



## CLIMATE WARRIOR

Bhumi Pednekar says protecting the environment and creating awareness on climate change has become her life's mission

LEISURE P2



## SAFFRON IN KERALA

Kerala civic body polls bring cheers and tears for Bharatiya Janata Party which hoped for a blockbuster performance

TWO STATES P7



## MISSION SUCCESSFUL

China's Chang'e-5 probe successfully touched down on Earth bringing home the first samples of the moon in over 40 years

INTERNATIONAL P10

## MAOISTS KILL CONTRACTOR



**MALKANGIRI:** Outlawed Naxalites once again made their presence felt in Malkangiri district by killing a contractor and setting blaze three vehicles. The incident took place near Goliaguda village under Mathili police limits. Employees of the contractor were involved in the construction of a road near the village. The deceased was identified as Sukumar Mandal. He had been awarded the road laying project through the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) programme. In order to supervise ongoing work, Sukumar reached the construction site in his vehicle early Thursday morning. As the Maoists were waiting for him, they dragged him out of the vehicle and killed him on the spot. The ultras also set his SUV and two other vehicles ablaze, an eye-witness stated.

# KIDNAPPINGS DON'T STOP

ANOTHER SHOCKER! MINOR BOY ALLEGEDLY KIDNAPPED IN GAJAPATI DISTRICT, THURSDAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kashinagar (Gajapati), Dec 17:** Even as the state is yet to come to terms with kidnappings and deaths of Pari and Swati in Nayagarh and Bishnupriya's death in Balasore, report of alleged abduction of an eight-year-old boy from Gajapati district has come to the fore, Thursday.

The boy, identified as Jami Hardhik, 7, son of a cashew trader Jami Gopi, was last seen playing with his friends at Morning Sahi near the crowded busstand area in Kashinagar NAC Wednesday evening. According to his friends, two unidentified bike-borne miscreants reached the spot and took Hardhik away with them.

While Hardhik was playing with his friends in the locality, the miscreants approached them and called Hardhik by his name. They asked Hardhik the address of his father's workplace. In response, Hardhik said that his father will be in the cashew factory following which they took him with them on their bike. Just when his friends had realised something was wrong, they gave a chase. But it was too late as the miscreants had already crossed the village limits by then.

While the reason behind Hardhik's abduction is yet to be known, after coming to know about the incident from his friends his family members searched for him at all possible locations but in vain. Later, they lodged a report with Kashinagar police station.

Kashinagar police registered a case and started an investigation by launching a manhunt to trace whereabouts of the boy, police IIC Susant Kumar Sahu said. Gajapati SP Tapan Kumar Patnaik and SDPO Ramakrushna Pati also visited Kashinagar Thursday and took stock of the situation.

Police stations in Paralakhemundi

## Children's fate lost in files

THE CASES OF MISSING CHILDREN FILED AT VARIOUS POLICE STATIONS IN THE STATE SOARED BY 75% BETWEEN 2015 AND 2019



and Gunupur in the state and Kataru, Batili and Purunapatnam in adjoining Andhra Pradesh have been informed about the incident and asked to track the whereabouts of the missing child. Four separate teams have launched search operations, while the CCTV footages of the cashew factory are being scanned, the SP said.

It is worth mentioning here that in July this year, Pari, a 5-year-old girl in Nayagarh district, went missing while playing outside her house. Later, she was found dead. The murder of Pari grabbed public attention following the self-immolation bid by her parents before the Assembly building.

The Opposition parties had subsequently tried to corner the state government by pressing for immediate expulsion of Minister Arun Sahoo for his alleged complicity in the case. Later, the Odisha government ordered an investigation into the case by Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by senior IPS officer Arun Bothra.

Meanwhile, another girl from Nayagarh district went missing soon after Pari's kidnapping and death. As per reports, the three-year-old girl was

last seen playing near her house at Dadhipatna village under Ranpur block in the district last Friday. Though the parents of the girl launched a search operation, they failed to trace her. Following the incident, a massive search operation was launched by local police and personnel of Odisha fire services department to trace the missing girl.

What is worrisome is that the number of such cases filed at various police stations in the state spiraled by around 75 per cent between 2015 and 2019. The reports suggest that as many as 1,807 missing cases reported in 2015 rose to 3,151 till the end of 2019.

However, the police failed to achieve success in tracing the children who went missing from 2015 to 2019, with 2017 as an aberration. In 2015, the state police was tasked with a target to trace out 4,588 missing children, including 2,781 untraced children of previous years. But, the police managed to find out only 698 kids.

As many as 1,901 children went missing in 2016. The police succeeded in tracing out only 589 minors in 2016 out of a total of 5,791 cases, that also included untraced 3,890 from the previous years. The tracing rate was a mere 10.1 per cent.

## Body of missing boy recovered

**DHENKANAL:** The body of a 3-year-old boy who had gone missing was found floating in a well at Khankira village under Nihalprasad police limits in Dhenkanal, Thursday.

According to sources, the minor boy had gone missing while playing near his house Wednesday evening. His family members searched for him at various places in the village but his whereabouts could not be known.

The body of the minor boy was found in an abandoned well in Khankira village early Thursday morning, the sources added.

On being informed, a team comprising fire-fighting personnel and local police reached the spot and recovered the body. Police have launched a probe in this connection and sent the body for post-mortem. The precise reason behind the boy's death is yet to be ascertained.



## Compulsory retirement for Abhay recommended

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** Taking a strong step towards zero tolerance towards corruption, the state government Thursday recommended the Centre to give compulsory retirement to suspended IFS officer Abhay Kant Pathak on grounds of corruption.

This is the first time that the state government has recommended the Centre for compulsory retirement of an all-India services officer on corruption charges.

The state government told the Centre that the IFS officer had accumulated huge property through corrupt means for which he has been arrested.

Abhay was using high-brand luxury cars like Mercedes and BMW from ill-gotten wealth. During the lockdown, Abhay Kant Pathak and his son Akash were flying across India in chartered planes and staying in plush five-star and seven-star hotels.

He was depositing the ill-gotten wealth in his son Akash Pathak's bank accounts and also helping his



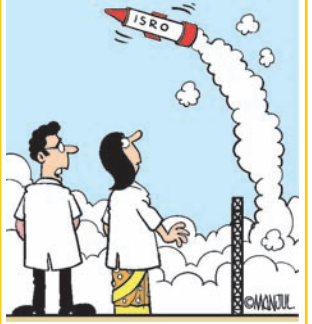
son to fraudulently pose as the MD of Tata Motors.

Akash has also been arrested by Crime Branch in connection with cases pertaining to forgery, cheating and duping unemployed youth by falsely promising them employment in Tata Motors. In this case, the FIR was lodged by Tata Motors.

The state Vigilance department had arrested Abhay Kant Pathak and his son Akash Pathak after acquiring evidence their corrupt deeds and ill-gotten wealth worth over ₹20 crore. Both, father and son are now in jail.

Following the arrest, the state government had put the IFS officer under suspension. Meanwhile, the Commissionerate Police took Akash Pathak on a two-day remand Thursday, while expelled BJD MLA from Gopalpur, Pradeep Panigrahi, was released from remand and send to jail custody.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Do you think this new communication satellite will help govt communicate with protesters better?

## PSLV-C50 lifts off successfully

**CHENNAI:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s PSLV-C50 lifted off successfully from the Sriharikota spaceport near Chennai. The rocket is carrying orbiting communication satellite CMS-01 (formerly GSAT-12R). The rocket lifted at 3:41 p.m. from the second launch pad at the rocket port in Sriharikota, in Andhra Pradesh. After about 20 minutes into its flight, it will eject CMS-01 into geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO) and from there, the satellite will be taken up and positioned in the geosynchronous stationary orbit. The 44-metre-high four-staged engine, PSLV-C50, is the 22nd flight of PSLV in 'XL' configuration (with six strap-on motors hugging the first stage). It will be the 52nd mission for India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

## Farmers' protests legitimate: SC

PNN & AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** The farmers' protest at the borders of Delhi, which is on its 23rd day Thursday, must continue and the national capital cannot be blocked, the Supreme Court said Thursday while hearing a series of petitions on the issue. The court said it would refer the matter to a vacation bench and suggested that the government not take any action to implement the law till the court takes a final decision on the issue.

Attorney General KK Venugopal, who was representing the government, said he got back to the court on the issue after discussion.

"We make it clear that we recognise the fundamental right to protest against a law. There is no question of balancing or curtailing it. But it should not damage anyone's life or property," said Chief Justice SA Bobde.

Justice Bobde, who said Wednesday that the matter must be handed over to a committee, said it

**We make it clear that we recognise the fundamental right to protest against a law. There is no question of balancing or curtailing it**

SA BOBDE | CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

must have "independent members with knowledge of agriculture and hear both sides and give report on what is to be done". Meanwhile, the "protests can continue without violence and the police will not do anything (to stop the protests)," the Chief Justice said.

Senior advocate Harish Salve, who was representing one of the petitioners, said, "Protests cannot be just for protest, but to articulate point of view," the court said, "That is exactly what we mean".

"Protest's purpose must be fulfilled by non-violent means. Protests must be about issues. Aggrieved parties must be allowed to articulate and the party that caused the problem must be allowed to answer," the Chief Justice said. Declaring that the farmers can-

not just demand a repeal of the laws, the Centre insisted on a clause-by-clause discussion, but the court said: "We observed yesterday that the Centre is not successful in negotiations. We do not think that the farmers will accept your conclusions. Let the committee decide."

Former Union Minister P Chidambaram, who was representing the Delhi government, said, "If you make so many amendments, the original law is untraceable. The farmers say this law is not acceptable. So bring a new law and let parliament discuss". The court, which was hearing a bunch of petitions for and against the protest, said it would not take a call on the validity of the contentious farm laws passed in September that are at the heart of the furor.

## SELFIE TIME



With restrictions on visiting tourist places lifted, visitors at Khandagiri caves on the outskirts of the capital city make the outing memorable by taking a selfie

## State to provide free Covid shots to health workers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** Odisha Health Minister Naba Kishore Das Thursday said that the government will give Covid-19 vaccines free of cost to all health workers in the state. At the same time, the minister made it clear that the state will abide by the latest norms released by the Union government on the issue.

Meanwhile, Niranjan Mishra, State Public Health Director Thursday said that the state government is preparing a blueprint to rollout its Covid-19 vaccination programme once it is approved by the concerned authorities.

Mishra, however, said that the preparations are in a nascent stage. According to him, the state government has received communication from the Union government to be prepared for the vaccination drive.

"The vaccination will lead to herd immunity and it will possibly help the community to fight the disease better," he said.

The official informed the media that the government has already prepared the database of the health workers who would be given the vaccinations on a priority basis. "On the vaccination front, we are working as per the recommendations and guidelines of the Union government. The government has decided to give priority to healthcare providers," he said.

"Covid Warriors such as the police, fire-fighters and sanitation workers would be given second priority and after that the elderly would be considered for the vaccination. This will be followed by vaccinating people with comorbidities," he added.

Mishra, however, said that it is yet to be decided when the common people will get the shots. The Union government is not clear on this issue, he said.

## MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	46890.34 ↑ 223.88
NIFTY	13740.70 ↑ 58.00
DOLLAR	73.84 ↑ ₹0.04
EURO	90.08 ↑ ₹0.33
GOLD	₹50,514 ↑ ₹917
SILVER	₹68,021 ↑ ₹2110

## WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	29.9°C	29.5°C
MIN	17.8°C	16.2°C
Humidity	90%	80%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Fog or mist in the morning

## In a first, UK schoolgirl's death linked to pollution

A UK CORONER HAS HELD THAT AIR POLLUTION MADE A MATERIAL CONTRIBUTION TO ELLA'S DEATH - THE FIRST CASE IN THE UK WHERE POOR AIR QUALITY HAS BEEN RECORDED AS A FACTOR ON A DEATH CERTIFICATE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**London, Dec 17:** A coroner in the UK has ruled that air pollution contributed to the death of a nine-year-old girl who died in 2013 after a serious asthma attack. This is the first legal case in the UK where air pollution has been held responsible for someone's death.

The victim, Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, died in February 2013. In the previous three years, she had been taken to hospital nearly 30 times. The reason was breathing difficulties. Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah lived in southeast London just 30 metres from a major ringroad in the capital. The road is often clogged



with heavy traffic. "Air pollution made a material contribution to Ella's death," assistant coroner Philip Barlow said. This is first case in the UK where

poor air quality has been recorded as a factor on a death certificate. "She was exposed to levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) in excess of World Health Organisation guidelines. The principal source of her exposure was traffic emissions," Barow said.

Elaborating on the role of air pollution in Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah's death, he said it was also important to record a "recognised failure" to reduce those NO2 levels to within UK and EU limits, "which possibly contributed to her death".

Apart from this, her mother was not provided crucial information that may have prompted her to take action that might have prevented the

girl's death. In 2014, the first judicial inquiry into Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah's death said she died of acute respiratory failure. However, this ruling was overturned when the case was reviewed, following which a new hearing was ordered.

Air pollution expert Stephen Holgate found a "striking link" between spikes in NO2 and harmful particulate matter and the occasions that she was taken to hospital for treatment. He told the inquest she was "living on a knife edge" because of her surroundings and the air quality in her neighbourhood, which exacerbated her condition.

Winter air pollution worsened her asthma in the months leading

up to her death, added Holgate, a professor of immunopharmacology at the University of Southampton.

Experts working on air pollution and public health in the UK have said the coroner ruling in Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah's case has exposed the dangers of air pollution in the UK.

The British Lung Foundation and Asthma UK said the inquest had laid bare the "invisible dangers of breathing dirty air" and set a precedent for a "seismic shift" in government policy. Meanwhile, Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah's mother Rosamund told AFP that she would have moved from the area had she been aware of the effects of air quality on her daughter's health.



## IAN MCKELLEN GETS COVID VACCINE IN ENGLAND

Veteran star Ian McKellen has received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, and says he is feeling euphoric about it. The 81-year-old star received the vaccine as part of the UK's priority category, reports [dailymail.co.uk](http://dailymail.co.uk).

## LIZZIE MCGUIRE REBOOT SHOW CALLED OFF

Actress Hilary Duff has revealed that the much anticipated *Lizzie McGuire* reboot has officially been cancelled. The actress took to Instagram to share the news, and express her disappointment. The reboot was announced in 2019 at D23 Expo to be streamed on Disney+.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
At times it is a good thing to be under pressure, because it brings out your potential to the fullest. You will outsmart all your colleagues in the work you do. However, results may not match your expectations. Ganesha advises patience as results don't come overnight.

**TAURUS**  
This day, you can't afford to take chances with your health, says Ganesha. If there is the least sign or symptom of illness, go consult a doctor straight away. As you are going to be unusually prone to injuries and infections, it is advisable that you stay at home.

**GEMINI**  
You will spend your time figuring out other people and their motivations today. You will probably spend time discussing issues of security and finance with your family members today. You will gain love and appreciation from people owing to your caring nature, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
You may get a gift from your life partner. Ties with business partners will be good and you will get a good news from them. Time to make new plans for the future with spouse. You will feel greater companionship with spouse, giving you joy.

**LEO**  
Your day will be one of mixed results. On one hand you will be dissatisfied with your spouse or business partner, on the other hand you will make fantastic returns on your speculations. You will be able to maintain a balance owing to the advice of some friend, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Today you will find yourself overflowing with ideas. You have a soothing touch, the hands of a healer, and so you will be able to help many people, says Ganesha. You will be very considerate, and your mind-reading abilities will work wonders both for you and your loved ones.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says today is a good day for government-related work. Those of you who are government employees will be able to get good results for their work. Your work will be rewarded and your performance and efficiency will be praised. You will be able to have a heart-to-heart talk with your loved one.

**SCORPIO**  
Free your mind from negative thoughts. You need to be in high spirits to work with your team and delegate equal responsibilities to your team mates. Know their calibre and designate accordingly. Trust them with their work and the rest would fall in place.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Dark and gloomy, that's what you feel today, foresees Ganesha. However, the cloud of worries is likely to burst during the latter half of the day. Good news from abroad or a phone call from a friend is likely to cheer you up.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will want to expand the horizon of your business. But, you will be confused about the path to take for the expansion. You want to reach to the sky, but such a dilemma will keep you in a double mind. Listen to what your heart says, as it will guide you to the right direction, feels Ganesha.

**AQUARIUS**  
It is your lucky day today! Whatever you will wish for, it will fall into your lap, be it name, fame, money or love. During the second half of the day, you will keep yourself occupied with your hobbies like reading, writing, playing active role in discussion groups or research, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
You will find yourself ecstatic now that certain important projects you have been slaving over are nearing completion. You will implement new strategies and will hope that everything goes according to plan. You will experience intimate moments with your partner. On the whole, it will be a peaceful and productive day, says Ganesha.

# SARA

## posts video of 'Nurse Varun'

**Mumbai:** Actress Sara Ali Khan Thursday posted a behind-the-scenes video of Varun Dhawan dressed as a nurse, from the set of their upcoming film *Coolie No. 1*.

In the Instagram video, Sara stands next to Varun, who is seated on a chair and getting his wig fixed before a shot. The actor flashes a smile in his nurse avatar.

"Meet Varuna Dhawan, in all her glory," Sara says, and adds as caption to the video: "Meet the hottest Nurse ever... Varuna Dhawan."

Meanwhile, Varun took to Instagram Stories to say he is thrilled with the response the film's songs *Husn hai suhaana* and *Mummy kasm* have got so far. He has posted



## Vir Das on why his new special was 'tough'

**New Delhi:** Stand-up star Vir Das has dropped a new comedy special, *Outside In*. He says he did not plan to make this into a show and that getting it to a point where it felt like he wanted to put it out was tough for him.

The comedy special is created out of 30 virtual shows he did during lockdown and features audience joining in from all over the world. The special captures the mundane aspect of being stuck at home, besides heartwarming stories about everything that lockdown put us through.

The show primarily unfolds through conversations Vir Das has with the audience. Working from home, he said, "wasn't difficult at all", adding: "I had such minimal equipment so it was quite easy to shoot. I put a camera on a stack of books and started to shoot. So, in that sense it was not very difficult at all because the entire show was conversation with people across the world that was a little bit tough because you ended up with having a lot of footage at the end of it."

**Mumbai:** Actress Bhumi Pednekar is a climate warrior too, and she has now engaged in a new effort to work at spreading awareness about carbon footprint.

Bhumi has joined hands with the global citizen initiative named Count Us In as a climate champion. She will work closely to inspire and educate Indians towards reducing carbon footprint. Her own initiative, named Climate Warrior, will work very closely with Count Us In, to involve and educate people across the country.

"Protecting the environment has become my life's mission and I'm thrilled to partner with Count Us In to raise more awareness towards climate change in India. Christiana Figueres is an inspirational human being who has dedicated her life to saving the planet, and I look forward to working with her on this issue in my country," said environmental activist Bhumi.

## Bhumi to raise awareness on carbon footprint



## Content houses that drive change in Indian OTT space

The global appeal of the streaming world has compelled superstar Shah Rukh Khan to delve into the medium.

At a time when the OTT wave in India is on an all time high, there are many production houses that can be credited for establishing the culture of digital entertainment, with the essential emotions, drama, action and success.

Here is a look at some of the major production houses driving change in the narrative of OTTs in India.

### Red Chillies Entertainment

Shah Rukh Khan's company Red Chillies Entertainment is leading the content game in the OTT world. His company struck a long-term deal with the streaming giant Netflix. Under the deal, they



worked together on the big-budget web series *Bard Of Blood*, said to be created at a cost of Rs 50 crore, the zombie thriller *Betaal*, and *Class of '83*, which was made on a budget of over Rs 20 crore.

### Excel Entertainment

Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment is creating ripples in the OTT space with content like *Inside Edge*, *Mirzapur*, and *Made In Heaven*. Their content streams on Amazon Prime Video as per agreement. Through the shows, they have created franchises with anticipation running high on the next chapters.

### Dharma Productions

Dharma Productions' digital arm Dharmatic has entered a deal with Netflix to work on a range of films and series for the streaming giant. Karan Johar first collaborated with Netflix on the 2018 anthology film *Lust Stories*, and realised the reach of OTTs. He went on to work on *Ghost Stories* and *Gully*.

### Applause Entertainment

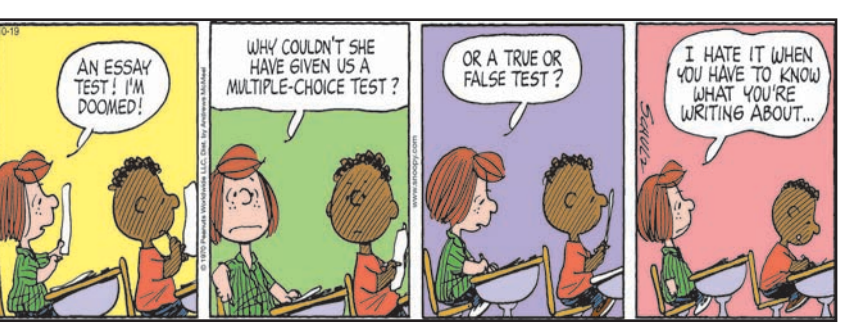
Spearheaded by Sameer Nair, the content production company from the stable of Aditya Birla Group was revived in 2017 to make content for OTT, and has had a successful flight so far. Applause have backed projects

like *Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story*, *Mayanagri: City Of Dreams*, *Hostages*, *Mind The Malhotras*, *The Office*, *Madhuri Talkies*, *Bhaukaal*, and *Criminal Justice* among others.

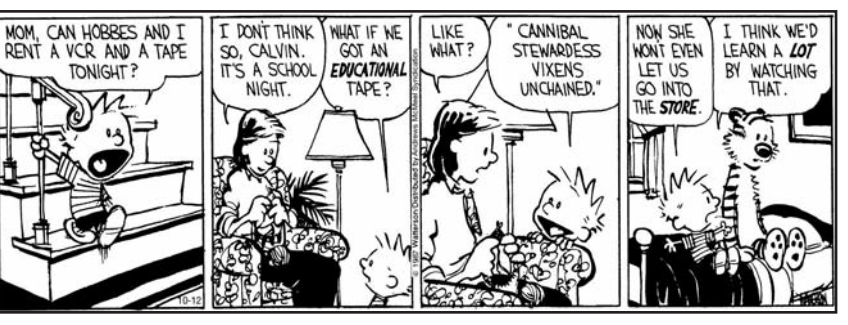
### RSVP

Ronnie Screwvala's film production house RSVP started producing content for the digital arena more than two years ago. The Vicky Kaushal and Angira Dhar-starrer *Love Per Square Foot* was the first film from the production house to take the digital route. "I think digital is not an alternative to a theater. This platform is an addition, and both can co-exist," said Screwvala.

### PEANUTS



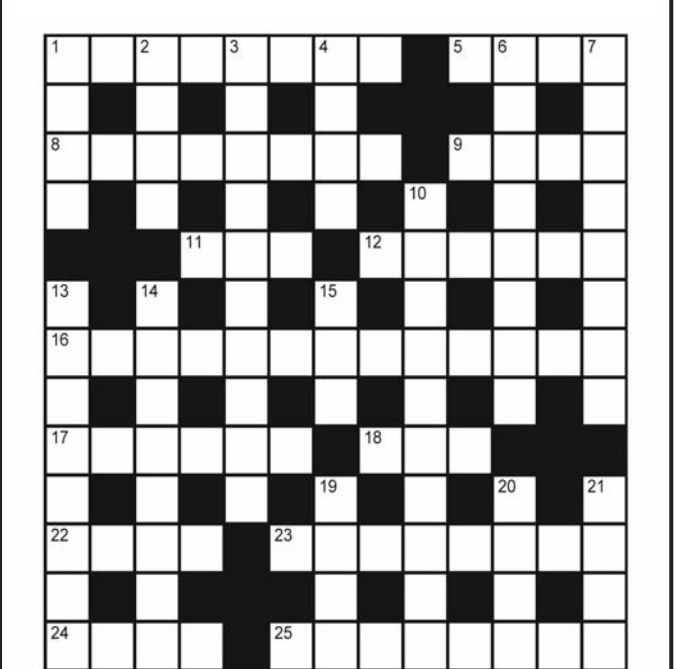
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Common sense
  - 5 Smile widely
  - 8 Hazelnuts
  - 9 Jewels
  - 11 Ultimate degree
  - 12 Llama relative
  - 16 Comic's forte (5,2,6)
  - 17 Sports venues
  - 18 Psyches
  - 22 Cousin of a mandolin
  - 23 Green-eyed monster
  - 24 Pub projectile
  - 25 Imposing houses
  - Down**
  - 1 Yielding
  - 2 Apple variety
  - 3 Shoot the breeze (4,3,3)
  - 4 Ballet wear
  - 6 Lift
  - 7 Slaughter
  - 10 Sword lily (5-2-3)
  - 13 Attacked
  - 14 Aardvark
  - 15 Away from the bow
  - 19 Lyra's brightest star
  - 20 Camera setting
  - 21 Henna and others

### SUDOKU

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

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

### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

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

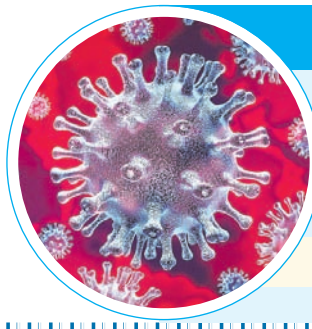
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## XMAS AHEAD

A woman checks out Santa Claus caps at a roadside stall in Jaydev Vihar area of Bhubaneswar ahead of the Christmas, Thursday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	7,47,41,396	5,25,53,079	16,59,111
India	99,56,557	94,89,740	1,44,451
Odisha	3,25,147	3,20,584	1,825

# Ekamra Kshetra redevelopment violates monument Act: ASI

As many as 26 Centrally Protected Monuments are located within the area earmarked for Ekamra Kshetra project, says the central agency

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has strongly opposed the ongoing construction activities near the protected monuments under redevelopment of Ekamra Kshetra in old town here.

Superintending Archaeologist, Bhubaneswar, Arun Malik, has recently written a letter to Works secretary in this regard.



FILE PHOTO

marked for the Ekamra Kshetra. The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Odisha Bridge and Construction Corporation (OBCC) is carrying out peripheral developmental works in the prohibited and regulated area of these CPMs without obtaining prior permission of the competent authority. Besides, the JCB machines involved in the process are also damaging the monuments viz. Sari Deul Temple etc," the archaeologist said in his letter.

He further said as per Ancient Monument and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958, 100 metres in all directions from a protected monument is prohibited area and upto 200 metres is regulated area. In such areas, repairs

or renovation/public works are allowed only in extraordinary cases after obtaining NOC from the National Monument Authority.

"It is evident that the development works which are being carried out in the Ekamra Kshetra are in full violation of the provisions of AMASR Act, 1958; The Rules 1959 and AMASR (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010 enacted by the Parliament," the ASI superintending archaeologist said.

The archaeologist has urged the state to take permission from ASI director general before carrying out any developmental work.

Following the letter, the Works department has asked OBCC, which is executing the project, to take permission from the ASI DG, in this regard.

## CM launches 22 online services of Labour dept

POST NEWS NETWORK

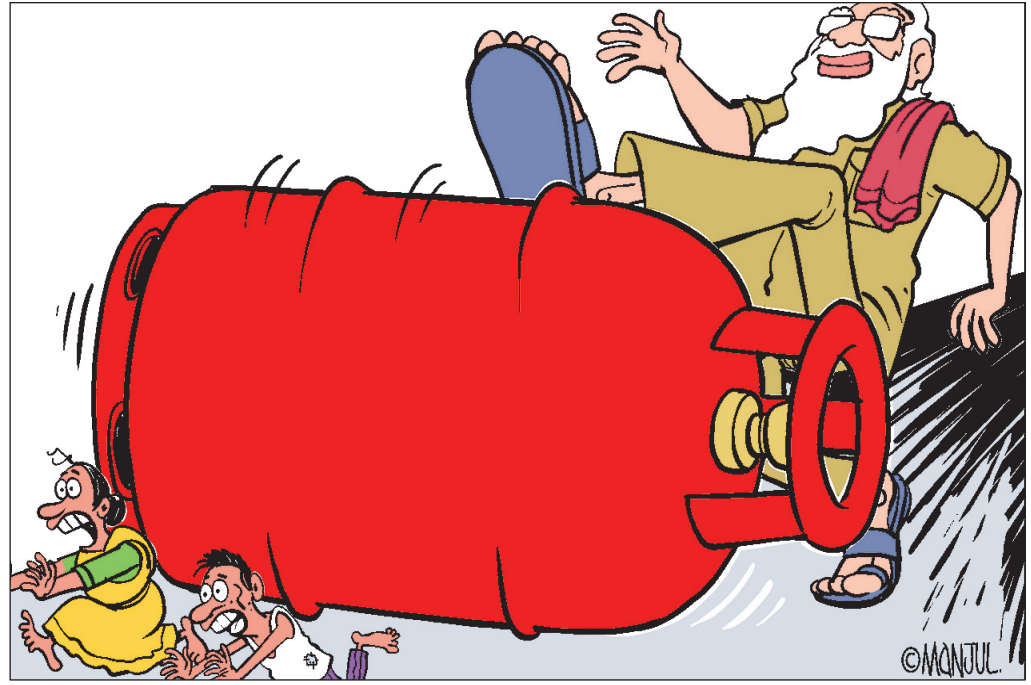
**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** As part of the 5T initiative, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Thursday, launched 22 online services of Labour and Employees State Insurance department on virtual mode.

He also inaugurated a web portal of the department. The portal and online services will be helpful especially for the Ease of Doing Business and will contribute to the overall industrial growth in the state, Naveen said.

The Chief Minister said that the portal would provide information on various labour laws, which will benefit various industries, commercial establishments, small businesses and the public.

He advised the department officials and staffers to provide the services within the stipulated time.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# Revise EPF pensions: Naveen to Centre

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has sought Union Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar's intervention in revision of minimum pension of EPF pensioners.

Supporting the demands of around 1.62 lakh Employees Provident Fund (EPF) pensioners of Odisha, Naveen, in a letter to Gangwar, said that the pensioners are facing much hardship after their retirement with a paltry monthly pension.

"Time and again these Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS)-95 Pensioners' Associations are putting forth their



The pensioners are demanding implementation of the recommendations by Petition Committee headed Rajya Sabha MP Bhagat Singh Koshyari in 2013

grievances for revision of minimum pension by the Government of India and giving their memorandum also at the state level for redressing their cause," he said.

The pensioners have been de-

manding implementation of the recommendation made by the Petition Committee under the chairmanship of Rajya Sabha MP Bhagat Singh Koshyari during 2013 for enhancement of the their monthly

pension. According to them, the issue is pending at the Government of India level for consideration, the CM mentioned.

"The grievances of these pensioners deserve sympathetic consideration at your end as they had contributed to the nation building at their prime age. And now they should be protected by the state with reasonable financial and social security. This can be ensured by re-casting their pension structure for which they have been pursuing at every level," he said.

The CM sought favourable action from the Centre in resolving the pension issue which would benefit such pensioners across the country.

## SHAWLS FOR DEITIES



A Darjee servitor stitches winter clothes for Srimandir deities in Puri, Thursday

OP PHOTO

# RUB between Titlagarh, Kesinga stations to ease traffic snarl

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** The construction of a 36-metre long road under bridge (RUB) between Titlagarh and Kesinga stations in Sambalpur has been completed, putting an end to the inconvenience faced by the locals due to the frequent closure of the level crossing on the National Highway-26.

There was a long standing demand for the RUB at Level Crossing No- RV-172.

The RUB work was completed with seven hours of traffic block for insertion of 48 pre-cast RCC twin boxes below the track. Though the work for construction of road over-bridge (ROB) was sanctioned in 2016 in lieu of LC No- RV-172 and the same was to be constructed by NHAI, the work could not be taken up due to land acquisition issues.

Hence, the state government had requested the Railways for construction of RUB and gave consent to bear the cost for the same. The estimated cost of RUB is ₹13.37



crore. The Railways took up the work on priority basis and completed the work in six months and it is well before the deadline - February 28.

The Railways finalised the tender expeditiously and completed casting of 48 box segments and 10 pre-cast retaining walls within a short span of four months in spite of Covid-19 restrictions. The traffic block was also arranged by East Coast Railway (ECoR) on priority basis and insertion of boxes below the track was completed successfully.

ECoR General Manager Vidya Bhushan said with the successful completion of above launching work, the ECoR once again reaf-

## INFRASTRUCTURE BOOST

Though the work for construction of road over-bridge (ROB) was sanctioned in 2016 in lieu of LC No- RV-172 and the same was to be constructed by NHAI, the work could not be taken up due to land acquisition issues

The Railways took up the work on priority basis and completed it before the deadline

The RUB resolved the problem being faced by locals due to frequent closure of the level crossing there

firm its commitment and dedication towards finalisation of public projects. Successful completion of the above project will go a long way in fulfilling the aspirations of the people of Kesinga as well as Kalahandi.

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY

# Honing skills can put brakes on migration: Experts

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** The agony and distress the migrant labourers underwent due to Covid-induced lockdowns could hardly be forgotten by anyone who has seen the pictures of homebound migrants walking the roads barefoot along with their families.

As per Union government data, over 60 million people had to return to their villages due to the lockdowns which affected the lives and livelihoods of migrants working in different locations. The migrants faced immense difficulties due to job loss, lack of food, shelter and other social measures.

Recently, several civil society organisations (CSOs) here jointly conducted a survey in 20 districts of Odisha to understand the situation of migrants during Covid-19 lockdowns. Debabrat Patra, associate director of Actionaid, said, "Through this survey, we observed the jobless situation and difficulties the migrants faced while returning to their homes during the lockdown and now we also observed reverse



File photo of migrants returning to their villages in Odisha in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic

migration where the migrant labours are forced to return back to other states in search of jobs."

A survey report says 70 per cent migrant labours have reported loss of livelihood, 43 per cent have been stranded for more than a month during lockdowns, 45 per cent were forced to vacate their houses and 67 per cent had to curtail their food consumption. Similarly, 58 per cent were exhausted with their savings as they could not get any livelihood opportunities. Likewise, 45 per cent

did not get their entitlements and 48 per cent did not have access to primary health-care facilities.

Patra said that better coordination between the state governments could have helped in addressing the issue of migrant labourers.

Sudarshan Chhotoray, a city-based social activist, said that the government could have tried to im-

## The lack of database of migrant labourers was a big problem during Covid-19 crisis

prove the skills of the migrant workers so that they don't have to again travel to the other states. "We have also seen that MGNREGA was not helpful in engaging a large number of labourers. The government could have used different

sectors such as textiles and MSMEs for engaging the migrant labourers."

He said that during the beginning of the lockdown more than 50 per cent of the migrant population of the state returned to their native places while the remaining 50 per cent found alternatives in Capital city.

Saroj Kumar Barik of Aide-et-action, which works for the migrant labourers' welfare, said that the state government should have created a database of the migrant population of the state working outside. The lack of database about them was a big problem during Covid-19 crisis. "The database of the labourers helps in helping them during crisis like this or natural calamities like earthquakes," he said.

The government could have implemented the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act-1979 under which the workmen or migrant workers are required to be registered with registering officers appointed under the Union or state governments, Barik added.

Chairperson of Odisha Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board, Ramesh Chandra Chyau Patnaik said that the government is trying to engage the migrant population in block levels by improving their skills. "We are also engaging them in different MSMEs so that they don't have to go to other states again," Patnaik added.

We are engaging migrant workers in different MSMEs so that they don't have to go to other states again

RAMESH CHANDRA CHYAU PATNAIK | CHAIRPERSON, ODISHA BUILDING AND OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' WELFARE BOARD

# Behera flays oppn over fuel price hike

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** BJD MLA and former finance minister of Odisha Shashi Bhushan Behera, Thursday, criticised the opposition parties on the issue of rising fuel prices in the state and talked about the share of federal taxes in the final prices of petrol and diesel.

He said that the BJD has often opposed the hike in fuel prices and questioned the central cess on the prices. "Despite the fact that we are in the government, we have protested against rise in petrol and diesel prices. We have demonstrated in the Capital city more than the

Congress party which is raising the issue now," he said.

He also added, "The Union government needs to see how the rise in fuel prices is affecting the people of the country and their overall financial health. The government needs to see how the rise in fuel prices gives benefit to the Centre and states in terms of tax collection."

He said that the cess charged by the Centre, if not changed, the Centre can blame the states over the issue. "We need to analyse how much tax goes to the Centre and how much VAT the state charges from fuel prices," he said.

## Govt seeks reports on informal sector workers

**Bhubaneswar:** The state government has directed all the District Collectors to inform it about the steps they have taken for welfare of differently-abled workers engaged in informal sectors in their areas. The communication was sent from the state Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department. The department has directed all the District Collectors to inform the office within a week about the steps taken by them with regard to the differently-abled population. The communication from the SSEPD department to the Collectors comes to the fore after the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) wrote to the states about taking special measures for the informal sector workers during Covid-19 pandemic.

**LVPEI bags Greenberg Prize**



**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) is the proud recipient of the highly prestigious 'The Greenberg Prize - End Blindness 2020'. The winners were chosen based on the strength of their contributions to eliminate blindness. Dr Gullapalli N Rao, Founder-Chair, L.V.Prasad Eye Institute received the award in the 'Outstanding Achievement Prize' category. "I feel humbled and honoured to accept this prestigious award on behalf of over 3000 members at LVPEI and its numerous supporters globally. Eliminating avoidable blindness by the year 2020 has been an aspiration of the global eye care community for over two decades," said Dr Gullapalli N Rao, Founder-Chair, LVPEI.

**DGGI warns against GST frauds**

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) Thursday urged the people of the state not to share details of their Aadhaar and Pan cards with anyone who can use information to create ghost companies for tax fraud. Speaking at a presser, Debashish Sahu, Additional Director General of DGGI, Bhubaneswar Zone, said, "I request the people not to share personal documents like PAN cards, Aadhaar cards or OTP messages in their mobile phones with any person who tempts them with monetary help and small job offers. The fraudsters have been using their documents to make fake companies and misappropriate huge amount of money through input tax credit and GST credit frauds. It will put the common people in trouble." Sahu also revealed that the fraudsters have been creating fake invoices to defraud Input tax credits



**TAX EVASION**

**D**GGI OFFICIALS HAVE DETECTED AROUND 50 CASES OF TAX FRAUDS TO THE TUNE OF OVER ₹1,100 CRORE DURING THE LAST MONTH. CONMEN HAVE BEEN CREATING FAKE INVOICES TO DEFRAUD INPUT TAX CREDITS BY SELLING GOODS AND DELIVERING SERVICES. FOLLOWING GOVERNMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS, DGGI LAUNCHED A SPECIAL DRIVE TO NAB FRAUDSTERS INVOLVED IN TAX EVASION.

**We are determined to break the crime chain soon with the help of officials of all the zones across the country. Most of the frauds were reported in Rourkela**

**DEBASHISH SAHU | ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF DGGI (BHUBANESWAR ZONE)**

the DGGI has launched a special drive to nab conmen involved in tax evasion from November 9, 2020. The DGGI officials have detected around 50 cases of tax frauds to the tune of over ₹1100 crore during the last one month. 'The fraudsters' network has spread to other parts of the state as well. "It is an unending chain which we are determined to break soon with the help of officials of all the zones across the country. We have also detected fraud commit-

ted by several big private companies in the state. Most of the frauds were reported in Rourkela area," claimed Sahu. The DGGI here detected 52 Input Tax Credit fraud cases involving ₹126 crore while the fake invoice value to the tune of 1050 crore between July 1, 2017 to November 8, 2020. However, between the last one month, the DGGI detected 56 cases involving tax fraud worth ₹141.12 crore with fake invoice worth ₹1176 crore.

**PAYING HOMAGE**



Dignitaries, including Director of I&PR department Kruprasindhu Mishra, offer floral tributes to Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanjdeo on the latter's birth anniversary at Power House Square in Bhubaneswar, Thursday. OP PHOTO

**CLASSIFIED**

**AFFIDAVIT**

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Bapali, I, Dipa Meher W/o. - Ramakanta Meher, R/o- At./P.O.- Bapali, W. No.- 1, College Chowk, Dist.- Bargarh declare that my actual name is Dipa Meher. But in Reliance Life Insurance bearing Policy No.- 14176325 my name has been wrongly mentioned as Dipmala Meher and Dipmala Dewangan. That all the names Dipa Meher, Dipmala Meher and Dipmala Dewangan belongs to one and same person.

By virtue of an affidavit before Notary Public, Kantabanji on 16.12.2020 I, Krishna Agrawal S/o. Sanjay Kumar Agrawal of Kantabanji, P.O./P.S.- Kantabanji, Dist.- Bolangir, Odisha hereby declare that the original Secondary School Examination Certificate bearing Registration No. B113/03370/0106, Roll No. 6147645 conducted by Central Board of Education, Delhi has been fully damaged by white ants while kept in a wooden box in my residential house. It can not be traced out. I have not used the said certificate for any other purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit before Executive Magistrate, Kantabanji on 16/12/2020, bearing No. 640, It is also published in the Gazette of India, New Delhi on 26th November to December 2nd 2016 bearing No. 48 Part-IV and in the Odisha Gazette (extraordinary) No. 442 Cuttack March 7th, 2019 respectively. I hereby declare that in my Educational Certificate my name, Kumuda Baikar, father's name Balakrishna Baikar and mother's name Shantilata Baikar wrongly recorded respectively but my actual name is Kumuda Meher, father's name Gopa Meher and mother's name Lalita Meher. I do hereby declare that I shall be treated known and recognized as Kumuda Meher, S/o.- Gopa Meher (Father) and Lalita Meher (Mother) for all purposes.

**Tribal museum to reopen today**

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** Odisha State Tribal Museum will reopen from Friday, said A B Ota, Director, SCSTRTI, here Thursday. He said that visitors will have to follow guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Visitors' body temperature will be checked by using thermal forehead scanner before entering the museum campus. Anybody with temperature above the normal body temperature will not be allowed entry to the museum. Visitors without masks too will be denied entry.

Visitors need to maintain a space of at least 10 feet from each other while visiting the museum. They need to sanitise their hands at the entry point of the museum complex. Visitors are not allowed to touch any show-case, Touch Screen Kiosk, VR Head Set and artifacts displayed in the galleries and tribal huts. They are only allowed to view the exhibits and read the write ups in the display show-case. No visitor above the age of 65 and below the age of 14 will be allowed. The museum will remain open from 10 AM to 5.30 PM from Monday to Friday in the week till further orders.

**SC & ST welfare programmes launched**

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** A launching ceremony of various initiatives of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste (ST&SC) Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department for ensuring quality Education to students studying in SSD residential schools was held here Thursday. Suresh Ch. Mohapatra, Development Commissioner-cum-ACS graced the occasion as chief guest and all PA ITDAs and DWOs participated in the launching ceremony which was conducted via virtual mode. Mohapatra released a special issue 'ADIVASI', a research journal of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research & Training Institute (SCSTRTI) with an article titled 'Impact of Pandemics on Tribal Culture of Odisha with special reference to COVID-19'. This was followed by the release of the department's quarterly news letter "The Voice" developed for showcasing the best governance practices and also to provide an opportunity to those inhabiting at the bottom to be heard. In addition to the above, a MoU with People for Action (PFA) was signed to collaborate with the department in bridging the learning gaps in Odia, English, Maths and Science through accelerated learning enhancement programme and Teachers Professional Development through capacity building programmes. Further, to provide innovative digital learning solutions for all Std X students studying in SSD Schools in the state such as video lessons, online practice assessments and unit tests, an MOU with Avedi Learning Pvt. Ltd was signed. Finally, an MOU with PFEL was signed to support and identify key interventions for strengthening District and Block units of SSD Department, improve quality education and living standards in SSD schools and hostels and for designing and running a government fellowship programme was also signed. Ranjana Chopra, Principal Secretary, ST & SC Development Department too graced the event.

**Electrocution death: Farmer's kin to get ₹2L compensation**

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** The National Human Rights Commission directed the state government to pay ₹2 lakh as compensation to the relatives of a farmer who died due to electrocution in 2018. The chief secretary of the state has been asked to pay the above sum within four weeks and submit a compliance report to the Commission. The NHRC delivered the above order while hearing a plea filed by one human rights activist, Dillip Kumar Das. The deceased identified as Panu Charan Bhatta of Siharpur village in Nayagarh district on the way to his paddy field came into contact with a high voltage live wire hanging very low over his farmland August 1, 2018. Bhatta was rushed to the nearby medical where the doctors declared him brought dead.

**UP FOR SALE**



Youths from Madhya Pradesh put up clay pots for sale near Nayapalli Durga Puja mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday. OP PHOTO

**Man gets 20-yr RI for raping minor**

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Cuttack, Dec 17:** The Additional District Judge-cum-Special Judge under POCSO Act Thursday awarded 20 years of rigorous imprisonment to a person from Keonjhar district after convicting him in the rape of a minor girl in the city here in 2015. Judge Bandana Kar also imposed a penalty of ₹10,000 on convict Ram Munda of Keonjhar Sadar area. Non-payment of the penalty would invite one-year additional imprisonment, said the court.

As per court proceedings, Munda was working as a daily wager in CDA area of Cuttack city. He had raped a seven-year-old girl of the locality in the absence of her parents March 14, 2015. Markatnagar police had registered a case in this regard after receiving a complaint in this regard from the victim's family. Later, the case was transferred to Mahila police station. Munda was convicted under Section 376 (2) (I) of the IPC, said advocate Ramesh Mohanty who pleaded the case on behalf of the victim.

**Zumba fever hits Capital city again**

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** Zumba, a combination of dance and exercise, has taken the fitness world by storm. With followers in nearly 200 countries, Zumba has found fans even in the section of people who hate gym sessions. Zumba has become one of the most popular forms of workouts due to the easy-to-follow choreography, fun and upbeat rhythms. To promote Zumba fitness programs in the twin city, a Zumba master class and workshop was organised by Odisha Zumba Team of Bhubaneswar here Thursday. This was organised to spread awareness among people about Zumba fitness. More than 50 fitness enthusiasts participated in the programme. Programme coordinator Saroj Das said, "Zumba is a perfect form and mixture of exercise and dance routine. It is carefully designed to work on every part of the body. Naturally, it puts a little extra strain on the body while the dance elements in Zumba relaxes both the body and the mind." Das said that the Zumba session can be done in your own house. "During Covid 19 lockdown, people are doing classes virtually. Now, with the gradual unlocking, we have started live classes with Covid guidelines. We are not allowing more than 15 participants in one group. Also, the participants have to wear masks during the class." The Zumba classes were conducted by Zumba specialists



The Zumba class in progress at Bhubaneswar, Thursday. OP PHOTO

**STATE REGISTERED 351 NEW COVID CASES, 5 FATALITIES**

**PANN & AGENCIES**  
**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** State Thursday added 351 new cases to its Covid-19 caseload, raising Odisha's tally to 3,25,147, while five fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 1,825, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said. Of the 351 cases, 203 were reported from various quarantine centres, and 148 detected during contact tracing. Three districts—Gajapati, Rayagada and Kandhamal—did not report any case since Wednesday. Khurda, of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the maximum number of new cases at 52, followed by Sundargarh at 47 and Angul at 41. Taking to Twitter, the H&FW department said, "Regret to inform about the demise of five Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals." Two fatalities were registered in Sundargarh and one each in Balasore, Jagatsinghpur and Puri. The coastal state's positivity rate stands at five per cent. Over 65.02 lakh samples have been examined in the state including 33,494 Wednesday. Meanwhile, another 376 Covid patients recovered in Odisha, taking the total recoveries in the coastal state to 3,20,584, the H&FW department tweeted. The recovered cases include 50 from Khurda, 48 from Angul, 43 from Sundargarh, 23 from Balasore, 23 from Cuttack and 22 from Puri, the department added.

**PANDEMIC SCOURGE**



**K**hurda recorded the maximum number of new cases at 52, followed by Sundargarh at 47 and Angul at 41. Two fatalities were registered in Sundargarh and one each in Balasore, Jagatsinghpur and Puri. Odisha's positivity rate stands at five per cent. Over 65.02 lakh samples have been examined in the state including 33,494 Wednesday.

**Puri admin to issue tokens for darshan**

**Puri:** The district administration is likely to issue tokens to the residents of the Holy City here for visiting Srimandir. The locals would be allowed to have darshan of Srimandir deities from December 23 to 31. "Srimandir is likely to be reopened December 23. The people of Puri city would be allowed to visit the shrine in phases till December 31. The temple would remain closed January 1 and 2. The shrine would be kept open for all from January 3," said a source in the district administration. It is learnt that the administration would open special counters at Jagannath Ballav mutt to issue tokens to the residents of all 32 wards in Puri city. The locals would collect the tokens by producing their valid identity cards, said an official of the district administration.

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

- Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-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-7978646869, 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-Jugd Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Nagar-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-Cookiemann-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.



FOCUS INDIA & THE UK

# GROWING PARTNERSHIP



**A study conducted by the British Council in 2015, concluded that India is going to be a powerful country in the coming years. It advised the British government to pay special attention to India as a growing power. India was the fourth largest economy in terms of purchasing power**

standing and trust. The cultural awareness and affinity support the economic and diplomatic ties. Sadly, the study suggested that, there is no adequate understanding of India amongst the youth in the UK.

The suggestion from the British Council pointed towards creation of a UK-India young leaders/next generation forum for young people between the age of 15 and 35, who will potentially be leaders of 2050. This will strengthen cultural and educational collaboration between the two countries to improve mutual understanding and underpinning of economic and strategic engagement benefitting both the countries in terms of influences, security and prosperity.

Despite deep historical links in politics, education, institution building and even trade and economics, the relations between New Delhi and London have not been very strong. The colonial hangover caused by complex British legacies burdens the relationship.

The problems are basically two. On India's part, New Delhi is reluctant to plunge into a relationship mainly with western countries. Take for instance, the free trade agreement. Britain has been apparently keen on it to offset the damage from its exit from the EU. But New Delhi is reluctant to sign a free trade agreement.

To conclude India-UK partnership hinges on four factors. One, India must shed its inhibition in forging partnership with western powers, a diplomatic legacy from the days of Nehru. Second, both the UK and India should be watching US-China strategic competition. Third, both countries should measure and cope with the impact of the pandemic. Fourth, Britain should assess and adjust the negative consequences of breaking away from the EU. While we hold our horses on India-UK partnership, it is desirable and mutually beneficial for the partnership to grow. One hopes that leadership in India and UK are conscious of this need as the people are.

*The writer teaches International Relations at JIMMC.*

The United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson will be the Chief Guest on the Republic Day next month. His presence on the occasion signifies the deepening of partnership between India and the UK in a post-Brexit and a post-pandemic world. Johnson will be the second British Prime Minister to attend the Republic Day parade after former Prime Minister John Major in 1993. This would be the British PM's first bilateral visit taking office. India attaches great importance in terms of protocol and recognition of relationship when it invites a foreign head of government on this particular day.

In the run-up to Johnson being the chief guest there have been attempts at scoping the partnership between the two countries. Prime Minister Modi after the virtual meeting with his British counterpart November 26 said, "We agreed to work towards a quantum leap in our cooperation in all areas - trade and investment, defence and security, climate change and fighting Covid". Adding a personal touch, which is the new diplomatic style of our Prime Minister Modi said, "I met my friend Boris Johnson, had fruitful talks on issues of mutual interest and invited him to be the chief guest on the Republic Day".

On his part, Johnson said, "I am absolutely delighted to be visiting India next year and look forward to delivering the quantum leap in our bilateral relationship that Prime Minister Modi and I have pledged to achieve. As a key player in the Indo-Pacific region, India is an increasingly indispensable partner for the UK as we work to boost jobs and growth, confront shared threats to our security and protect our planet". Note the emphasis on India-Pacific.

Arguably, the Indo-Pacific tilt in the UK foreign policy will view India as a crucial strategic partner. The UK will most likely align with India in its outlook towards China. Like other western powers, London is also wary of Chinese expansionism and aggressive foreign economic policy. A significant decision taken by the UK in this re-

gard is the deployment of HMS Queen Elizabeth career group in the Indo-Pacific region. This is, in part, response to increasing Chinese dominance in the area.

India and the UK is about to sign a joint military logistic agreement like New Delhi has done with Australia, Japan and the US. This would mean sharing of services including fuel and facilities, more joint frequent exercises and smoother port calls.

Let us recall that India has been 'jewel in the British crown' during the colonial times. After decolonisation, India was debating whether to be a part of Commonwealth consisting of British colonies. After quite a bit of reflection, New Delhi, quite correctly, under the Cambridge-educated Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided to stay in the Commonwealth. The argument was that Commonwealth will open up the window for New Delhi to the world. Britain gradually declined in its influence, resulting in the dilution of the Commonwealth. At the same time, Britain joined the European Union in 1973 after vetoed by the French President, Charles De Gaulle.

*Dr DK Giri*  
**ARGUABLY, THE INDO-PACIFIC TILT IN THE UK FOREIGN POLICY WILL VIEW INDIA AS A CRUCIAL STRATEGIC PARTNER. THE UK WILL MOST LIKELY ALIGN WITH INDIA IN ITS OUTLOOK TOWARDS CHINA**

But few are those who tread the sunlit path; only the pure in soul can walk in light.  
**SRI AUROBINDO**



## Next Frontier of Responsible Business

The Covid-19 crisis has revealed how intertwined all of our major challenges are. Biodiversity loss and rising inequalities have contributed to a global public health disaster and the worst economic crisis in almost a century.

As often happens during such moments, people are suddenly open to changes that they previously would have rejected out of hand. For example, there is a major shift underway in the corporate world, where many managers and investors are eager to adopt more sustainable and responsible practices and business models.

The task now is to ensure that this new mindset itself goes viral. How can we ensure that all businesses are getting on the right page, given that they will remain beholden to the demands and interests of shareholders and investors? One obvious answer is through Environmental, Social, and Governance standards. But ESG offers only a partial solution. Precisely because this field is now booming, it has become crowded and confusing, leading to complaints about "sustainability reporting fatigue."

Fortunately, there has been some consolidation recently, with major ESG standard-setters such as the Global Reporting Initiative and the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board announcing that they will work together. Their goal is not to create a single standard, but rather to "help stakeholders better understand how the standards may be used concurrently."

Similarly, in the interest of clarity, comparability, and consistency, the World Economic Forum's International Business Council recently issued "Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics" that aim to accelerate convergence among the leading private standard-setters. And the European Union has launched a review of its non-financial reporting directive, which requires large companies to disclose information on how they operate and manage social and environmental challenges.

This is all well and good. The ESG financing sector is growing quickly and will likely continue to expand, now that companies with reputations for ethical, sustainable practices are proving to be more resilient during the Covid-19 crisis. But this progress could be derailed if investors cannot easily compare one set of corporate ESG disclosures with another.

What we need, then, is a set of truly global ESG standards with clear, harmonized metrics and disclosure rules. This doesn't mean there needs to be only one set of standards. Some reporting standards will give more information than others; some will focus on topics that are important for enterprise value creation; and some will emphasize a company's impact on the world around it. There would still be different approaches to ESG reporting, but all would rest on the same foundation.

Moreover, clear ESG reporting is only one part of the puzzle. Businesses also will need to complement ESG-based risk disclosures with metrics for assessing their impact on the environment and society, reporting both negative and positive externalities. Put another way, we must move from a culture of declarations and stated intentions to one of real-world results, based on impact assessments.

Measuring a company's wider impact is the first step toward proper corporate accounting. Going beyond immediate output, such metrics focus on broader outcomes stemming from a company's behavior. This type of framework encourages corporate leaders to integrate impact objectives into their core strategies, thus accelerating the shift in capital toward responsible investments. It also makes it easier for governments to fine-tune policies affecting corporate activities.

Impact accounting is the best way to create the kind of level playing field that stakeholder capitalism requires. It formally recognizes the value of decisions motivated by climate and biodiversity concerns. It accounts for employment issues such as wage equality, benefits, career advancement, and occupational health and safety. It encourages companies to promote sustainable practices throughout their supply chains, which can yield returns by making them more resilient against sudden shocks. And, last but not least, easy-to-understand impact metrics are the key to building trust with customers, local communities, and all other stakeholders.

Of course, not all companies will have a positive impact on the world. In some industries, impact measurements will be consistently negative. The point is to draw a line between companies that are truly committed to maximizing their net positive impact, and those that are merely greenwashing. When more companies are offering rigorous, verified, transparent impact data to investors who are responding to client demands for responsible investments, capital flows will adjust accordingly, delivering positive knock-on effects far down the line.

A final question is whether impact accounting can function as a complement to financial accounting. After all, measurements of impact are complex, and seem to rest on assumptions that can easily be challenged. Nonetheless, as John Maynard Keynes observed, "It is better to be roughly right than precisely wrong." Besides, it is not as though today's long-established financial accounting methods are perfect. They, too, are merely estimating underlying economic realities. We should not shy away from pursuing the same kind of solid approximation when it comes to measuring a company's social and environmental impact.

Since efforts to measure and monetize impact began with a small set of simple metrics developed by the OECD (based on the work of the Business for Well-Being Initiative), more advanced frameworks have emerged and will continue to evolve and expand. With robust impact accounting of direct operations, supply chains, and environmental and social assessments of goods and services in place, governments will be able to craft policies to encourage responsible behavior and increase the costs of negative externalities such as greenhouse-gas emissions.

The stakes are high, and governments and businesses must come together to take impact accounting mainstream. A global roadmap could cover key issues such as transparency and disclosure rules, in turn enabling faster progress toward common metrics and a shared methodology that could align the interests of corporations, investors, and governments around addressing the major challenges of our time. A new frontier of responsible business awaits.

*Bertrand Badré is CEO and Founder of Blue like an Orange Sustainable Capital and the author of 'Can Finance Save the World'. Camille Putois is CEO of Business for Inclusive Growth.*

### WISDOM CORNER

You've gotta dance like there's nobody watching, love like you'll never be hurt, sing like there's nobody listening, and live like it's heaven on earth.  
**WILLIAM W. PURKEY**

Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.  
**NEIL GAIMAN**

When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.  
**HELEN KELLER**

*Bertrand Badré & Camille Putois*

**The Covid-19 crisis has revealed how intertwined all of our major challenges are. Biodiversity loss and rising inequalities have contributed to a global public health disaster and the worst economic crisis in almost a century**

### SPECTRUM AGRICULTURE

## Why are farmers on the streets?



*Gokul Patnaik*

**CONTRACT FARMING ACTS AS A FORM OF PRICE ASSURANCE AND FARMERS WILL HAVE INCOME SECURITY DUE TO PARTNERSHIP WITH INDUSTRY. THEN WHY ARE THE FARMERS UNHAPPY?**

The government has said that the new farm laws are a 'game changer' and has promised the farmers freedom, protection, and higher income. They have assured that the farmers can now sell their produce to anyone anywhere. APMC mandis will continue to function and will not be closed. Contract farming acts as a form of price assurance and farmers will have income security due to partnership with industry. Then why are the farmers unhappy?

The root cause is a growing distrust of the farmers with assurances given by the government as well as some glaring lacunae in the hurriedly enacted laws. Before coming into power, the 2014 manifesto of the ruling party had promised implementation of the 2006 report of the National Commission of Farmers headed by Dr MS Swaminathan, which had recommended that the MSP should be at least 50 per cent more than the weighted average cost of production. The non-implementation of this recommendation was a long-standing grievance of the farming community and the meagre 2.6 per cent increase in MSP for Rabi wheat added fuel to the fire. The Modi government had also grandiosely

announced in 2017 to double farmers' income in 5 years by 2022. After three years, it seems like a pipedream. The farmers also fear that the path of so called 'market reforms' on which the government has embarked, will inevitably lead to pruning down of PDS system and revisiting of MSP policy as recommended by the Shanta Kumar Committee. Although the government has repeatedly assured that MSP will stay, farmers now demand it to be written into a law. In fact in 2011, when Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat, a committee headed by him had recommended that MSP should be a legal right. It is to be noted that none of the new farm laws makes any mention of MSP.

The distrust also arises from the manner these laws were promulgated - in a hurry and almost by stealth. Moreover, agriculture is a State subject, and the states were not consulted while bringing in these momentous reforms. Is this cooperative federalism?

The drafting of the laws themselves leave huge gaps which would result in faulty implementation. The basic function of a market is to facilitate buying and selling of agricultural commodities. It should provide transparent price discovery

system, preferably by open auction, good weighing mechanism and ensure certainty of payment. By complete deregulation, the government loses all control over orderly functioning of the market. Free-for-all may degenerate into chaos and uncertainty and may deter legitimate buyers from the market.

Regulated markets also play an important role in collecting price information and market intelligence. The prices prevailing in the APMC markets provide useful benchmark even to private buyers and sellers transacting business outside. Multitude of disaggregated markets operating independently will not be able to provide any signals. Moreover, if forming a single unified national market is the goal, the recent farm laws do nothing to achieve it.

It is said that the monopoly of a few cartels of traders in the APMC mandis keep the prices artificially low. In the absence of any regulation, the cartels within the mandi can efficiently reorganise outside the mandi to escape regulation and detection. Farmers fear that this may happen in a bigger scale and a few big businesses may dominate and capture the national market. They fear that the reforms are

a deliberate plot to help big corporate houses.

It has been alleged that the current agitation is mainly by Punjab and Haryana farmers who have benefitted the most from MSP. Big farmers and commission agents are accused of fuelling the agitation. Though initially it was fronted by Punjab farmers, the agitation has now received wide scale support of farmers from all over the country. It is not surprising that Opposition parties have joined in. Akali Dal and BJD, which had initially supported the new laws, withdrew their support after they read the fine print and realised that their implementation in the present form would not be in the interest of the farmers. The Government of India has also relented and is willing to concede to many of the demands of the farmers, including a written assurance on MSP. But farmers insist on a repeal of all the three laws. We wait to see who will blink first.

*To be continued.*

*The writer is a retired IAS officer and former Chairman, Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).*

### Minor riders & road mishaps

Sir, Regional Transport Office-I imposed a fine of ₹25,000 against the owner of a two-wheeler for allowing a minor boy to ride his vehicle. This was done only to ensure reduction in the involvement and fatalities of minors in road accidents. In India a large number of minor riders are die due to helmetless driving, including pillion riding, motorbike stunts and illegal street races. Statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau shows that almost 43 children die in road accidents across the country each day and the children below the age of 18 years who die in road accidents make up 10.5 per cent of all fatalities. In my point of view, in this case the parents must be arrested for letting the minors ride without driving license. Parents must hold accountability for underage driving. Parents who are the vehicle owners should be sensitized and penalised in case of violation for better outcome. Underage driving is dangerous for the minor as well as the people on the road. Adventurous teenagers want to feel the thrill associated with driving a bike or a car, but parents must step in and tell them to follow the law of the land and think of their safety and well being.

*Hitesh Kumar Parida, JAJPUR*

### Pitching for free trade

Sir, The world has been facing a lot of business and trade challenges from time immemorial. The Covid-19 pandemic has added to the trade issues across the globe. However, continents like Asia, America and Europe have started taking steps to reconcile the current situation. Intercontinental business/trade activities are the need of the hour in the current context. Economically speaking, the current business statements from the Asian region have been pretty encouraging. Sincere efforts and mutual business cooperation are badly needed to expand the potential trade platforms like APEC-Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) aims to encourage regional business activities through free trade. Free trade has been deemed to be the best way out of economic slump in contrast to the trade war intended to harm other countries. Plus, the idea of protectionism will never go down well with the people and countries. Getting down to free trade is the way forward and well ahead. Countries from the East and the West should come forward to strengthen the global economic status through bold business steps like multilateral negotiations and trans-boundary free trade.

*P Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI*

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



# Crackdown on colleges sitting on certificates

AGENCIES

**Amaravati, Dec 17:** The Andhra Pradesh government set the ball rolling Wednesday to crackdown on corporate intermediate colleges for criminally sitting on the certificates of the students, demanding fees.

Wednesday, B. Rajsekhar, Principal Secretary, School Education Department, wrote to Director General of Police (DGP) Gautam Sawang to initiate action against such colleges.

"In this regard, the DGP, Vijayawada, has been requested to instruct the authorities concerned to initiate necessary action against the principals/managements of junior colleges who are withholding/possessing SSC (10th standard) certificates of students illegally and not issuing transfer certificates (TC)," wrote Rajsekhar.

The Principal Secretary highlighted that some junior college managements are not returning the students' SSC certificates, intermediate pass certificates and TCs for want of tuition fees and other frivolous reasons.

"The complaints against college managements by the students include insisting for payment of additional amount, committed due amount and fees for online classes etc. for issuing the said certificates," he said. This unnecessary delay in procuring certificates is causing much heartburn among the students and their families as they are unable to go ahead with their preparations for higher studies.



"Many students who got admissions in IITs have complained to me that the colleges are sitting on their certificates, impairing their future plans," V. Ramakrishna, Secretary, Board of Intermediate Education (BIE), told IANS.

Rajsekhar reminded that the BIE had barred the colleges from withholding certificates in July itself as many college managements resort to this criminal activity regularly, terrorising students.

Already, the BIE has obviated the need for intermediate colleges to physically verify a student's 10th standard certificate and other documents, a much abused procedure to gain complete domination over the students.

"In the name of verifying certificates, they (college managements) are holding back the certificates if they (students) don't pay tuition fees and for other kinds of reasons," Ramakrishna had said earlier. In his appeal to the DGP, he also attached some complaints received from the students and their parents for reference.

**Many students who got admissions in IITs have complained to me that the colleges are sitting on their certificates, impairing their future plans**

V RAMAKRISHNA | SECRETARY, BOARD OF INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION

**.....the DGP, Vijayawada, has been requested to instruct the authorities concerned to initiate necessary action against the principals/managements of junior colleges who are withholding/possessing SSC (10th standard) certificates of students illegally and not issuing transfer certificates**

B RAJSEKHAR | PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, SCHOOL EDUCATION DEPT

The Andhra Pradesh government is reforming the two-year intermediate course subjected to decades of free-for-all exploitation, abuse and commercial enterprise. In a state like Andhra Pradesh, where an average family places a high premium on education at any cost, some enterprising individuals smelled a business opportunity and started intermediate colleges in the past four decades, which grew into formidable corporate players in the due course of time.

Over the years, several junior colleges erected makeshift sheds without libraries, playgrounds, proper facilities and crammed the students to call them intermediate colleges. It is exactly this abuse of the system which Ramakrishna is aiming to shatter for the good of lakhs of students.

Introducing online admissions, obviating the need for a principal to endorse examination hall tickets, displaying 25 pictures of colleges on the BIE website, abolishing mind-numbing advertisements are some

of the much-needed reforms that have been initiated.

Asbestos sheds as classrooms, premises sans fire safety certificates, admission hunting, compelling teaching staff to market colleges, overcrowded classrooms and other transgressions will be a thing of the past if the government manages to succeed with its reforms. From kindergarten to post-graduate courses, education in the southern state is highly commercialised, flouting several rules along the way.

# AMARAVATI PROTESTS TURN 1

# EX-TDP MLA LENDS SUPPORT FROM US

AGENCIES

**Amaravati, Dec 17:** Thursday, the protests against the trifurcation of Amaravati turned a year old with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leaders and its national president N Chandrababu Naidu, commemorating the struggle for one capital. On the very day, Bonda Umamaheswara Rao, an ex-TDP MLA from the Vijayawada Central constituency, lent his support to the cause from the US.

"Snow storms, floods, heat waves, nothing can stop our righteous fight for dream capital Amaravati. We will fight till our last drop of blood," claimed Rao.

He also shared a video in which he and a bunch of NRI Amravati supporters echoed with the local protesters at Amaravati from continents away. "We don't want three capitals, Amaravati is better," Rao said as others raised slogans from Washington amid incessant snowfall. The NRI protesters braved heavy snow to demonstrate with posters and placards which read 'One State, One Capital', 'Our Amaravati, Our Capital', and 'Let us raise our voice for our capital', among others.

**Amaravati is 'Capital of Gods'**



**AMARAVATI:** Telugu Desam Party (TDP) supremo N Chandrababu Naidu called Amaravati the 'Capital of the Gods' Thursday. "Prayed to Goddess Durga for her blessings on behalf of the five crore people of Andhra Pradesh," said Naidu.

Before proceeding to the pro-Amaravati Jana Bheri public meeting, he visited the Kanaka Durga temple atop the Indrakeeladri Hills in Vijayawada. Naidu expressed confidence that truth, justice and righteousness would prevail over alleged injustice, falsehood and atrocities. The former chief minister wished for Goddess Durga's protective cover even as the alleged 'evil forces are bent on crushing the Capital of Gods.' He prayed that Amaravati will remain the sole

capital city of AP. "So many hurdles and humiliations were handed over to the agitators and farmers who have been struggling and fighting for 'One Capital' for the past one year," he said. He claimed that the anti-people forces were so adamant and arrogant that they were obstructing even those coming for 'Darshan' of the deity. The TDP supremo said that there would always be blessings for Amaravati as it was begun with the noble purpose of building a people's capital for the state.

Later, Naidu visited Uddandarayanipalem where the foundation for the capital was laid. He prostrated at the site where soils from more than 100 holy temples were brought for the foundation.

# Is BJP really making inroads into Kerala

**KERALA CIVIC BODY POLLS BRING CHEERS AND TEARS FOR BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**



AGENCIES

**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 17:** The BJP in Kerala has braved many odds to make its presence felt in the state's bipolar politics, dominated for decades by the traditional coalitions-CPI (M)-led LDF and Congress-headed UDF.

But, once again the Saffron party has failed to create magic in electoral politics in the southern state as it could not perform according to its expectations when the counting for the crucial local body polls was taken up Wednesday.

Though compared to the 2015 civic body polls the BJP-NDA improved its tally and added more number of seats to its credit, they could not display a stellar performance as they claimed during the time of campaigning.

The failure of some of its major leaders and the loss of many sitting seats also took the sheen off their performance at the local body polls, which was generally considered a pointer to the Assembly elections due next year.

According to party sources, the Saffron party managed to win seats between 1600 and 1800 in the present civic polls though the Election Commission was yet to release the official figures of the total seats and vote share.

They could also reach second position in over 500 wards besides retaining the Palakkad municipality and wresting the Pandalam municipality from the LDF.

But, their target to garner 2500-3000 seats and capture the prestigious Thiruvananthapuram and Thrissur Corporations remained a distant dream.

Throughout the high-voltage campaign, the party leadership had claimed that they would capture the Corporation in the state capital and there would be a BJP mayor to welcome Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the airport when he arrives here next time.

Not only that the long-drawn dream did shatter but also they had to see the ruling front achieving simple majority in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation

Party sources say it managed to win seats between 1,600 and 1,800 in the present civic polls though the EC was yet to release the official figures of the total seats and vote share

They could also reach second position in over 500 wards besides retaining the Palakkad municipality and wresting the Pandalam municipality from the LDF

But, their target to garner 2,500-3,000 seats and capture the prestigious Thiruvananthapuram and Thrissur Corporations remained a distant dream

by improving their performance compared to the previous time.

Though they could successfully make inroads in many parts of the state, once dominated by either LDF or UDF, the Saffron front was yet to gain the trust or confidence of the minority communities completely in the state.

Their striking performance in Varkala and Attingal and in many wards of Pathanamthitta and Kottayam districts shocked even their political rivals.

They could also make their performance felt in almost all Corporations including in politically volatile Kannur, a left bastion.

Though the party leadership accused both the traditional coalitions of cross voting to fail them in many wards, political observers feel that factional feud and disunity among the leaders were also among the reasons for its failure.

The rift between BJP state president K Surendran, a close confidant of union minister V Muraleedharan and senior leader and party state vice president Sobha Surendran was very much evident ahead of the election. A group of dissident leaders including Sobha had reportedly sent a mass petition to the central leadership against the state leadership demanding to end neglect towards them.

Sobha, who used to be a fire-brand campaigner of BJP during elections, had kept herself away from campaigning this time.

# Rift in UDF out in open after setback in Kerala civic poll

AGENCIES

**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 17:** The rift in the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) came out in the open a day after it faced a major setback in the local body polls in Kerala despite performing well in the Lok Sabha elections last year.

Posters appeared in the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) office here, seeking to dissolve the district Congress committee. Also, boards were erected in Kozhikode district by Congress sympathisers criticising the party's state leadership.

Though the State Election Commission (SEC) is expected to announce the final results only by Thursday evening, the latest trends issued by the poll body shows that the UDF was leading in 375 Gram panchayats, 44 block panchayats, 45 municipalities and three district panchayats. The three-phase polling, conducted as per strict COVID-19 protocols, was held in a total of 21,893 wards in 1,200 local self governing bodies—including six corporations, 941 village panchayats, 14 district panchayats and 87 municipalities December 8, 10 and 14. The counting was taken up Wednesday.

Senior leaders including former union minister P J Kurien, Vadakara MP K Muraleedharan and

Kasaragod MP Rajmohan Unnithan, hit out against the party leadership headed by Mullappally Ramachandran and said the organizational set-up of the Congress party was weak.

"It's not right to say that our party lost its base in the state. But it seems like when our political rivals are expanding their voter base, we were unable to do so. That seems like the reason behind our defeat," Unnithan told the media.

**SENIOR CONGRESS MP K SUDHAKARAN ALSO LASHED OUT AT THE STATE CONGRESS LEADERSHIP**



Senior Congress MP K Sudhakaran also lashed out at the state Congress leadership and said democracy needs to be reinstated in the party.

"We need to reinstate democracy inside the party. The party should bring in leaders who can instill confidence in the minds of party workers and the civil society. Then we can save the party," Sudhakaran told the media.

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), a major ally of the UDF, had Wednesday itself said that the Congress and the Front had to introspect the matters that led to the debacle. "There are many things which the UDF needs to introspect with regard to the various political changes in the state," IUML leader P K Kunhalikutty told the media Thursday.

# Temples 'were demolished' under BJP-TDP govt

AGENCIES

**Amaravati, Dec 17:** Andhra Pradesh Endowments Minister Vellampalli Srinivas assailed state BJP leadership that temples were demolished and their lands sold away during the TDP and BJP government.

"I question Somu Veeraju if they were not the culprits in demolishing temples. Where did Veeraju sit that time? Why didn't Veeraju talk that time," questioned Srinivas.

Srinivas reminded that he was in BJP when temples were being demolished and he rushed back to Vijayawada from Bhimavaram to declare strike.

Though he wanted to protest against the then government, Srinivas said BJP did not endorse his strike back then.

Srinivas was referring to the demolitions carried out during the erstwhile TDP government.

"When I wanted to protest the temple demolitions, BJP gave a statement that it was my personal interest and not from the party," he said.

He criticised the BJP leadership

for changing colours after losing power. The minister said the BJP is creating an issue about those temples demolished in TDP regime because the state government has issued an order on Wednesday to rebuild some of them.

"Veeraju is doing these dramatic protests because YSRCP will get a good name by rebuilding some of those temples," he said.

Srinivas said the government decided to rebuild back in October itself but gave the order Wednesday. He criticised BJP for politicising even the rebuilding of temples and playing a political game.

Srinivas reminded that when a BJP endowments ministers, Pydikondala Manikyala Rao, was in power, the state government sold away Durga temple lands to a college very cheaply.

He said 14 acres of land worth more than Rs 400 crore was sold away to a college which is known for its profiteering nature.

The minister also recalled that Rao had also allowed the sale of 200 acres of land belonging to Mantralayam temple which went unquestioned by BJP leader Vishu Vardhan Reddy back then.



"In Visakhapatnam Rushikonda beach, Rao renewed permission to a resort. Will anybody give endowments lands to a resort where alcohol is served," he said.

In YSRCP government, Srinivas claimed not even a single square foot of temple lands were sold. "They did injustices and now trying to malign the government as anti-Hindu. Isn't this wrong? Isn't this changing votes every time for the sake of politics?" he posed.

He said the government is working for the upkeep of all the temples and reminded that Rs 70 crore was

sanctioned to develop the Durga temple in Vijayawada. "You say money is being given to churches and dargahs but can't you see the money given to Durga temple," he said. Srinivas said that BJP is playing all these tricks because of the forthcoming yet to be declared Tirupati Parliamentary by-election.

As somebody who worked in BJP, the minister said he knows who is what in that party and their capacities, while asserting that the 'Jai Shree Ram' slogan is not owned by the BJP. "When I wanted to

Andhra Endowments Minister says when a BJP endowments minister, Pydikondala Manikyala Rao, was in power, the state govt sold away Durga temple lands to a college at a throwaway price

protest temple demolition, no BJP leader came to my support. That's why I left BJP despite being an incumbent party back then. I came out because of you inefficiency and collusion with TDP," said Srinivas.

He reminded that Veeraju did not cooperate when he wanted to highlight a gaushala (cow shelter) destruction which is now being developed with Rs 70 lakh in this government.

"We are not the people who removed the shelter for cows, we shelter cows," he claimed. Srinivas questioned Veeraju if he should resign because he was developing goshalas or because he was restoring temple lands.





**The 90 lakh private security guards in the country will have a big role to play in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine**  
G KISHAN REDDY | UNION MINISTER

### WINTER CHILL

Northern states like Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh will continue to witness the blast of the winter chill for the next two days, the IMD said Thursday



### of the day quote

TMC is a big party. The party's fate does not depend on one or two persons. Is it possible? See the large number of people who turn out at the meetings of Mamata Banerjee



SUBRATA MUKHERJEE | TMC LEADER

Few farmers are backing the protests at Delhi borders against the new farm laws, and "anti-nationalists" have infiltrated the agitation



NITIN PATEL | GUJARAT DEPUTY CM

The Bombay High Court's decision to stay construction of the Metro car shed in Kanjurmargin is "unfortunate." The project is a matter of development of Mumbai and Maharashtra



SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA MP

## India, Bangladesh ink 7 pacts

Recognising that terrorism remains a threat to global peace and security, the two Prime Ministers reiterated their strong commitment to eliminate it in all its forms and manifestations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: Bangladesh is a "key pillar" of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday during a summit with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina, who called India a "true friend", as the two sides inked seven pacts to further broadbase cooperation in varied sectors, and restored a cross-border rail link, snapped during the 1965 India-Pakistan war.

During the summit, held virtually the two leaders deliberated on a range of issues including, threat of terrorism, challenges posed by coronavirus pandemic, management of Indo-Bangla border, regional connectivity, ways to boost trade and energy ties as well as matters relating to the displaced people from the Rakhine State of Myanmar.

"It has been a challenging year due to the epidemic. But it is a matter of satisfaction that India and Bangladesh had good cooperation in this difficult time. We are also having good cooperation in the field of vaccines. We will also take special care of your needs in this regard," Modi told Hasina.

Describing India as a "true friend", Hasina said both countries could play a significant role in the global and regional value chains by further integrating their economies as well as boosting connectivity.



BOOSTING TIES

well as boosting connectivity. Hasina also commended the way India confronted the coronavirus crisis and hoped that it would contribute significantly in recovery of the global economy that has been severely hit by the pandemic.

Ways to boost regional connectivity was a key focus area of the summit, and both Modi and Hasina agreed to an early operationalisation of the BBIN motor vehicles agreement with a provision for Bhutan to join at a later date. Bhutan has been dillydallying on the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) pact that provides hassle-free movement of people and goods among the four countries.

Recognising that terrorism remains a threat to global peace and security, the two Prime Ministers

reiterated their strong commitment to eliminate it in all its forms and manifestations, a joint statement issued after the talks said.

The two leaders also underscored the need for an early conclusion of a framework of interim agreement on water sharing of six rivers - Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar, and issued direction to expeditiously conclude a joint study on having a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the statement said.

Hasina highlighted the need for early signing of an interim agreement for sharing of the Teesta waters as agreed by both the governments in 2011 to which Modi reiterated India's commitment and continued efforts on it.

## Kejri tears copies of farm laws in Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: The Delhi Assembly Thursday passed a resolution against the Centre's three new agriculture laws with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tearing up their copies, saying he cannot betray the farmers of the country.

Addressing the Delhi Assembly, the Chief Minister also alleged the laws have been made for "electoral funding of the BJP and not for the farmers". "I am pained that I have to do this. I did not intend to, but I cannot betray the farmers of my country who have been sleeping on the streets in the cold... when the temperature is just 2 degrees Celsius," Kejriwal said, while tearing up the copies of the three laws.

"I am a citizen of this country first, a chief minister later. This assembly rejects the three laws and appeals to the central government to meet the demands of the farmers," he said. Kejriwal further said 20 protesting farmers have died so far and asked the Centre when it will "wake up".

He said the Centre should not be under the impression that the farmers camping at the protest sites will simply return to their homes, adding that in 1907, a farmers' protest continued for nine months till the British rulers repealed some laws.

"When asked about the benefit of the laws, every BJP leader says farmers can sell their produce anywhere in the country... But where



should farmers go to sell their crop at minimum support price (MSP)?" the CM asked.

He also claimed that due to the three new laws "big capitalists will sell produce at a higher price", which will lead to price rise. After the assembly passed the resolution by voice vote, AAP MLAs trooped into the well of the House, tore off copies of the laws and raised slogans demanding that the government repeal them.

Speaker Ram Niwas Goel adjourned the House proceedings till 5:15 pm. When the House reconvened, the AAP MLAs again gathered in its well, following which proceedings were adjourned till 11 am on Friday. Later, AAP legislators also burnt copies of the farm laws on the assembly premises.

## SUVENDU QUILTS TMC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 17: A day after quitting as MLA, Suvendu Adhikari Thursday resigned from the primary membership of the TMC, intensifying speculations that he might switch over to the BJP later this week.

According to party sources, several disgruntled leaders are rallying behind him.

Adhikari, the face of the Nandigram movement that added to the political left of Mamata Banerjee and catapulted her to power in Bengal in 2011, sent his resignation letter to West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee during the second half of the day, party sources said.

"I am writing to tender my resignation as a member of All India Trinamool Congress as well as from all other positions held by me in the party and its associate organs with immediate effect," Adhikari wrote.

Ending his two-decade-old association with the party, the former TMC heavyweight thanked Banerjee for the opportunities given to him, and said would he would always value the time he spent as its member.

Some of Adhikari's supporters indicated that he was likely to join the BJP on Saturday during a saffron party programme in Midnapore.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is scheduled to visit Bengal, starting Saturday, will also attend the programme. Adhikari's resignation from the TMC puts a lid on all rumour mills that went abuzz speculating his moves since November 26, when he resigned as the chairman of Hooghly River Bridge Commissioners (HRBC). On Wednesday, he submitted his resignation as MLA of Nandigram constituency in Purba Medinipur district. Of late, he had criticised the TMC leadership, on several occasions.

## Two Pakistani intruders killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Amritsar, Dec 17: Two Pakistani "armed intruders" were on Thursday shot dead by the Border Security Force along the International Border in Punjab as the force thwarted three bids of drugs smuggling at this front.

In the first interception, two men in their 30s were killed near the Rajatal border post in Amritsar around 2:20 am after the troops on guard detected suspicious movement ahead of the border fence in Indian territory, a BSF spokesperson said.

"The Border Security Force (BSF) sentry on duty heard some crawling sound near the fence. He challenged the approaching people in dense fog but he instead heard the sound of cocking the gun by the intruders.

"The BSF jawan fired in self defence and later we recovered two bodies of the armed intruders from the spot," BSF Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Bhupinder Singh told reporters in Amritsar.

An AK-56 rifle, semi-automatic rifle, pistol, 90 bullets, five magazines and two PVC pipes, usually used to push drug packets across the border, of about ten feet each, have been seized after a search was conducted of the incident site, the DIG said. No drugs were found in this spot, he added.

## India's recovery rate among highest globally

"While the global figure for recovery rate is 70.27 per cent, India is recording 95.31 per cent. The USA, Brazil, Russia, and Italy are reporting lesser recovery rates," the ministry said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: India's COVID-19 recovery rate is amongst the highest in the world, the Union Health Ministry said Thursday, underlining that countries like the US, Brazil, Russia, and Italy are reporting lesser recovery rates.

With focussed strategy and proactive as well as calibrated measures of the Centre along with the states and UTs, India has sustained a very high COVID-19 recovery rate along with rapidly declining active cases and low mortality rate, it said.

"While the global figure for recovery rate is 70.27 per cent, India is recording 95.31 per cent. The USA, Brazil, Russia, and Italy are reporting lesser recovery rates," the ministry said. Recoveries outnumbering new cases on a daily basis have ensured a high recovery rate among patients. The total recovered cases are nearing 95 lakh. "The gap between recover-

ies and active cases is also increasing consistently and presently stands at 91, 67,374," the ministry said. The rising recoveries have also led to a continuous contraction of India's active caseload which presently stands at 3, 22,366 and consists of just 3.24 per cent of India's total infections.

Following the national pursuit, 18 states and UTs have a recovery rate more than the national average. India has registered 33,291 new recoveries in a span of 24 hours. The ministry said that 75.63 per cent of these new recovered cases are contributed by ten states and UTs.

With 5,728 persons recovering from COVID-19, Kerala has recorded maximum number of recoveries. Maharashtra registered another 3,887 daily recoveries while West Bengal registered 2,767 new recoveries.

A total of 24,010 new daily cases were registered in a span of 24 hours.



## Centre formally recognises yoga as competitive sport

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 17: The Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda Yoga and Naturopathy Unani Siddha Homoeopathy) and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports Thursday formally recognised yogasana as a competitive sport.

The announcement was made at a joint press conference held here by the Union Minister of State for AYUSH Shripad Naik and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju. While addressing, Naik traced the origins of yogasana competitions to the Indian Yoga tradition.

He said that they are still being conducted today at multiple levels, but a strong and sustainable structure to impart national visibility to the competitions is yet to emerge. Naik further said that the government's decision to recognise yogasana as a competitive sport comes after 3-4 years of wide consultations with the stakeholders of the yoga sector.

The minister also said that yogasana is an integral and important component of yoga, which is psycho-physical in nature and popular across the globe for its efficacy in fitness and general wellness.



"Yogasana becoming as a sport will also ensure new technologies and new strategies being inducted into the disciplines, to benefit our ath-

letes and officials towards building fruitful and fulfilling careers in this field," Naik said. On this occasion, Rijiju said that

the competitions that will arise out of the recognition of yogasana as a sport will enhance interest in yoga among people around the globe. He also said that both the ministries have been closely working together to establish yogasana as a competitive sport and that a plan is being made to include yogasana as a sport discipline in Khelo India and in the University Games.

"We will also pitch it at the National Games but the aim and objective of any sport is to be included in Olympics and this is a beginning of a long journey," Rijiju said, adding that yogasana is going to

become a beautiful, attractive and popular sport.

The Secretary AYUSH also informed that various steps or activities will form part of the road map and the future development of yogasana Sport like a pilot yogasana competition named as "National Individual Yogasana Sports Championship" (Virtual Mode) to be held in early 2021. Yogasana as a sport discipline in National Games, Khelo India and international sports events will be introduced along with steps to create job opportunities for yogasana athletes.

### FULL BLOOM



A Tabebuia tree in full bloom at Cubbon Park in Bangalore

PTI PHOTO

## Man stabbed over salad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: A daily wage labourer has been arrested here for allegedly stabbing his fellow worker multiple times when one of them asked for extra onions for salad while having dinner, police said Thursday.

On December 8, the accused Riyasat Ali (59) along with Pawan (60) came to SB Farm in south Delhi's Fatehpur Beri for working at a godown.

After work, the duo along with others sat for dinner during which a heated argument took place between Ali and Pawan over sharing onion salad, a senior police officer said.



According to police, Ali asked Pawan for some extra onions, but Pawan said there were hardly any onions left. In a fit of rage, Ali stabbed Pawan multiple times with a kitchen knife lying next to him. Ali left the spot after Pawan fell unconscious, a senior police officer said. "We were informed

about an incident of stabbing at Fatehpur Beri. On reaching the spot, it was revealed that the injured was shifted to AIIMS Trauma Centre by CATS ambulance.

The hospital said the patient was stabbed multiple times near his stomach due to which his intestine and other inner body organs were exposed completely," Atul Kumar Thakur, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South), said. The patient was in a very serious condition, but is stated to be out of danger now, he said.

A case of attempt to murder was registered and an investigation was taken up in the matter, the officer said.



of the day quote

The Centre and the state government are working in the interest of farmers, villagers and the poor under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The government will ensure that farmers get their dues and their income increases



YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

The BJP government is avoiding facing the farmers and the Opposition by avoiding the winter session of the Lok Sabha by using COVID-19 as an excuse



AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

Centre has taken a number of steps to revitalise agriculture in the recent years



M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Ex-MLA's son killed

Patna: Unidentified attackers have gunned down the son of a former Janata Dal (United) MLA in Bihar's Chapra, police said Thursday. The deceased, identified as Prince Kumar Rai, was a son of former MLA late Ram Pravesha Rai. Prince Rai had a tyre shop located in the Bhagwan Bazaar area near the residence of the district councillor president. The police said Prince was on the way to his shop on Wednesday night when some unidentified men intercepted him and shot him thrice.

Four arrested

Sultanpur (UP): The UP police have arrested four criminals in an encounter that took place in Sultanpur district. Three others, including a Constable, were injured in the encounter late on Wednesday night.

Groom killed

Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh): In a shocking incident, a groom was stabbed to death by his friends because he refused to give them more liquor during the post-wedding celebrations. The incident took place on Tuesday in the Palimukimpur village when the 28-year-old Bablu went to meet his friends soon after his marriage.

Trooper injured

Srinagar: One Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) trooper was injured on Thursday in a militant grenade attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district. The police said militants hurled a grenade at a joint party of the security forces deployed outside the hospital in Bijbehara town of Anantnag district. "One CRPF jawan of 40 battalion received injuries in this attack. He has been shifted to hospital for treatment," police said.



Rahul Gandhi should learn to respect constitutional institutions or else his role in democracy will be negligible

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | UNION MINISTER

TIGER CENSUS BEGINS

The tiger census through camera trapping method has started in West Bengal's Sundarbans, which, according to the last estimate, was home to 96 big cats, an official said



SNOW FUN



A tourist rides a sledge on a snow-covered meadow after snowfall at Sonamarg in Ganderbal district of Central Kashmir, Thursday

BJP leader's kin thrown before train

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh) Dec 17: The 28-year-old nephew of a BJP leader has lost his left arm after he was pushed in front of a speeding goods train. The incident took place in Ghatampur area late Tuesday. The injured identified as Lalit Dwivedi was admitted to Lala Lajpat Rai hospital from where he was referred to KGMU Trauma Centre in Lucknow on Wednesday. Police have detained a few suspects for questioning.

According to reports, Lalit had gone to see a Ramhila in Gopalpur village on Tuesday night when he got into an argument over a trivial issue with a group of men. His uncle Umesh Dwivedi, a local BJP leader, intervened, and after pacifying him and the other men, dropped him home.

Ghatampur circle officer Ravi Kumar Singh said that "Lalit, however, went to the Ramhila venue again after midnight, and a scuffle took place between him and the rival group. The group overpowered Lalit, and after brutally assaulting him, pushed him inside a van. They then took him to Banda-Kanpur rail track and pushed him onto the track when they saw a speeding goods train approaching. Following this, Lalit lost his left arm."

The accused thereafter fled the scene. The incident came to light early on Wednesday morning after local residents spotted Lalit lying near the railway tracks in a pool of blood. They immediately informed the police. The police rushed to the spot and took Lalit to a nearby CHC from where doctors referred him to Lala Lajpat Rai hospital.

He was later sent to the KGMU Trauma Centre in Lucknow. The circle officer said that an FIR has been registered under relevant sections of IPC in this regard and raids are underway to arrest those named in the FIR.

SC REFUSES TO INTERFERE WITH HIGH COURT ORDER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: The Supreme Court Thursday refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict which had quashed the detention of Dr Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act (NSA) and ordered his immediate release, saying it is "a good judgement". "We will not interfere in the judgement. However, the observation will not impact any other proceedings," said the bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

The bench was hearing the Uttar Pradesh government's plea challenging the high court's September 1 verdict. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, told the bench that observation made by the high court exonerates Khan in the criminal proceedings. "Criminal cases will be decided on their own merits," the bench



observed. Khan had hit the headlines after the 2017 tragedy at Gorakhpur's Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College, in which several children died due to a lack of oxygen cylinders. Initially, he was hailed as a saviour for arranging emergency oxygen cylinders but later faced action along with nine other doctors and staff members of the hospital, all of whom were released on

bail later. A state government probe cleared Khan of all major charges, prompting him to seek an apology from the state. Khan had alleged that an institutional failure had led to the deaths of the children.

In its September 1 verdict, the high court had quashed Khan's detention under the NSA and ordered his immediate release, saying his speech at the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) during the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests did not promote hatred or violence and gave a call for national integrity.

The high court had said that the Aligarh district magistrate, who had passed the order for Khan's detention, did a "selective reading" of his speech, "ignoring its true intent". The high court had allowed the petition filed by Khan's mother, Nuzhat Parveen, and said the detention order by the district magistrate was illegal.

Mamata fumes over Govt's order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Kolkata, Dec 17: The Centre Thursday shot off a fresh letter to the West Bengal government to immediately relieve its three IPS officers for central deputation, provoking a combative Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to brand the move as "unconstitutional and unacceptable".

A defiant Banerjee also declared she will not allow the "brazen attempt to control the state machinery by proxy", in escalation of tension between the state and the Centre. Five days after the West Bengal government said it will not relieve the three IPS officers, the Centre sent a fresh missive on Thursday, asking the state to immediately release them so they could take up their new assignments.

In a communication to the West Bengal chief secretary, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said, according to the IPS cadre rules, the Centre prevails over a state government in case of any dispute between the two.

Quoting the rule, the MHA noted in case of any disagreement between the central and the state governments, the "state governments concerned shall give effect to the decision of the central government".

The three officers - Bholanath Pandey (SP, Diamond Harbour), Praveen Tripathi (DIG, Presidency Range) and Rajeev Mishra (ADG, South Bengal) - were responsible for the security of BJP chief J P Nadda during his December 9-10 visit to the politically volatile state.

The Centre wants them shifted account of alleged dereliction of duty that led to an attack on Nadda's convoy in Diamond Harbour constituency of TMC MP and Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee. Several vehicles in the convoy were damaged.

aged and BJP leaders received injuries in the attack.

A livid Banerjee responded with expected anger. "This move, particularly before the election is against the basic tenets of the federal structure. It's unconstitutional & completely unacceptable!" she said. "Govt's (Government of India) order of central deputation for the 3 serving IPS officers of West Bengal despite the State's objection is a colourable exercise of power and blatant misuse of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954," Banerjee tweeted.

In its letter, the home ministry insisted that in accordance with the IPS cadre rules, the Centre prevails over the state in case of a dispute. However, Banerjee asserted in another tweet, "We wouldn't allow this brazen attempt by the Centre to control the State machinery by proxy! West Bengal is not going to cow-down in front of expansionist & undemocratic forces."

The MHA said Pandey has been appointed an SP in the Bureau of Police Research and Development, Tripathi as a DIG in the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and Mishra an IG in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). The copy of the letter has also been sent to the West Bengal director general of police (DGP).

On December 12, the West Bengal government had conveyed to the Centre that it would not be able to spare the three IPS officers. A state government's consent is taken before any all-India service officer is called to serve in central deputation.



MAN KILLS SON FOR URINATING IN BED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur (UP), Dec 17: A daily wage labourer in Uttar Pradesh beat his three-year-old son to death for urinating in bed.

The accused was arrested by the police Wednesday evening after the boy's mother and maternal uncle reported the matter to the police. The father had fled to Hamirpur with the body of the boy. He was detained by the Hamirpur police that later handed him over to the Kanpur police.

Kanpur Nagar SP (rural) Brijesh Kumar Srivastava said that the accused, Santraj, a brick-kiln labourer, after killing the boy, also threatened his wife and their other children not to cry or

tell anybody. In order to evade the police, he escaped with his son's body and family to Chaani village of Hamirpur district.

"Santraj flew into a rage after the child Ravindra, who was sleeping with him, soiled the bed on Tuesday night. He beat his son mercilessly in front of his wife and children who begged for mercy for the child, but in vain. He kept on assaulting him until he died and then escaped with the body to his native village," the police official said.

Ravindra was the only son of Santraj who has two daughters. The accused has been booked under relevant sections of IPC, including 302 (murder) while the boy's body has been sent for post mortem examination.

Ayodhya mosque foundation to be laid on Republic Day

The blueprint of the mosque and other facilities, including multi-speciality hospital, community kitchen and library will be unveiled by the Mosque Trust Saturday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya, Dec 17: On the 71st anniversary of India as a Republic, the foundation will be laid for the much-awaited mosque in Ayodhya on the five acres of land mandated by Supreme Court following the Ram Jannabhoomi-Babri Masjid final verdict.

The blueprint for the mosque will be unveiled Saturday. It will be a round-shaped structure. The masjid will come up, 20km away from the Ram Jannabhoomi site, at Dhannipur village, exactly six months after the Sunni Waqf Board constituted the mosque trust - Indo-

Islamic Cultural Foundation.

"The Trust chose January 26, 2021, for laying the foundation of the Ayodhya mosque as on this day our Constitution came into effect more than seven decades ago. Our constitution is based on pluralism, which is the leitmotif of our mosque project," said Athar Hussain, secretary of Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation.

The blueprint of the mosque and other facilities, including multi-speciality hospital, community kitchen and library will be unveiled by the Mosque Trust Saturday as

per the plans finalized by chief architect Professor S.M. Akhtar.

"The mosque will have the capacity of 2,000 namazis at a time and the structure will be round-shaped," Prof Akhtar said. "The new mosque will be bigger than Babri Masjid, but will not be a lookalike of the structure which once stood in the Ram Jannabhoomi premises. The hospital of course will hold centre stage on the five-acre plot allotted to the Sunni Waqf Board at Dhannipur village in Ayodhya. The hospital will be in-sync with the architecture of the mosque, replete with calligraphy and Islamic symbols," said Akhtar.

₹28,000 CR DEFENCE PURCHASE CLEARED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: The defence ministry Thursday approved procurement of weapons and military equipment worth ₹28,000 crore for the three services, officials said.

The procurement proposals were cleared at a time India and China are locked in a bitter border standoff in eastern Ladakh.

"The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh approved proposals to procure equipment worth ₹27,000 crore from domestic industry," the defence ministry said in a statement. Officials said a total of seven

acquisition proposals were approved by the DAC, the defence ministry's highest decision-making body on procurement. "Six of the seven proposals, that is, ₹27,000 crore out of ₹28,000 crore for which AONs (Acceptance of Necessity) were granted will be sourced from the Indian industry to give a boost to the 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives," the ministry said.

Acquisition proposals approved include procurement of the DRDO-designed and developed airborne early warning and control systems for the Indian Air Force, next generation offshore patrol vessels for the Indian Navy and modular bridges for the Indian Army.

COVID IMPACT

Quiet year-end in Nainital as tourists stay away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nainital, Dec 17: Christmas and New Year's Eve are around the corner but the celebratory mood, sparkling lights that brighten up the markets and swarm of tourists are missing in Nainital as the coronavirus pandemic has kept most people confined to their homes.

According to local hotel and restaurant bodies, the farmers camping at Delhi borders to demand the repeal of the Centre's agriculture reform laws has also deterred people from the national capital and neighbouring areas from travelling.

Though both Christmas and New Year's Day fall on a Friday this time,



making them extended weekends, the business has been slow for hotels in the popular hill station. "This year, hotels received little to almost no bookings for New Year's due to coronavirus. Similarly, only a few bookings were made for Christmas," said Dinesh Shah, president of Nainital Hotel and Restaurant Association. Normally, people make bookings for Christmas and New Year's months in advance, he said.

Alok Shah, PRO of Nainital Hotel and Restaurant Association, said, "Due to the farmers' protest, people from Delhi and nearby areas are avoiding travel. Coronavirus testing at (Nainital's) entry point is another deterrent for tourists."

This has not only made the occasion less cheery but also impacted Nainital's economy, he said. Hoteliers reminisced about previous years when Christmas and New Year's drew domestic and international tourists in large numbers.

Often 'No Entry' signs had to be put up at various places. Hotels used to host various functions every year to entertain the visitors, they said.

"This year there will be no special programmes since the hotel has not received many bookings due to the coronavirus pandemic," said Naresh Gupta, manager of Hotel Manu Maharani. Traders associations said the Mall Road will not be decorated with fancy lights this time.

The usual fanfare associated with the annual Winter Carnival will also be missing this year. "While the tradition of Winter Carnival will continue, it will be limited to marathons and a few competitions," said Shah, president of the Nainital Hotel and Restaurant Association. As of December 15, Uttarakhand had recorded 83,502 COVID-19 cases, including 1,372 deaths, according to official data.

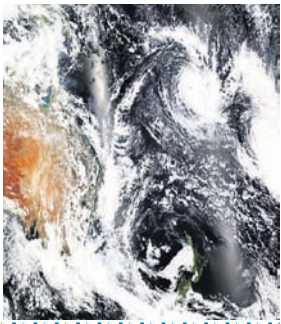
# international



The New Zealand government will purchase Covid-19 vaccines from pharmaceutical companies AstraZeneca and Novavax, enough for every New Zealander to be vaccinated  
JACINDA ARDERN | NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER

## FIJI IMPOSES CURFEW

Fiji imposed a nationwide curfew Thursday after urging people near the coast to move to higher ground as the island nation prepared for a major cyclone to hit



## of the day quote

Turkey won't step back from its decision to deploy Russian air defence systems despite US sanctions imposed on the country over the purchase  
MEVLUT CAVUSOGLU | TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER

I don't want to get ahead of the line, but I want to make sure we demonstrate to the American people that Covid-19 vaccine is safe to take  
JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT-ELECT

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

## SHORT TAKES

### Putin rejects poisoning claims

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin Thursday rejected allegations that the Kremlin was behind the poisoning of his top political foe, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and accused US intelligence agencies of fomenting the claims even as he held out hope for better ties with Washington. Putin also voiced hope that the administration of President-elect Joe Biden would move to extend the last remaining US-Russian arms control pact that is set to expire in early February.

### Quake shakes eastern Japan

Tokyo: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 4.6 shook eastern Japan Thursday, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. The epicentre of the earthquake was in Ibaraki prefecture, north of the capital Tokyo, the agency said, adding that a tsunami warning had not been issued.

### Volkswagen loses case

Brussels: The European Union's top court ruled Thursday that Volkswagen breached the law by installing on its cars a so-called defeat device to cheat on emission tests and cannot argue it was merely protecting car engines. The scandal known as "Dieselgate" erupted five years ago when the US Environmental Protection Agency found that Volkswagen had installed special software to rig US Emissions tests for its latest "clean diesel" vehicles.

### US States sue Google

New York: Several US states led by Texas filed suit against Google Wednesday over alleged anti-competitive practices, branding it an "internet Goliath" that had eliminated competition in online advertising and was harming consumers "This Goliath of a company is using its power to manipulate the market." Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said in a brief Twitter video announcing the suit.

### Saudi starts vaccination

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia Thursday started a vaccination programme for the novel coronavirus, the Health Ministry announced. The Kingdom received Wednesday the first shipment of the vaccine.

# CHINA ASSURES SUPPORT TO WHO TEAM

AGENCIES

Wuhan, China, Dec 17: China, which questions the view that COVID-19 emerged from Wuhan, Thursday said it is ready to enhance its cooperation with the WHO to advance the global efforts to trace the origin of the coronavirus, as a team of experts of the UN health agency prepares to visit the central Chinese city.

The 10-member team will travel to Wuhan next month to investigate the origins of COVID-19, the BBC quoted the World Health Organization (WHO) as saying. Asked to confirm the team's visit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing that the "WHO has also updated China on the global efforts to trace the origin of the coronavirus".

"China stands ready to enhance its cooperation with the WHO to advance the global tracing efforts to contribute our share in the early victory over the pandemic," he said in statement.

In October, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told the media that "the epidemic broke out in various places in the world at the end of last year, while China was the first to report the outbreak, identified the pathogen and shared



the genome sequence with the world".

"Even though China was the first to report coronavirus but doesn't necessarily mean China is where the virus originated," Zhao Lijian, another spokesman of the Foreign Ministry told the media on November 27.

China has been reluctant to agree to an independent inquiry and it has taken many months of negotiations for the WHO to be allowed access to the city.

The virus is believed to have been originated from the wet market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December last year. It remained sealed since then.

## COVID-19 ORIGINS

The search for the source has led to tensions between the US and China. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly accused China of trying to conceal the initial outbreak.

The World Health Assembly, the governing body of the WHO, in May approved a resolution to set up an independent inquiry to conduct an "impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation" of the international response as well as that of the WHO. It asked the WHO to investigate the "source of the virus and the route of its introduction to the human population".

China, which has backed the inquiry with a rider that it should commence after the coronavirus was brought under control, said it

### Vax's allergic reaction

A healthcare worker in the US suffered an allergic reaction after receiving Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine, the only vaccine that has been authorised for emergency use in the country so far. The worker was among the healthcare workers being vaccinated at Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau in the US state of Alaska Tuesday. Meanwhile, US Vice President Mike Pence and his wife Karen Pence will publicly receive a Covid-19 vaccine Friday to promote the safety and efficacy of the vaccine and build confidence among the American people.

is getting ready to receive the experts' team. Globally, there have been 74,378,599 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 1,652,235 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Others said a WHO visit is an opportunity to show how well the city had done battling the virus. Wuhan has not reported a locally transmitted case since May 10, after a 76-day lockdown that was one of the strictest worldwide.

"We are not afraid of their investigation," said Liu Qin, who works in real estate. "Because you can see from the epidemic this year, in Wuhan things were done well, if not the epidemic would not have been controlled quickly."

## UK pets will need certificate to enter EU after Brexit



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

London, Dec 17: British pet owners will need a new document to enter the European Union with their animals after the Brexit transition period ends 1 January next year, the government said Wednesday.

Owners will have to get an animal health certificate from a vet no earlier than 10 days before travel, the government said on its Brexit guidance page.

British pets required only a passport while their country was part of the EU. Only vets officially allowed to inspect animals for export can issue the certificates. The same rule will apply for taking animals from England, Scotland and Wales to Northern Ireland. But the UK government said

its approach to enforcing the rule in Northern Ireland would recognise "these changes will take time to adjust to", without specifying whether there would be a grace period.

Owners will still have to ensure pets are microchipped and have up-to-date rabies vaccinations, as currently.

The health certificates will be valid for pets' onward travel for four months. There will be no new rules on pets travelling from the EU into Britain, which will continue to recognise EU pet passports. The new rules are less complex than if the EU had classified Britain as an "un-listed" country -- the least favourable status.

This would have involved animals getting a blood test to check for rabies at least three months ahead of travel. Britain has instead been given the same status for pet travel as Australia, Russia and the United States. The UK government is pushing to get Part 1 listed status, which would allow pets to travel almost as they do now.

## Denmark strengthens rape laws

REUTERS

Copenhagen, Dec 17: Denmark strengthened its rape laws on Thursday by criminalising sex without explicit consent.

The new law passed by parliament widened the circumstances that could constitute rape - under the old legislation, prosecutors had to show the rapist had used violence or attacked someone who was unable to resist.

"Now it will be clear, that if both parties do no consent to

sex, then it's rape," justice minister Nick Haekkerup said in a statement.

A similar law introduced in neighbouring Sweden in 2018 resulted in a 75% rise in rape convictions.

Around 11,400 women a year are raped or subjected to attempted rape in Denmark, according to the ministry's figures.

Amnesty International said Denmark had become the 12th country in Europe to recognise non-consensual sex as rape. The law will take effect January 1.

# China's spacecraft successfully brings home Moon samples

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 17: China's Chang'e-5 probe successfully touched down on Earth in the early hours of Thursday, bringing home the first samples of the moon in over 40 years.

The spacecraft landed in Siziwang Banner in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 1:59 AM (local time), according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA). Zhang Kejian, head of the CNSA, declared the Chang'e-5 mission a success. It marks a successful conclusion of China's current three-step lunar exploration programme of orbiting and landing, and bringing back samples which began in 2004, state-

run Xinhua news agency reported. President Xi Jinping congratulated scientists on the complete success of the Chang'e-5 mission.

As China's most complicated space project, Xi in his message to the CNSA said, the Chang'e-5 mission "is another major achievement in overcoming difficulties by giving full play to the advantages of the new system of pooling national resources and strength, marking a great step forward in China's space industry".

The Chang'e-5 space mission is China's maiden attempt to retrieve materials from an extra-terrestrial body. It was launched November 24.

It was the first attempt to bring the moon samples in over 40 years after the US sent astronauts to the moon to collect samples. In the

## BREATHE EASY



An Ethiopian boy who fled the ongoing fighting in Tigray region, gestures in the Hamdayet village, in eastern Kassala state, Sudan  
REUTERS

## Macron tests Covid+ve

AGENCIES

Paris, Dec 17: French President Emmanuel Macron is the latest world leader to test positive for COVID-19, joining a growing list of others just as inoculation drives against the illness are beginning in a number of countries.

Macron, 42, has repeatedly said he is sticking to strict sanitary protocols during the pandemic, including not shaking hands, wearing a mask and keeping distance from other people. The Elysee Palace announced on Thursday that Macron would be isolating for seven days.

DONALD TRUMP  
President Donald Trump announced in October that he and his wife, first lady Melania Trump, tested positive for the coronavirus. For months, Trump was accused of downplaying the virus that has killed more than 300,000 Americans.



BORIS JOHNSON

The British prime minister was the first major world leader confirmed to have COVID-19, after facing criticism for downplaying the pandemic. He was moved to intensive care in April after his symptoms dramatically worsened a day after he was hospitalised for what were called routine tests.

JAIR BOLSONARO

The Brazilian president announced his illness in July and used it to publicly extol hydroxychloroquine, the unproven malaria drug that he'd been promoting as a

treatment for COVID-19 and was taking himself.

ALEXANDER LUKASHENKO  
The president of Belarus, who dismissed concerns about the virus as "psychosis" and recommended drinking vodka to stay healthy, said in July he had contracted it himself but was asymptomatic. Belarus is one of the few countries that took no comprehensive measures against the virus. Other top officials in former Soviet states who were infected include Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

INDIA

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, 71, recently tested positive but his office said he had no symptoms and was quarantined at home. Home Minister Amit Shah, the No. 2 man in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, was hospitalised for COVID-19 in September and has recovered.



Researchers work around Chang'e-5 lunar return capsule carrying Moon samples next to a Chinese national flag, after it landed in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region  
REUTERS

Soviet Union's unmanned lunar sampling missions, the spacecraft took off from the moon and returned to Earth directly. Commenting on Chang'e-5 mission,

Dr. Jonathan McDowell, Astronomer, Centre for Astrophysics, Harvard and Smithsonian, said it is the most ambitious space programme China has accomplished so far.

On Wednesday night, the return capsule of Chang'e-5 separated from the orbiter about 5,000 km above the Atlantic. The capsule entered the Earth's atmosphere at an altitude of about 120-km. At about 10 km above ground, a parachute opened.

The capsule landed smoothly in the predetermined area and the search team recovered it, the Xinhua said.

The capsule is set to be airlifted to Beijing for opening, and the moon samples will be delivered to the research team for analysis and study, the CNSA said. China will make some of the samples available to scientists in other countries, said Pei Zhaoyu, deputy director of the Lunar Exploration and Space Program Center of CNSA. Chang'e-

## POST-BREXIT DEAL

### EU Parl issues 3-day ultimatum

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brussels, Dec 17: The European Parliament has issued a three-day ultimatum to Brexit negotiators to strike a trade deal, warning that MEPs won't have time to ratify an agreement this year unless it is ready by Sunday night.



Teams of negotiators from the European Union and the United Kingdom are in Brussels seeking a deal that would avoid costly chaos at the borders at the end of the year.

To enter into force, any agreement would require the European Parliament's ratification.

After EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier briefed them on the negotiations Thursday, the conference of presidents of the Parliament's political groups said it is ready to organise a plenary session by the end of the month, but on condition that "an agreement is reached by midnight Sunday 20st December."

If a deal comes later, it could only be ratified in 2021, as the parliament would not have enough time to debate the agreement before that. "We give until Sunday to Boris Johnson to make a decision," said Dacian Cioloș, president of the Renew Europe group in the European Parliament. "The uncertainty hanging over citizens and businesses as a result of UK choices becomes intolerable."

5 is one of the most complicated and challenging missions in China's aerospace history as it touched down on the north of the Mons Rumker in Oceanus Procellarum, also known as the Ocean of Storms, on the near side of the moon on December 1, the report said.

Change-5 drilled into the lunar surface for samples that record evolutionary events, and grabbed material on the surface.

Using modern analytical technologies, scientists will be able to unravel the mysteries of volcanic activities and meteorite impacts over the past billion years, the report said.

The probe has collected material at different sites to ensure the diversity of the samples.



**Healthy procurement and a favourable outlook for the Rabi season, as well as greater visibility of an approaching Covid-19 vaccine rollout, will strengthen demand and economic activity in the fourth quarter of financial year 2021**

**ANITI NAYYAR** | PRINCIPAL ECONOMIST, ICRA

## CIL PLANS TO SUBSTITUTE IMPORTED COAL

Coal India Ltd is aiming at substituting imported dry fuel of 80-85 MT with more domestic supplies in the current fiscal. The miner has asked power plants in coastal areas to submit proposals to increase its supplies



## of the day quote

**A long-term, uniform policy is needed for steel and cement manufacturers. Had the price hike been in the range of 15-20%, it could have been justified but it was abysmally high. They can enhance productivity and earn profit. Else, projects will become unviable**

**NITIN GADKARI** | UNION MINISTER

**Humans wield more power over the planet than ever before. In the wake of Covid-19, record-breaking temperatures and spiraling inequality, it is time to use that power to redefine what we mean by progress, where our carbon and consumption footprints are no longer hidden**

**ACHIM STEINER** | UNDP ADMINISTRATOR

**With many of the vaccine development efforts almost reaching fruition, India is getting ready to have multiple vaccines in the next few weeks or months**

**DV SADANANDA GOWDA** | MINISTER FOR CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS

## SHORT TAKES

### Rapido expands auto service biz

**Mumbai:** Ride-hailing app Rapido Thursday announced the expansion of its three-wheeler auto-rickshaw services to 11 more cities, spreading across the National Capital Region and five states. The platform, which currently caters to auto-rickshaw and bike ride-sharing segments, also said it is looking to onboard over five lakh auto drivers in the next six months. With the addition of 11 new cities, Rapido Auto service, which was launched in 14 key cities across 10 states in October last year, is now available across 25 cities, the company said.

### Ikea to open Navi Mumbai store today

**Mumbai:** Ikea, the world's largest furniture retailer from Sweden, Thursday said it will open its second store in the country in Navi Mumbai Friday. The new store is its first big format store in Maharashtra, spanning over 5.3 lakh sq ft and situated near the Turbhe local railway station and stocks over 7,000 home furnishing products. Peter Betzel, CEO and chief sustainability officer at Ikea India told reporters that Mumbai is the first omnichannel market for them.

### Dhamija appointed as Zaakpay's CEO

**New Delhi:** Fintech major MobiKwik Thursday said it has appointed Siddharth Dhamija as CEO of Zaakpay, its payment gateway arm. Dhamija has 23 years of experience with five years in the payments industry. In his most recent role, he led the Enterprise Business at PayPal India and was part of the founding team that launched PayPal's Domestic Payments business, a statement said.

### IFC provides \$30mn loan

**New Delhi:** International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group, Thursday said it is providing a loan of up to \$30 million (around ₹220 crore) to pharma company Biological E Limited. The loan will support the pharmaceutical firm's expansion of low-priced, generic vaccines for routine immunisation of children and to boost capacity for manufacturing any future COVID-19 vaccine, it added.

# Economy showing signs of bottoming out: Report

**ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, THE CONSENSUS FORECASTS OF GDP GROWTH FOR FY 2022 OVER FY2020 STOPPED FALLING AFTER OCTOBER 2020**

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Dec 17:** After several years of downgrades to the country's medium-term growth outlook, the estimates are likely to be upgraded now, Credit Suisse said in a report. The country's economy is showing signs of bottoming out, it said. According to the report, the consensus forecasts of GDP growth for FY2022 over FY2020 stopped falling after October 2020 (currently at (-)1%). Analysts at Credit Suisse expect these estimates to be

revised upwards. "After several years of downgrades to India's medium-term growth outlook, we believe upgrades are now likely. "The easing of monetary conditions reverses the tightness of 2015-18, with the large balance of payments (BoP) surpluses that have allowed for this also providing the macroeconomic scope for a stimulus," Credit Suisse co-head of equity strategy, Asia Pacific and India equity strategist Neelkanth Mishra told reporters Thursday.



The multi-year real estate cycle is no longer a drag on the economy, he said, adding that there is a pro-growth shift in the country's in-

dustrial policy. Mishra said the production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes can add 1.7% to GDP by FY27, or an average of 0.305% a year. The cuts in corporate tax rates in September 2019 and the labour law reforms should contribute as well. The report said a pro-cyclical fiscal policy was a drag on growth in the September 2020 quarter and is now likely to support it as the earlier-than-expected rebound in economic momentum boosts (central and state) government tax receipts. The restocking-led momentum in

manufacturing is likely to boost GDP for a few quarters, it added. Indian equities are no longer cheap, the report said, adding "in fact, they have rarely been more expensive". "Any reasonable investment strategy must factor in lower or at best unchanged P/E (price-to-earnings) going forward - if Nifty and current FY22 and FY23 index EPS (earnings per share) forecasts sustain, in a year P/E ratios are only likely to go back to pre-pandemic levels," it said.

## BoE holds fire as it awaits Brexit developments



AGENCIES

**London, Dec 17:** The Bank of England has kept interest rates on hold and opted against injecting another dose of stimulus into the British economy as it waits to hear whether a post-Brexit trade between the UK and the European Union is agreed in time for the new year. In a statement released Thursday, it said the nine rate-setters on the Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously to keep the bank's main interest rate at the record low of 0.1% and to maintain the monetary stimulus already in place. It said the main news since it boosted its bond-buying programme in November has been the successful trialling of coronavirus vaccines and the rollout in the UK of the one developed by America's Pfizer and German biotechnology firm BioNTech. Financial markets and some business and consumer surveys have been buoyed by the developments. "This is likely to reduce the downside risks to the economic outlook from COVID," the committee said.

However, the committee warned that recent global activity has been affected by the increase in cases and the associated re-imposition of restrictions. UK growth is set to be weaker than anticipated in November. The British economy is expected to end this year around 12% smaller than it started as a result of the pandemic and the restrictions on business activity and public life. That would be its deepest recession in three centuries.

# Cabinet to press ahead with PSU stake sale: FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Kolkata, Dec 17:** The government will press ahead with the sale of public sector companies that have been approved by the Cabinet, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Thursday. Highlighting that FDI flow into India is much higher compared to other emerging economies, she said India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals, ability to do reforms and a stable government help attract long-term foreign funds into Indian businesses.



India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals and ability to do reforms help attract long-term foreign funds into businesses, said Sitharaman

The government has approved strategic sale, along with transfer of management control, in over 25 public sector companies

"Even during the pandemic, our efforts to disinvest some of those big companies are going on fine. The Eols have come in, the next stage is going on and even within this financial year. I expect DIPAM to be able to prove that they are even more actively engaging in those disinvestments for which cabinet has already given approval," Sitharaman said while addressing the AGM of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICC). The government has set an ambitious ₹2.01 lakh crore disinvestment target in the current fiscal. However, COVID pandemic has derailed the stake sale plans and so far over ₹11,006 crore has been mopped up from minority stake sale in various CPSEs. The Cabinet has approved strategic

sale, along with transfer of management control, in over 25 public sector companies, including Air India, BPCL, Pawan Hans, Scooters India, Bharat Earth Movers Ltd (BEML), Shipping Corporation, Cement Corporation and some steel plants of SAIL. The process of sale of BPCL and Air India is ongoing and the government has received "multiple expressions of interest" in these two companies. Sitharaman mentioned that the government has taken several measures to support the economy but no amount of intervention will be adequate to deal with the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The finance minister said public expenditure will continue particularly for infrastructure and with the tax concessions that the government has doled out several sov-

ereign funds and pension funds are keen to invest in infrastructure projects outlined in the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP). "Today we are able to see with all the tax concessions that we have given, several sovereign funds and pension funds from abroad are keen to come to India, and that kind of an investment readiness explains why there is an inward FDI flow into India. Inward FDI flow into India is much, much higher in proportion than compared comparable economies, emerging economies... "So they (foreign funds) are committed to be here. They are coming in because our macroeconomic fundamentals are strong, even as there are challenges, but more importantly there is an elected stable government," she said.

## SC reserves judgement in Tata-Mistry case

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** The Supreme Court (SC) Thursday reserved its verdict on the cross appeals filed by Tata Sons Pvt Ltd and Cyrus Investments Pvt Ltd against the appellate tribunal NCLAT order which had restored Cyrus Mistry as the executive chairman of the over \$100 billion salt-to-software Tata conglomerate. A bench comprising Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian asked the parties to file compiled written submissions and subject index in the matter. During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing, Shapoorji Pallonji (SP) Group claimed that there was breach of Articles of Association and provisions of the Companies Act in the removal of Cyrus Mistry as the chairman of Tata Sons in October 2016. The Tatas denied the allegations and claimed there was no wrong doing as they were well within their rights to remove Mistry. The apex court had January 10 granted relief to Tata group by staying the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order of December 18 last year by which Mistry was restored as the executive chairman of the conglomerate. Mistry had succeeded Ratan Tata as chairman of Tata Sons in 2012 but was ousted four years later October 24, 2016.



**The apex court had January 10 granted relief to Tata group by staying the NCLAT order of December 18 last year**

The top court May 29 had issued notice to Tata Sons and others on a cross-appeal filed by Cyrus Investments Pvt Ltd. Tata Sons had earlier told the top court that it was not a "two-group company" and there was no "quasi-partnership" between it and Cyrus Investments Pvt Ltd. Tata Sons had made the averments in an affidavit filed in the apex court while responding to the cross-appeal filed by Cyrus Investments seeking removal of alleged anomalies in the NCLAT order for getting representation on the TSPL's board in proportion to the stakes held by his family. Mistry had also filed an affidavit to the apex court saying the Tata Group had an adjusted net loss of ₹13,000 crore in 2019 - the worst losses in three decades.

## Apex court reserves verdict on extension

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** The Supreme Court (SC) has reserved its verdict on pleas requesting an extension of the loan moratorium period. The loan moratorium period lasted for six months and had ended August 31, 2020. Senior lawyer Ravindra Srivastava, on behalf of the Chhattisgarh industry bodies, said the impact of Covid-19 in continuous and many people are still suffering financially. He said this is a case where the NDMA should have come out instead of handing over the burden to the banks. He went on to say that there has to be a solution regarding the moratorium and that the power cannot be left to the

banks. "Instead RBI should be making provisions for resolution of processes," he said. "NDMA has to collect empirical data and make a comprehensive policy, not arguing that there needs to be a complete waiver. There can be a partial waiver also but for this, there is a need for a calibrated policy under the Disaster Management Act (DMA)," Srivastava said. It may be noted that the Reserve Bank of India had in March announced a moratorium on repayment of term deposits for three months, later extended till August 31. The move was intended to provide relief to borrowers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Supreme Court had also instructed banks to not declare accounts as NPAs until further orders.

## Udaan curates 2,500 leading brands

**Bhubaneswar:** Udaan, India's largest business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce platform, Friday announced that it now has over 5 lakh products curated across 2,500 national and regional brands on its platform. Leading brands across categories from HUL, P&G, ITC, Coca Cola, PepsiCo, Reckitt Benckiser, Dabur, Colgate, Apple, LG, HP, Adidas, Reebok, Godrej, Bajaj, Prestige, boAT, Sandisk, Karbonn, Micromax, Pigeon, Haldiram's, Zyduz Wellness, Biba, Relaxo, and VKC among others, have entered into a partnership, and are leveraging Udaan's strong distribution network to reach over three million retailers with an everyday delivery cycle across 900 cities covering more than 12,000 pin codes. Udaan has achieved this landmark milestone within four years of its launch.



## BIZ BUZZ

**IFFALCON launches washing machine**  
**Bhubaneswar:** IFFALCON, TCL's sub-brand, launched its first 8-kg front load washing machine to offer a seamless laundry experience to users during winters. The brand-new machine offers cutting-edge features such as auto error diagnosis, digital display, auto drum clean, and honeycomb crystal drum, all of these at ₹22,499, available on e-platform. The model is available in white and silver, with LED display technology making it easy for the users to monitor the several functions during the wash. The auto error diagnosis lets the user know if there is any technical error in the machine so that it's easier to fix it accordingly before the situation exacerbates. With auto drum clean, users don't have to wash their drums manually anymore. The cleaning process of the drum is totally automated, thereby making the laundry experience more convenient.

## Vedanta Lanjigarh wins CII National Award

**Bhubaneswar:** Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh, the premier producer of metallurgical grade alumina in India, bagged the prestigious CII National Award for Excellence in Water Management for the year 2020. The plant has been recognised as a 'Noteworthy Water Efficient Unit' in 'Within the Fence Category' during the National Competition for Excellence in Water Management. Among 100 participants, Vedanta bagged the coveted award. Santosh Nayak, Head-Environment, Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh received the award during the awards ceremony held virtually December 16, 2020. The unit is taking measures towards prevention of water pollution.



# 'Indian professionals cautiously optimistic heading into 2021'

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** Indian professionals are cautiously optimistic heading into 2021 as two in five Indian professionals expect an increase in the number of new jobs, LinkedIn year-end data shows. LinkedIn Thursday released key survey and platform data for 2020. According to LinkedIn year-end data, India has remained cautiously optimistic and resilient in the face of uncertainty, and overall confidence scores remained steady between 50 and 57 from April to November. As per the findings, two in five (40%) Indian professionals expect an increase in the number of new jobs (up from 19% in April), and

one in two (53%) expect their companies to do better in the next six months, going into 2021. The workforce sentiment data and confidence scores are based on the online survey responses of 21,066 professionals from April to November 2020 as part of the LinkedIn Workforce Confidence Index, which is a fortnightly pulse on the confidence of the Indian workforce. "The year 2020 was a disruptive year, and 2021 will help us tackle unforeseen challenges and prepare for new realities. Going forward, India will reimagine the future of work across five areas, specifically the workplace, careers, recruiting, business, and leadership styles," said Ashutosh Gupta, India Country



Manager, LinkedIn. Gupta further noted that "in 2021,

skills-first hiring will be a pivotal trend, the Chief Human Resources

Officer (CHRO) will play a critical role, virtual collaboration will become stronger, and learning will be part of everyone's job. At LinkedIn, we will continue to help professionals navigate these changes and we will stay committed to helping members get closer to opportunities." In 2020, online learning and digital skills took centre stage and Indian professionals pivoted to up-skill themselves and stay productive. LinkedIn data states that the average number of monthly learning hours on LinkedIn Learning increased 3X from April to December 2020, compared to pre-COVID months of January and February. As per LinkedIn's year-end findings, three in five (57%) profes-

sionals say they will increase their time spent in online learning going forward. However, working in isolation and navigating a tough job market over the past few months has adversely affected India's emotional well-being and financial outlook. As of November 2020, four in five (78%) unemployed professionals feel stressed, and only one in three (32%) Indians expect their incomes to increase, heading into the New Year. "This holiday season, three in five (61%) Indian professionals said they will take less time off, while about nine in ten (87%) said they will spend equal or more time working at their primary jobs this year-end, it noted.

# Kohli's run-out changes momentum as hosts take control of day/night Test

## OZ RESTRICT INDIA TO 233/6



**SCORECARD**

**INDIA 1ST INNINGS**

Prithvi Shaw b Starc 0, Mayank Agarwal b Cummins 17, Cheteshwar Pujara c Labuschagne b Lyon 43, Virat Kohli run-out 74, Ajinkya Rahane lbw b Starc 42, Hanuma Vihari lbw b Hazlewood 16, Wriddhiman Saha batting 9, Ravichandran Ashwin batting 15;

**Extras:** 17 (b-2, lb-7, nb-7, w-1); **Total 233/6 (89 overs).**

**FALL:** 1/0 (Shaw), 2/32 (Mayank), 3/100 (Pujara), 4/188 (Kohli), 5/196 (Rahane), 6/206 (Vihari).

**BOWLING:** Mitchell Starc 19-4-49-2, Josh Hazlewood 20-6-47-1, Pat Cummins 19-7-42-1, Cameron Green 9-2-15-0, Nathan Lyon 21-2-68-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-3-0.

### Opening day play's reactions

**CHETESHWAR PUJARA**

**About Indian innings:** We were in a very good position in the first two sessions. We needed to make sure that we don't lose wickets when the ball is swinging. It was a great day of Test cricket and there are no regrets at all about the strategy. We couldn't have lost more wickets playing shots and getting bowled in a day.

**About his innings:** Test cricket needs patience. If the wicket is flat, then you can be aggressive but when it's helping the bowlers, you can't play a lot of shots. In overseas conditions, you don't want a total of less than 200 runs (in first innings). In the first two sessions, the bowlers are fresh and the pitch is fresh.

**About Lyon:** He gets a lot of revs (revolutions) on the ball. His line and length have really improved. He likes taking the challenge and while facing him, you also need to be prepared to face that challenge.

**NATHAN LYON**

**About Kohli's dismissal:** It was massive. A wicket like that, run out, specially of Virat is massive. It was good to be back on board after the Ashes. He was batting pretty well, so happy with that.

**Battle with Kohli & Pujara:** It was good fun, good conversations there but battle there is against the best players of the world. On a day-one wicket, it was a great challenge. They (Kohli and Pujara) are different in style and approach, batting against spin bowling. I am always up for the challenge against best batsmen.

**About team's mood:** Definitely satisfying, but we can get a lot better. We are very happy with where we are at but can keep pushing the boundaries and keep getting better as a bowling unit. We are happy, but still lot of work to do.

**Edges fell short of fielders:** If you look at India's top order, they play with extremely soft hands. The wicket was pretty good. We are looking forward to bowling in the second innings. Hopefully we will have good batting innings. The wicket will only get better. The pink ball gets soft a bit early. All in all very good wicket.

**About Green & Starc:** It's exciting, isn't it. He (Green) is extremely impressive. He seems to be an exceptional cricketer, lovely fellow, I already like his company. (And) Starc is (a) world class player, I love playing with him.



Cheteshwar Pujara plays a cut shot during his dodgy innings

was a fantastic advertisement of top quality Test cricket, it can't be denied that Pujara's dogged approach did make Kohli also go into his shell before he and Rahane showed lot of intent in the final session.

When Pujara used more pads against Lyon, Kohli played the copy-book forward defence, presenting his bat first. When an opportunity came along, he punched over Lyon's head for a boundary.

In the morning, Prithvi Shaw's (0) poor technique was once again exposed by Starc while Mayank Agarwal (17) got a beauty from Pat Cummins.

The Australian pace trio of Starc (2/49), Josh Hazlewood (1/47) and Pat Cummins (1/42) bowled a very steady line comprising mostly of fuller deliveries.

At the start, it was another disappointing mode of dismissal for Shaw, who according to many, was a rather surprising selection over an in-form Shubman Gill.

Starc kept a full delivery, which slightly shaped in, and the opener, having faced one delivery, went for an expansive drive, playing away from his body only to drag it back onto the stumps.

Agarwal was a bit adventurous as he found India's first boundary with a cover drive off Hazlewood. An uppish square drive off Starc got him a second one.

But Cummins produced one that was fast and moved off the track and Agarwal was beaten for pace as replays showed that he couldn't even complete landing on his front-foot.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Adelaide, Dec 17:** Virat Kohli's enduring love affair with Adelaide Oval resulted in a classy 74 but his untimely run-out triggered a batting collapse as India ended the opening day at 233 for 6 against Australia in the first Day/Night Test here Thursday.

Kohli, who looked in complete command, was run out when his deputy Ajinkya Rahane backed out after calling for a single and it happened just before the second new ball was taken.

From a comfortable 188/3, India slumped to 206/6 as Rahane and Hanuma Vihari (16) found the pace and swing generated by the pink ball under lights too hot to handle. Ravichandran Ashwin (15 batting) and Wriddhiman Saha (9 batting) saw off the final few overs and also got a few runs.

In conditions, which can't exactly be called batting friendly, Kohli blended the right amount of caution and aggression in his 180-ball innings, showing one and all that he is a few lightyears ahead of his



**TURNING POINT:** Lyon whips the bails off as Kohli is left stranded mid-pitch looking at Ajinkya Rahane who apologises to his skipper for the wrong call

peers when it comes to quality batsmanship.

If Cheteshwar Pujara (43 off 160 balls) let bowlers dictate terms with an ultra-defensive approach, his skipper gave opposition the respect it deserved but also from time to time, played those shots to drive home a point.

His 88-run partnership with Rahane (42 off 91 balls) during the

approach became his own undoing as India literally crawled during the first two sessions.

So intent was Pujara on blocking anything and leaving everything for the better part of his innings, that a 68-run stand for the third wicket with Kohli couldn't release pressure going into the second break of the evening.

Not often does one find a batsman take 148 balls to score a boundary and it became a battle of attrition between Pujara and star spinner Nathan Lyon (1/68) during the post-dinner session.

It made for a fascinating hour of Test cricket, a throwback to the good old days when batsmen would plonk their front-foot with a big stride forward and use their pads as the first line of defence.

He did hit Lyon for a couple of boundaries trying to break the shackles but then came a classical off-break which had both turn and bounce and the bat-pad fielder Marnus Labuschagne, at leg-gully, lunged forward to take an easy catch.

While the art of defensive batting

final session nearly put India on even keel but fortunes tilted once Kohli was back in the pavilion.

Rahane was soon snapped with the second new ball by Mitchell Starc (2/49), easily the best bowler in action. The knock will certainly be among the Indian captain's favourites as he hit three kinds of pull-shots to the pacers.

Earlier, Pujara's ultra-defensive

## Firmino scores late as Reds beat Spurs

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Liverpool, Dec 17:** Roberto Firmino scored with a 90th-minute header as Liverpool beat Tottenham 2-1 to climb above their opponents to the top of the Premier League.

In a victory reminiscent of so many which carried the Reds to their first title in 30 years last season, Liverpool's relentlessness was rewarded when the Brazil striker powered home a header from Andy Robertson's corner with the clock ticking toward stoppage time Wednesday.

Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho looked sickened, having assumed his side had done enough to earn the point to stay in first place.

Liverpool had comfortably out-shot their opponents during the 90 minutes, in which it enjoyed 76 per cent possession, but saw Mohamed Salah's 26th-minute goal canceled

out by Son Heung-min's effort on a breakaway in the first half.

The hosts looked set to be frustrated by Mourinho's rope-a-dope game plan, which the Portuguese coach seemed satisfied enough with to replace midfielder Steven Bergwijn, who hit the post in the second half and looked a threat on the counterattack, with left back Sergio Reguilon with 15 minutes to go.

But Jurgen Klopp's side has seen this sort of thing before and, encouraged by their opponents' passivity, continued to drive forward. It eventually brought its reward.

How much the victory meant was evident as Klopp, having had words with Mourinho, raced onto the field at the final whistle and lifted Sadio Mane off his feet before embracing each and every one of his players. He then produced his trademark triple fist-pump for the supporters on The Kop. Liverpool moved three points clear after 13 games.



Roberto Firmino is ecstatic after scoring Liverpool's winner against Spurs

## Silva, Chhetri break Odisha FC hearts



Odisha FC players (L) celebrate their equaliser with the other team team staff before Cleiton Silva's (R) winner for BFC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Goa, Dec 17:** Bengaluru FC piled on further misery on Odisha FC with a 2-1 win in the Indian Super League (ISL) at GMC Stadium in Bambolim, Thursday.

Cleiton Silva (79th minute) scored the match-winner for Bengaluru after Steven Taylor (71st) had cancelled out Sunil Chhetri (38th) first-half lead for the Blues, who remained unbeaten in their six

matches this season.

Bengaluru were dominant from the start but were lucky not to fall behind early in the game. Diego Mauricio played a delightful through ball for Manuel Onwu, who managed to get the ball past Gurpreet, but his celebrations were curtailed, as the assistant referee signaled it offside.

Odisha had their moments in the game with Onwu and Jerry Mawihmingthanga creating problems for the Bengaluru defense but



failed to test their keeper. They failed to record a single shot on target in the first session.

Bengaluru dominated with 58 per cent possession in the first half but despite playing an attacking game, they struggled to get the ball past the Odisha defence line.

Bengaluru finally got the breakthrough in the 38th minute and it was their skipper Chhetri who got the much-needed goal.

Dimas Delgado found Harmanjot

Khabra who routed the attack from the right and floated a perfect cross into the box. Chhetri leapt higher than Shubham Sarangi and headed home. The goal made him the first Indian player to record 50 goal contributions in the ISL — 42 goals and eight assists.

The home team came back stronger after the restart in search of an equaliser. They nearly scored when Sarangi bent in a delivery into the box, which fell into Gaurav Bora's path. The defender's shot took a deflection off a Bengaluru player forcing keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu to dive at full length to push the ball away. Bengaluru nearly doubled their lead when Erik Paartalu's shot was brilliantly saved by Arshdeep Singh.

At the other end, Odisha made it all square from a set-piece. Skipper Taylor made a fine run to reach the end of Jerry's free-kick and nodded in the equalizer.

But the visitors were determined to regain their lead and were successful in the 79th minute. On receiving a long ball, Udanta Singh headed in for Deshorn Brown in the box. The latter played it into Silva's path. The Brazilian did not miss from close range.

## Alba leads Barca to 2-1 win over Real Sociedad

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Barcelona, Dec 17:** Barcelona defender Jordi Alba scored one goal and set up another to spark a 2-1 comeback victory over Real Sociedad, depriving the Basque Country side of the Spanish league lead.

Alba cancelled out Willian Jose's opener by curling in a strike in the 32nd minute Wednesday. The left back then helped the hosts take the lead a minute before halftime when he crossed for Frenkie de Jong to score.

The result shuffled the order of Sociedad, Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid, all level on points at the top of the table and separated only by goal difference. Atletico is now in first place, Sociedad in second, and Madrid in third.

The win by Barcelona boosted their chances of joining the tightly-contest title race. Lionel Messi's team climbed into fifth place, six points adrift the front-runners. Atletico have three games in hand, Barcelona two, and Madrid one, in respect to Sociedad.

## Boxing World Cup: Panghal in final, 4 medals assured

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** Amit Panghal (52kg) stormed into the final after three other Indian boxers were assured of medals at the World Cup in Cologne, Germany on Thursday even as a positive COVID-19 case among the support staff caused some anxiety in the contingent.

Asian Games champion Panghal defeated Frenchman Billal Bennama, a bronze-medallist from the World Championship where the Indian won a silver, in his semi-final bout. The diminutive Haryana-lad prevailed 5-0 in the clash.

Earlier, three Indian women were also assured of medals after finding themselves in semifinals when draws were unveiled. Pooja Rani (75kg), Manisha (57kg) and Simranjeet Kaur (60kg) made the last four due to the small size of their respective draws.

The team was hit by a positive COVID-19 case in a support staff member. However, none of the travelling boxers returned positive in a fresh round of testing done after the case came to light.

"A physio, Rohit Kashyap, has tested positive for COVID-19 but the boxers are fine. They have been tested again

and returned negative. The physio has been isolated and is doing alright," a source in the Sports Authority of India (SAI) told this agency.

The contingent was also hit by fitness issues with four-time Asian medallist Shiva Thapa (63kg) and Sanjeet (91kg) forced to pull out of the tournament due to minor niggles. "Just unfortunate, what more one can say," said an official close to the team.

The rest of the team will compete as planned in the three-day event after which it will return to the country, completing an over a month long training-cum-competition stint in Europe.

