The coal ministry has again invited bids for four coal blocks whose tender process was annulled in the first round of auction for commercial mining, as the number of technically qualified bidder for each mine was just one.

Of the four coal blocks, three are in Odisha and one is in Jharkhand. The nominated authority conducted the first attempt of 11th tranche of auction under CM(SP) Act and 1st tranche of auction under the MMDR Act of identified coal mines blocks vide tender document dated June 18, 2020, the coal ministry said in a notice inviting tender.

It added that as the number of technically qualified bidders for the tender was less than 2 for Chendipada, Chendipada-II and Kuraloi (A) North coal mines in Odisha and Seregarha block in Jharkhand, the process was annulled.

The blocks, which are fully explored, have an annual peak-rated capacity of 52 million tonnes (MT).

The nominated authority is initiating the second attempt of auction of these coal mines with the same terms and conditions as in the first annulled attempt of auction,



The blocks, which are fully explored, have an annual peak-rated capacity of 52 million tonnes (MT)

the ministry said.

The auction of blocks for commercial mining has opened India's coal sector to private players.

The first-ever auction of coal mines for commercial mining witnessed fierce competition.

Earlier, Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi said 19 auctioned mines will generate total revenues of around ₹7,000 crore per annum and create more than 69,000 jobs once they are operationalised.

In June, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the auction process for 41 coal blocks for commercial mining. Some of the large corporate groups that have bagged blocks include Adani Enterprises, Vedanta, Hindalco Industries and Jindal Power.

Tata Power to reduce SOUTHCO losses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: Following the acquisition of power utility SOUTHCO, Tata Power Company Limited (TPCL) is now committed to bring down AT&C losses to 14.80 percent in 10 years from present losses of 35.29 percent.

According to statement made by the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC), TPCL has also set a target to collect arrears of ₹100 crore in the next five years of time period.

With a massive arrear of about

₹1,800 crore, TPCL has assured the commission to recover previous arrears which is ₹200 crore from the consumers. Moreover, TPCL has planned to invest ₹1,541 crore in the coming five years for system improvement.

Also, the company has decided its capex commitment for the acquired power utility of Odisha. TPCL will invest Rs227 crore for 2022-23, ₹316 crore for 2023-24, ₹241 crore for 2024-25, ₹233 crore for 2025-26 and ₹150 crore for 2026-27, the statement said.

A report claims that OERC awarded the Letter of Intent (LOI)



to TPCL in December, 2019 for management of CESU for a consideration of about ₹175 crore.

Call on capital infusion soon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: The Finance Ministry will take a call on residual ₹14,500 crore capital infusion in the public sector banks (PSBs) in the fourth quarter of this fiscal, sources said.

Following the financial performance review after the first half, sources said, it was found that Punjab & Sind Bank, out of the 12 PSBs, was in need of ₹5,500 crore to meet the regulatory requirement.

So, the government approved capital infusion through preferential allotment of equity shares in Punjab & Sind Bank last month.

The fund was approved from ₹20,000 crore cleared by Parliament in September for capital infusion of PSBs as part of the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2020-21. With ₹5,500 crore going to Punjab & Sind Bank, the government is left with ₹14,500 crore.

When the performance review post third quarter numbers takes place, sources said, by that time banks



would have clear idea about additional burden on them due to one-time restructuring being undertaken as per the RBI guidelines to help the industry tide over the risk of default due to subdued business environment in the COVID-19 crisis.

Besides, sources said there would be a clarity on NPA recognition as the Supreme Court may decide on interest on interest case by then. NPA recognition process has been halted by the apex court till further order.

During 2019-20, the government proposed to make ₹70,000 crore capital infusion into the PSBs to boost credit for a strong impetus to the economy.

However, the government refrained from committing any capital in the Budget 2020-21 for the PSBs, hoping that the lenders will raise funds from the market depending on the requirements.

In the last financial year, Punjab National Bank got ₹16,091 crore, Union Bank of India received ₹11,768 crore while Canara Bank and Indian Bank got ₹6,571 crore and ₹2,534 crore, respectively.

Allahabad Bank received ₹2,153 crore, United Bank of India got 1,666 crore and Andhra Bank received ₹200 crore. These three lenders have been merged with various PSBs.

Centre plans third tranche of Bharat Bond ETF this fiscal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: The government is likely to launch the third tranche of Bharat Bond ETF, the exchange traded fund that invests in debt of public sector companies, this fiscal, a source said.

Central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) have fund raising plans of about ₹12,000 crore. We are thinking of launching the next tranche of Bharat Bond ETF in a couple of months, the source said.

The second tranche of Bharat Bond ETF, which was launched in July, was oversubscribed more than 3 times, collecting about ₹11,000 crore. It had fetched about ₹12,400 crore in its debut offer in December 2019.

The funds raised through debt ETF help in smoothening borrowing plans of the participating CPSEs or public sector banks. It also helps them in meeting their capital expenditure needs.

Bharat Bond ETF, which is a debt exchange traded fund (ETF), offered maturity options of 5 and 12 years in its second tranche, while in the first tranche, maturity options were for 3 and 10 years.

Bharat Bond ETF will offer two maturities of five years and 11 years maturing in April 2025 and April 2031 respectively. You can choose to invest based on your investment horizon. 2. The ETF will track Nifty BHARAT Bond Index - April 2025 or Nifty BHARAT Bond Index - April 2031 depending on the maturity.

Indicative yield of Nifty BHARAT Bond Index - April 2025 was 5.60% and Nifty BHARAT Bond Index - April 2031 was 6.75% as on July 06.



2ND WARM-UP MATCH FOR MEN IN BLUE ALSO ENDS IN A STALEMATE

Plenty of positives for India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Dec 13: The Indian cricket team will head into the first day-night Test against Australia with a lot of optimism and happy selection dilemmas. They have managed to tick most of the boxes before drawing the three-day pink ball dress rehearsal against Australia 'A' here Sunday. The hosts gave a better account of themselves on an eased out third day track, despite being reduced to 25 for three. They ended on 305 for four riding on Ben McDermott (107 n o, 167b, 16x4) and Jack Wildermuth's (111 n o, 119b, 12x4, 3x6) centuries.

Yes the Indians did not get too many wickets on day three. However, Virat Kohli and head coach Ravi Shastri watching the proceedings from the dug-out, will be happy with multiple options that emerged from the game.

In the first hour itself, the probable first Test opening pair of Joe Burns (1) and Marcus Harris (5) was sent back by Mohammed Shami (2/58). Indians will certainly have



IN GOOD RHYTHM: Indian players congratulate Mohammed Shami (centre) after he picked up a wicket in the game against Australia 'A' which ended in a draw Sunday

PHOTO: @BCCI TWITTER

BRIEF SCORES
India 194 and 386 for 4 declared; Australia A 108 and 307 for 4 (Ben McDermott 107 n o Jack Wildermuth 111 n o, Mohammed Shami 2/58). Match drawn.

their plans worked out against these two prospective openers.

Shubman Gill's (43 and 65) composure and technique opening the innings wouldn't have gone unnoticed compared to Prithvi Shaw's loose batting during his two knocks in the game.

Similarly, Hanuma Vihari strongly kept himself in the hunt with a hundred which again reflected his patient approach. With his handy off-breaks, one such delivery got rid of Alex Carey (58), he can be a good option for the sixth specialist batsman's spot in the side.

But then there is an extremely stylish KL Rahul, who has been sweating it out at the nets under the watchful eyes of his skipper: Rahul gives multiple options both as an opener and a middle-order batsman.

The fact that he has experience of 36 Test matches won't be lost on the decision-makers when they sit back and pick the playing XI for the Adelaide opener.

If the day/night warm-up game is any indicator, then Rishabh Pant, after his 73-ball hundred, is the primary contender for donning the big gloves. The selection will be purely on Pant's ability to turn the game around in a session with his batting which his senior counterpart Wriddhiman Saha is not capable of.

As far as bowling is concerned, Jasprit Bumrah, Shami, Umesh Yadav and Ravichandran Ashwin look all set to start the Test match.

Both Bumrah and Shami had a fairly good workout during the game and captured a few wickets also. In the second innings both bowled 13 overs each and looked in quite good rhythm.

Hazlewood keen to bowl with 'Josh' against Kohli



Josh Hazlewood is happy with Mitchell Starc joining the Australian squad

AGENCIES

Adelaide, Dec 13: Senior Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood said Sunday that he will certainly have a bit of 'advantage' while bowling to Indian skipper Virat Kohli in the pink ball day/night Test. However, Hazlewood has refused to admit that he has the wood on Kohli. In the recent white ball series Hazlewood dismissed Kohli four times in six games.

"I've had some luck of late in the white ball stuff. You take a little bit into the next format but I think it's pretty much a fresh start, a different story again with the pink ball. He (Kohli) has obviously scored some runs last time with the red ball. It's just crucial to start well against him. I've got him in both the innings in one Test so it's crucial to get him out early on," said the Australian pacer.

Hazlewood is however very happy that his partner-in-crime Mitchell Starc is returning to the Test squad. He is expected to join the squad Monday. The left-arm pacer has 42 wickets from seven pink ball Tests and Hazlewood feels his return will certainly boost the side.

"He's obviously a huge part of our team and attack. Everyone knows his numbers with the pink ball. We welcome him with open arms," Hazlewood said.

Starc was withdrawn after the

It is important to start well against Kohli. Crucial to bowl well early on. Yes, I have dismissed him a few times, but will again have to start afresh in the Test series

JOSH HAZLEWOOD

first T20I against India in Canberra last week after learning of a family illness. Cricket Australia (CA) announced Sunday that the Aussie pacer was ready to return.

"I think he (Starc) would be fine. Nothing goes to plan. He is a professional player. He would have been doing everything he could have over the last week. He will be ready to go and jump straight in," Hazlewood said when asked if a two-day preparation is enough.

India won the historic Border-Gavaskar Trophy in 2018-19 and the series witnessed the Aussie bowlers lose intensity after the first two Tests. Hazlewood hoped to 'swing it around' this time.

"Probably our bowlers did not get enough rest in between innings with (Cheteshwar Pujara) facing a lot of balls," Hazlewood pointed out. "Hopefully we can swing that around this time and keep the Indian bowlers out for as long as possible to reap benefits later in the series," the pacer added.

KULDEEP BACKS HIMSELF UNDER LIGHTS



Kuldeep Yadav

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Dec 13: Backing his case, Kuldeep Yadav reckons it may not be a bad idea to play him in the se-

You should not try too many things quickly in Tests. Patience is the key to success for any spinner in Tests

KULDEEP YADAV

a spinner uses variations it's not always easy to spot the seam position of the ball. That can be an advantage for us," Kuldeep was quoted as saying in 'KKR.In'.

This incidentally will be India's first day-night Test overseas, having played their maiden one in Kolkata in 2019. "I have never experienced a pink ball match outside

India. So, it will be exciting to see how it goes," Kuldeep stated.

Kuldeep however, was quick to add that in the longest format, a bowler will need to have loads of patience. "A lot of us, having played so much T20 cricket of late, will have to be patient when playing Test cricket. Mental toughness is very important," the spinner asserted.

Kuldeep was asked about the advice he received from spin legend Shane Warne, whom he idolizes.

"Warne has asked me to always wear a smile to hide the 'stress'. He has shared valuable inputs about bowling, but mainly, he talks about mental preparation," said Kuldeep.

SHORT TAKES

Biopic on Anand

Mumbai: A biopic has been announced on Indian chess grandmaster Viswanathan Anand. The film will be directed by filmmaker Aanand L Rai. Informing about the same, trade analyst and film critic Taran Adarsh tweeted Sunday, "BIOPIIC ON VISWANATHAN ANAND... A biopic on #Indian chess grandmaster #Viswanathan Anand has been planned... The yet untitled biopic - will be directed by Aanand L. Rai. Produced by 'Sundial Entertainment' and 'Colour Yellow Productions' (Aanand L. Rai) (sic)." The actor who will play Anand in the film however, has not been finalised. The Indian chess legend celebrated his 51st birthday recently December 11.

Kiwis in control

Wellington: New Zealand were in touching distance of an innings win and series sweep over the West Indies here Sunday when bad light stopped play on the third day of the second cricket Test. The West Indies were 244 for six in their second innings at stumps. They were still trailing New Zealand by 85 runs after being forced to follow on 329 behind. West Indies captain Jason Holder (60 batting) put on 74 runs for the seventh wicket with Joshua da Silva (25 batting) to frustrate the Kiwis. New Zealand had scored 460 in their first innings before bundling the visitors out for 131 with Tim Southee (5/32) and Kyle Jamieson (5/34) sharing the spoils.

Easy for Mark

Yas Island (Abu Dhabi): Red Bull driver Max Verstappen won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix here Sunday for his second victory of the season and 10th of his career. He finished 16 seconds ahead of Valtteri Bottas and 18.4 clear of World Champion Lewis Hamilton as Red Bull enjoyed a rare and significant success over both Mercedes cars. Alexander Albon of Red Bull finished fourth. Hamilton however, has won 11 of the 16 races in this pandemic-hit season to emerge as the most dominant driver. AGENCIES

House burgled during funeral

ROSSI FOULED IN DEATH ALSO

AGENCIES

Vicenza (Italy), Dec 13: The home of late Italian World Cup-winning forward Paolo Rossi was burgled during his funeral Saturday. Rossi, led Italy to their 1982 World Cup title with six goals in the event, died aged 64, Wednesday. His funeral took place here Saturday morning.

Local media reports said that when Rossi's wife Federica Cappelletti returned to their house she found the house had been burgled and valuables stolen, including a watch. The reports said police and forensic teams were investigating the matter.

Earlier Rossi's former teammates served as pallbearers at the funeral of the 1982 World Cup hero. Only 300 people were allowed into the cathedral here Saturday because of coronavirus restrictions but thousands had paid their respects to Rossi in the preceding days when his coffin was placed in a viewing room at the Stadio Menti.

Rossi's former teammates from the



FINAL JOURNEY: Former teammates carry Paolo Rossi's coffin to the cathedral, Saturday

winning World Cup squad carried the coffin into the cathedral, led by Marco Tardelli and Antonio Cabrini and accompanied by Rossi's son, Alessandro. His shirt from the World Cup was laid on top of the coffin.

"I haven't lost just a teammate but a friend and a brother," Cabrini said at the service. "Together we fought, won and sometimes lost, always getting back up after disappointments. We were part of a group, that group, our group ... I already miss you, your comforting words, your quips and your stupid jokes," Cabrini added.

1ST DEFEAT FOR FRANK LAMPARD'S TEAM IN 17 GAMES

Everton end Chelsea run

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, Dec 13: The People's Club welcomed back their fans and Chelsea felt the full force. With 2,000 supporters allowed back Saturday into Goodison Park after nine months, Everton won 1-0 to end Chelsea's 17-match unbeaten run in all competitions.

"I don't think we were at our best," Chelsea manager Frank Lampard said. "We have been on a really good run and we knew what was coming with Everton physically and we didn't handle that well. We didn't show enough to break them down," he added.

It was an uncharacteristic mistake by Chelsea goalkeeper Edouard Mendy - bringing down Dominic Calvert-Lewin - that allowed Gylfi Sigurdsson to score a penalty in the 22nd minute and spark home celebrations as Everton rose to seventh.

"The impact was really strong. We were really pleased. It is really important to have the support. It's a totally different environment, completely," Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti said.

However, the main game of the day, the Manchester derby ended in



ON THE MONEY: Gylfi Sigurdsson scores from the spot to secure an important victory for Everton against Chelsea

an insipid stalemate. There was no atmosphere, no intensity and no goals as Manchester United and Manchester City drew 0-0 in the 183rd derby. "We're not happy to draw 0-0 at home at Old Trafford," Man U captain Harry Maguire said. "We did not create any big

chances for fans to get off their seats and get excited about."

There has been little joy for fans with United failing to score in three games at Old Trafford. After exiting the Champions League Tuesday, a draw against their biggest rival will help coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

BENGALURU WIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Margao (Goa), Dec 13: Bengaluru FC (BFC) defeated Kerala Blasters 4-2 in an exciting game of the ISL here Sunday at the Fatorda Stadium. In an earlier game played in the day, North East United FC (NEUFC) played out an unspiced 0-0 draw with Chennaiyin FC.

The Bengaluru-Kerala game was a fast-paced affair: KP Rahul (17th) gave Kerala a surprise lead with a powerful shot that beat Gurpreet Singh Sandhu hands down. However, BFC who had better share of possession restored parity through Cleiton Silva (29th).

Bengaluru however, stamped their supremacy in the game early into the second half with two quick goals from Eric Paartalu (51st) and Dimas Delgado (53rd). Even though Jordan Murray (61st) pulled a goal back for Kerala it wasn't to be enough. Sunil Chhetri (65th) hit the fourth goal for Bengaluru to seal his side's win and enable them to earn three important points.

GOOD SHOW IN DOUBLES

3rd title for Ankita

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 13: Top Indian tennis player Ankita Raina won her third doubles title of the pandemic-hit 2020 season, clinching the Al Habtoor challenge event with Ekaterine Gorgodze here Saturday. The unseeded Indo-Georgian pair won 6-4, 3-6, 10-6 against Aliona Bolsova Zadoinov from Spain and Slovakian Kaja Juvan in the final of the USD 100,000 hard court event.

Ankita said success on the singles circuit is unparalleled but a deep run in doubles draw is not without significance.

"Doubles has always helped me in singles. Playing well in doubles has always been followed by good run in singles in my career. You get to practice with good players, get to play and can work out a few things in matches," Ankita said Sunday.

It was the fourth doubles final of

It is good that I am being able to play and travel again. I was doing physical and mental training at home. However, playing on court is different always

ANKITA RAINA

the season for Ankita but the biggest trophy of the calendar since her earlier two titles were at the USD 25,000 level. In February this year, Ankita had made three finals, winning back-to-back titles in Nonthaburi (Thailand) with Bibiane Schoofs and ending runners-up in Jodhpur with compatriot Snehal Mane.

Ankita said returning to the circuit was relieving. "It's really good that I am able to travel again. I was doing a bit of training, both physical and mental at home, but it's different on court," Ankita stated.