

**REEL TO REAL**  
Actor Bidita Bag had one of her biggest realisations in life while shooting for web series 'The Missing Stone'

LEISURE P2

**FOR FLOODPLAIN PROTECTION**  
The NGT asks the state government to frame rules for protection of Mahanadi floodplains

DOWNTOWN P4

**CHINA 'OBSTRUCTING' PROBE**  
The US accuses Beijing of 'obstructing' a WHO probe into the origin of coronavirus in Chinese city of Wuhan

INTERNATIONAL P10



## Didi will be all alone: Shah

AMIT SHAH IS ON A TWO-DAY VISIT TO BENGAL TO TAKE STOCK OF THE BJP'S STRENGTH IN THE DISTRICTS AHEAD OF THE ASSEMBLY POLLS NEXT YEAR

AGENCIES

**Kolkata, Dec 19:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah Saturday attacked the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal and said that by the time the election comes, the Chief Minister would be left all alone in her party.

"By the time elections come, you will be left all alone... Why are so many people leaving Trinamool Congress now? Because of the misrule, corruption and nepotism of Mamata Banerjee," Shah said at his mega rally.

The minister said that this is just the beginning in Bengal.

"You gave three decades to Congress, three decades to Communists and 10 years to Mamata 'Didi'. Give just five years to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), we will transform Bengal into 'Sonar Bangla'," he said.

Shah welcomed Suvendu Adhikari and several others to the BJP. He said that senior party members are leaving Trinamool Congress because of corruption and growing discontent



among the common people.

Adhikari Thursday resigned from the primary membership of the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal. He had tendered his resignation addressing an official letter to Trinamool supremo Mamata Banerjee. Adhikari also resigned from the state legislative Assembly Wednesday evening. He went to the Assembly building and submit-

ted a hand-written letter at the secretariat as speaker Biman Banerjee was not present in his office.

Earlier, Adhikari had tendered his resignation as minister from the Mamata Banerjee-led state cabinet last month, November 27. He had also left the chairperson's post of the Hooghly River Bridge Commissioner's (HRBC) two days before that.

### THE TURNCOATS

■ 6 sitting legislators of the TMC and four others from the Left and the Congress joined the BJP

■ TMC's Burdwan East LS MP, Sunil Mandal; former minister Shyama Prasad Mukherjee; former LS member from north Bengal's Alipurduar, Dasrath Tirkey; and 15 civic body councillors of the TMC and other parties picked up the BJP flag along with at least 20 dist-level leaders

■ Apart from Adhikari, the other TMC MLAs who joined the BJP are: Shilbhada Dutta from Barrackpore; Banashri Maiti from the Kanthi North in East Midnapore; Sukra Munda from Nagrakata in Jalpaiguri district; Biswajit Kundu from Kalna in East Burdwan; and Saikat Panja from Manteswar in East Burdwan

■ Significantly, veteran leader Bani Singha Roy from Howrah district, who is one of the founder vice-presidents of the TMC, also joined the BJP

MORE P9

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## SIT picks up college student Saroj Sethy

Sethy had alleged that the SIT chief and IPS officer Arun Bothra had offered him ₹5 lakh while asking him to take the blame for the 5-year-old Nayagarh girl Pari's 'murder'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nayagarh, Dec 19:** The Special Investigation Team (SIT) picked up Nayagarh College student Saroj Kumar Sethy Saturday morning along with two of his family members from Jadupur for interrogation in Pari murder case.

Sethy had alleged two days ago that the SIT chief and IPS officer Arun Bothra had offered him ₹5 lakh, thereby asking him to take the blame for the 5-year-old Nayagarh girl Pari's much-debated murder.

According to a source, officials of the investigating team have started interrogating Sethy, his mother and sister in connection with the alleged abduction and murder case at an undisclosed place.

Notably, the startling revelation came a day after the SIT submitted an affidavit



informing the Orissa High Court (OHC) in Cuttack that the 5-year-old girl was sexually assaulted prior to being killed, sources said. "The SIT members collected my blood and swab samples as well as my clothes from our house. Arun Bothra offered me ₹5 lakh to take the blame for her murder," Sethy said December 17 claiming that his name has been falsely implicated in the case. "Even though I am above 18 years of age, the SIT chief had assured me of reducing the age to claim that I am a juvenile so that quantum of punishment can be relaxed," the college student had added.

## ED goes after Farooq's assets

The agency attaches assets worth ₹11.86 cr of Farooq Abdullah and others in connection with its money laundering probe

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** The ED has attached assets worth ₹11.86 crore of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah and others in connection with its money laundering probe linked to alleged financial irregularities in the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association, official sources said Saturday.



They said the agency has issued a provisional attachment order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and the attached properties are located in Jammu and Srinagar. Two immovable assets are residential, one is a commercial property while three other plots of land have also been attached by the Enforcement Directorate, they said.

While the book value of these attached properties is ₹11.86 crore, their market value is about ₹60-70 crore, they added.

The 83-year-old NC patron has been questioned by the ED in this case a number of times, the last being in October at Srinagar.

WEATHER	
BHUB	CTK
MAX 27.6°C	27.4°C
MIN 16.5°C	13.8°C
Humidity 92%	70%
Rainfall Nil	Fog or mist in the morning

## 'NONE' OBJECTS TO RAHUL AS CONGRESS PREZ

The party will hold many such meetings like the Saturday's one in the coming days

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Interim Congress chief Sonia Gandhi's meeting with senior Congress leaders Saturday morning ended after almost five hours. Sources said nobody in the meeting objected to Rahul Gandhi's name from being proposed for the party chief's position again, although there will be 'Chintan shivir' or brain storming camps soon.

"No one has a problem with Rahul Gandhi, and this is not just for today. Everybody said that we need Rahul Gandhi's leadership. We must not fall into the trap of other people who are trying to distract the party's agenda," senior party leader Pawan Bansal said emerging out of the most awaited meeting ever since the group of 23 had shot a letter to Sonia Gandhi in August this year.

The meeting which lasted for

hours after starting off a little after 10.30 am and went off on a cordial note despite the participation from the disgruntled group, saw Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka speak at the meeting.

Several other senior leaders also brought in suggestion with fresh measures for strengthening the party.

Prithiviraj Chavan, one of the signatories of the G23 letter, said after the meeting: "Nineteen leaders of Congress met and discussed means to

strengthen the party. A clear future course is on the anvil." "It is the first of such meetings. More meetings will take place. 'Chintan shivirs' in line with Shimla and Pachmarhi will be organised."

He said suggestions of the party leaders will be recorded. The meeting at the residence of the Congress interim chief included several of the 'dissident' leaders.



## Pari case: NCPCR for central probe

**NEW DELHI:** Expressing dissatisfaction over police investigation in Pari murder case, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has recommended a thorough investigation into the case by a central agency. The Commission noted that the investigation conducted by the police authorities is "severely flawed with glaring defects, which has caused untoward delay in the investigation of this serious incident of murder of a minor girl." The Commission also recommended disciplinary action against the investigating officers of Pari murder case. "In view of the erroneous investigation conducted by the police authorities in this serious incident of murder of a minor girl, the Commission recommends for disciplinary action to be taken against the investigating officers in the matter and requests your good offices to recommend for a thorough investigation of this incident by a central agency," the Commission said.



MORE P4

## SANTA IS COMING



With the pandemic unable to dampen festive spirit, customers check out a Santa Claus doll in Bhubaneswar ahead of Christmas, Saturday

PICT BY: BIKASH NAVAK

## US AUTHORISES MODERNA VAX

AGENCIES

**New York, Dec 19:** Moderna Inc's coronavirus vaccine Friday became the second to receive emergency use authorisation (EUA) from the US Food and Drug Administration.

Millions of doses of the Moderna vaccine are expected to be added to the US rollout, which began this week with healthcare workers. Older people in long-term care facilities are next in line for vaccines, with a US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expert panel Sunday set to recommend what groups follow, as industries compete to have their



workers given precedence.

The FDA announced the authorisation the day after the agency's panel of outside experts endorsed its use and a week after the FDA authorised a vaccine from Pfizer Inc and German partner BioNTech SE. The vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech, based on similar technology, has been put into the arms of thousands of US healthcare workers this week in a massive nationwide rollout. Moderna injections are expected to begin in coming days for adults 18 years old and up.

"With the availability of two vaccines now for the prevention of COVID-19, the FDA has taken another crucial step in the fight against this global pandemic that is causing vast numbers of hospitalisations and deaths in the United States each day," FDA Commissioner Stephen M Hahn, MD, said in a statement.

Moderna's shot is expected to be used in harder-to-reach locations, such as rural hospitals. The vaccine needs to be stored and shipped frozen, but does not require the ultra-cold temperatures of the Pfizer/BioNTech shot.

IT'S VERY HARD TO PUT (MY) FEELINGS INTO WORDS. WE HAD A LEAD OF 60 WHEN WE ARRIVED TODAY AND JUST COLLAPSED COMPLETELY

VIRAT KOHLI | CAPTAIN, INDIAN CRICKET TEAM



## INDIA POST THEIR LOWEST TEST TOTAL

AGENCIES

**Adelaide, Dec 19:** Australia crushed India by eight wickets inside three days of the first test at Adelaide Oval Saturday. The Aussies skittled the tourists for their lowest innings score in 88 years of test cricket and took a 1-0 lead in the four-match series.

Josh Hazlewood (5-8) and Pat Cummins (4-21) turned a tight day-night test on its head in a devastating spell of pace bowling to open the day, ripping through the much-vaunted Indian batting line-up in less than two hours to dismiss the tourists for 36.

Australia's batsmen, playing without pressure, chased down the victory target of 90 runs with some ease, opener Joe Burns giving his confidence a much-needed boost with an unbeaten 51 that included the six which secured victory.

If the tourists were shell-shocked, the hosts were also taken aback by a turn of events which few would have predicted when India came out to bat with a 62-run lead

and nine second-innings wickets in hand.

"We were expecting a real dogfight right to the end, late day four, maybe day five in this test," said Australia skipper Tim Paine. "Again, it shows the talent we have with the ball and when our boys execute, and there's anything in the wicket, that's what can happen."

The margin of victory will be a hefty blow to India's morale as well as their hopes of repeating their maiden test series triumph in Australia two years ago.

None of India's batsmen, including the prolific Virat Kohli and stalwart Cheteshwar Pujara, managed to get into double figures - only the second time that has happened to any team in a test match.

Their innings score of 36 was the lowest in 544 tests going back to 1932, worse than their previous low of 42 against England at Lords in 1974. Only two countries have managed fewer runs in the long history of the format.

India's total of 36 is also the joint fourth lowest total in the history of Test cricket that

has seen 2,396 Test matches played over 142 years. It is also the second lowest score in the post World War II period, just 10 runs more than the 26 by New Zealand in 1955, the lowest-ever in Test cricket.

Among the four lowest totals scored across seven different innings, the pre-War South African teams take the largest share, getting out for 30 twice and 35 and 36 once each.

Behind New Zealand's 26-run total, are South Africa's two scores of 30, first in 1896 against England at Port Elizabeth and then against the same team in Birmingham in 1924.

South Africa also made 35 in 1899 at Cape Town, also against England. The 1932 South African team could score just 36 against Australia at Melbourne.

The Aussies of 1902 were skittled out by England at Birmingham for 36 - the same score as India got in the second innings at the Adelaide Oval in this week's pink-ball Test. India's previous low of 42 now stands as joint sixth in the list of low scores. Ireland's 38 at Lord's in 2019 against England is the fifth lowest score.



...if any other team had been facing that kind of bowling, they would have also got out, maybe not all-out for 36, maybe 72 or 80-90 but the way Hazlewood, Cummins bowled and the earlier three-over spell from Starc, they asked a lot of questions

SUNIL GAVASKAR | FORMER INDIAN CRICKETER





## PORTMAN WAS BULLIED FOR BEING A CHILD ACTOR

Hollywood actress Natalie Portman revealed that she was bullied in school for being a child actress. She said this while speaking to actress Drew Barrymore on a show. The two were discussing their experiences as child stars.

## HOLMES MAKES RELATIONSHIP WITH CHEF VITOLO OFFICIAL

Actress Katie Holmes has made her relationship with chef Emilio Vitolo Jr. official on social media. Vitolo wished Holmes on her 42nd birthday, sharing a black-and-white photograph of the couple at dinner. In the picture, Holmes is seen sitting on his lap.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today, you need to access every bit of your mental agility. Quick and spontaneous decisions are the need of the hour. But a word of caution from Ganesh: take advice, as these decisions could have long-term implications, especially if they involve money.

**TAURUS**  
You have an easy care-free day ahead. There will be no woes or worries, says Ganesh. But to be inclined to take up too many things at one time, more than you can handle. This may, in turn, get you stressed and uptight.

**GEMINI**  
You are likely to make a list of your daily chores that take most of your time. Then you will find a way to outsource these activities or eliminate them from your routine altogether. You will also devote a lot of your time to meditation.

**CANCER**  
Today, you will put your heart and soul into whatever task you take up. But the results may not be too forthcoming. However, that should not be a reason for you to get dejected or anxious. You will get your due sooner or later.

**LEO**  
If you are wondering whether you'll get the carrot or the stick today, then Ganesh has some good news for you: the day promises to bring only rewards for you. This will be especially true for your workplace, where your innate talents get recognised today.

**VIRGO**  
Today may prove to be a turning point for you. You will explore the opportunities to secure the money needed to make your future bright. Matters regarding relationships will be on the top of your priority list today.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says your friend who is very influential will be lucky for you. You will be able to start a new joint venture business with out any obstacles. Your efficiency and hard work will be appreciated.

**SCORPIO**  
Two words will define your day — eloquence and elegance. Sweet talk and compliments may take you a long way, but do not become complacent and get carried away with your success. Sometimes, saying the right thing may be more beneficial than saying what the other person wants to hear.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
According to Ganesh, money is likely to slip-off your hand easily today. Try to wave off unnecessary expenditure. The entire day is spent managing funds, while the evening brings a lot of positive energy with it. You prefer to sit back and relax.

**CAPRICORN**  
Paradise is where patience leads you, success is the other terminus, says Ganesh. Keeping your cool will benefit you in more ways than you would have imagined, so think twice before you unleash your vengeance on your foes. You are also likely to have a heart-to-heart conversation with your beloved and make him/her feel wanted.

**AQUARIUS**  
You have been turning a blind eye towards the pending work you are loaded with. But, today you will take up the challenge of getting done with the pile of work. You may clean your desk at work or room, make payments and purchases, and clear the mess.

**PISCES**  
Your inherent talents, competitive colleagues and supportive superiors will spur you on to great heights at the workplace, beginning today. Make sure that you do not get carried away by little victories, says Ganesh.

## Bidita reveals her biggest realisation

**Mumbai:** Actress Bidita Bag, who plays the female protagonist in the upcoming web series *The Missing Stone*, says she had one of her biggest realisations in life while portraying the character of Dhvani in the show. "The biggest realisation I had while playing Dhvani was that no matter how hard you try, you can never know everything about a person, and in this plot Dhvani is left shattered when she realises everyone she considers

dear has a hidden agenda that goes beyond her wildest dreams," she said.

The five-episode web series is the story of a happily-married couple, Dhvani and Sahir. With Dhvani's birthday coming up, she expects the usual surprise from her younger sister Payal, who plans something elaborate each year. This year, Payal has organised a weekend getaway at a resort. The surprise soon turns into shock when Payal does not arrive at the resort.

The show also features Barun Sobti along with Rashi Mal, Saqib Ayub, Vitthal Kale, Pallavi Patil.

## BIG B ON HOW HE WAS TORTURED AT SHOOT

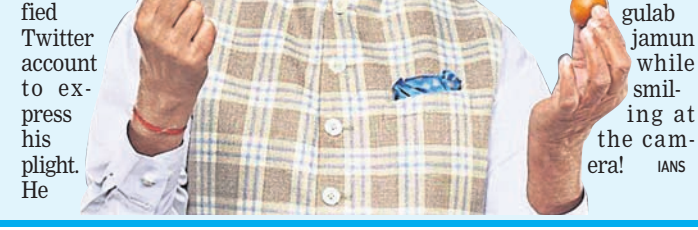
**Mumbai:** Iconic actor Amitabh Bachchan Saturday revealed the biggest torture he has faced while shooting.

For the veteran actor, who abstains from eating sweets, the biggest torture was to pose with a rasgulla and gulab jamun in hand for a commercial and pretend as if he is delighted after eating them!

Big B took to his verified Twitter account to express his plight. He

wrote in Hindi: "I have quit eating sweets and after that I have to pose with a rasgulla and gulab jamun in my hand during the shoot, and was asked to give an expression which reveals how tasty it feels after eating them! There can't be a bigger torture than this."

The veteran actor also shared a couple of photographs from the shoot where he can be seen happily posing with a rasgulla and



gulab jamun while smiling at the camera! IANS



## Neha celebrates her pregnancy with new song

**Mumbai:** Singer Neha Kakkar Saturday announced a new song to celebrate her pregnancy. She will release the song December 22.

Titled *Khyaal rakhya kar*, the song has been announced by Neha just a day after the singer announced her pregnancy in front of the world.

Neha had revealed on social media Friday that she is expecting her first child with husband, singer Rohanpreet Singh. She flaunted her baby bump in a photograph she shared on



her

verified Instagram account along her post.

The couple tied the knot in October this year.

The video of *Khyaal rakhya kar* features Neha alongside husband Rohanpreet. The lyrics have been penned by Babbu while the music is composed by Rajat Nagpal.



## Nila Madhab's maiden Odia film makes it to IFFI-2020

'*Kalira Atita*', based on the prophecies of 'Malika', is about a man from Satabhaya village in Kendrapara district which has been swallowed by the sea



A still from the movie

POST NEWS NETWORK

**BHUBANESWAR:** National Award winning movie producer-director Nila Madhab Panda's Odia movie *Kalira Atita* (Yesterday's Past) has been selected to be screened in the prestigious Indian Panorama section of 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) to be held in Goa from January 16-24, 2021.

Speaking on the selection the *I Am Kalam* director said, "Kalira Atita is my first Odia film and I am really happy that it has been picked up for screening at prestigious IFFI. This is definitely good news and I hope year 2021 will bring more cheer."

If prophecies are to be believed, the global warming and subsequent rise in the water level in the Bay of Bengal will make Puri go under water.

Achyutananda Das, a 16th century saint from Odisha, had written about it in his famous book Achutananda Malika.

Panda's latest film, about a man from Satabhaya village in Kendrapara district which has been swallowed by the sea, is based on the prophecies of



Actor Pitobash Tripathy in the film

Malika. The director, who had been shooting the film since 2005, said the reason he wanted to make it is because for many climate change is still a future shock which is not true. "This film highlights the harsh reality of how people are losing their lives and livelihood because of climate change," the director asserts.

Among the other films, Tapsee Pannu starrer *Saand Ki Aankh* and Sushant Singh Rajput's *Chhichhore* will be screened at the festival.

### FUN post

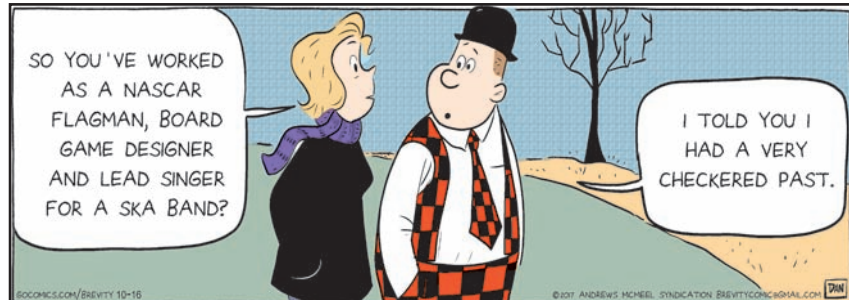
#### PEANUTS



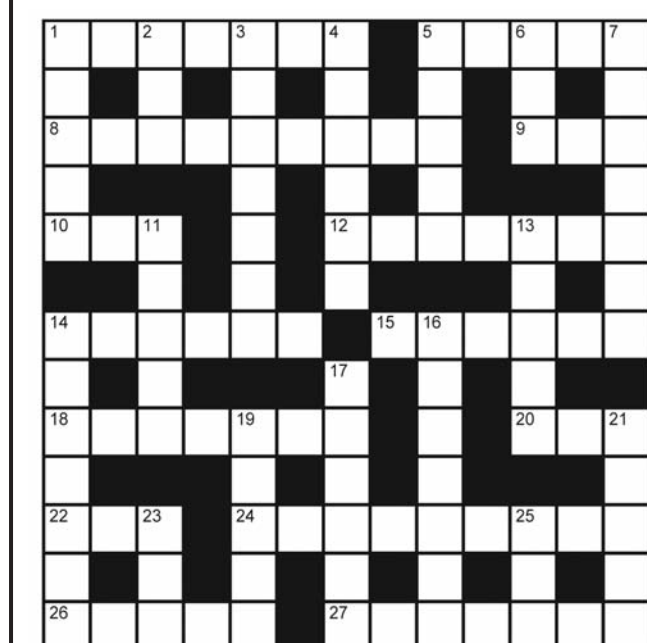
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### BREVITY



#### CROSSWORD



##### Across

- 1 Australian marsupials
- 5 Zeno, notably
- 8 Permit
- 9 After caudal or dorsal
- 10 Pound sound
- 12 Overshadow
- 14 Dieters' dishes
- 15 Tidbit
- 18 Gloves
- 20 Lennon's lady

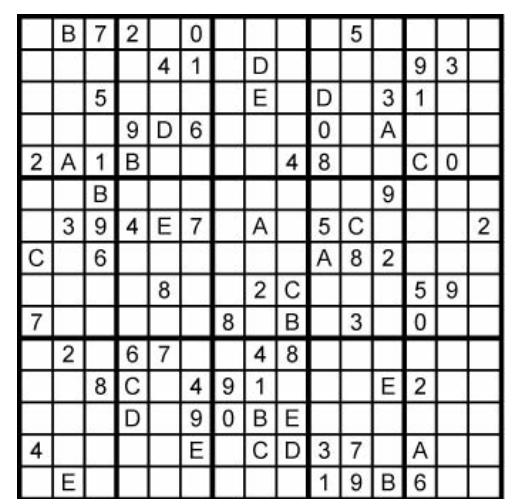
##### Down

- 1 Spent
- 2 Yoga class need
- 3 Dodged
- 4 Pilfers
- 5 Witch's hex
- 6 Buffoon

- 7 Solidify
- 11 Aviator
- 13 Basil-based sauce
- 14 Italian elderberry liqueur
- 16 Flightless bird
- 17 Seizes
- 19 Roof overhangs
- 21 Title holder
- 23 Silent assent
- 25 Indisposed

#### SUDOKU

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

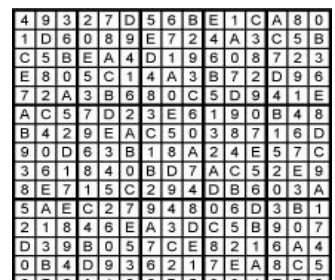


#### SOLUTIONS

##### CROSSWORD



##### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





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MAHANADI ENCROACHMENT

# Frame norms to protect floodplains, NGT asks govt

THE STATE GOVT ACCEPTS ENCROACHMENT ON MAHANADI FLOODPLAINS IN CUTTACK

THREAT TO ECOLOGY

The NGT was hearing a case of encroachment of floodplains of the Mahanadi river in Cuttack where a proposed campus of SCB Medical College and Hospital has been planned besides other construction works.

Encroachment of Kathajodi and Mahanadi rivers and construction in floodplain area may adversely affect the riverine ecology



The response filed by the applicant shows that a new campus of SCB Medical College is proposed on 25 acres reclaimed from the river. The Mahanadi river front project involves change of nature of the river land. Encroachment of Kathajodi and Mahanadi rivers and construction in floodplain area may adversely affect the riverine ecology. Precautionary measures are re-

quired," the NGT order said. "We are also not aware of the legislative and administrative measures in the state of Odisha on the subject of regulating and prohibiting activities in the floodplain zones of the rivers in the state, but such an exercise appears to be necessary to give effect to the precautionary principle of environmental law, required to be enforced by this

Tribunal," it said. "The NGT claimed that timely actions are needed in the issue. "In view of averments by the applicant that the riverbeds is likely to be affected by setting up of the medical college or other permanent constructions in the floodplain of the river; there is a need to prevent irreversible damage to the riverine ecology by enforcing the applicable

rules, if any. If there are no rules, appropriate norms need to be laid down considering such norms in other similar situations in consultation with experts," the order said.

The NGT also ordered formation of a joint committee comprising representatives of Central Water Commission (CWC), nominees of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, CPCB, National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee and the State PCB to consider the issue and laid down norms so as to ensure that the proposal of the state for construction of the medical college and river front development takes place in accordance with law, without damage to the flood plains of the Rivers.

"Flood plain zones need to be identified and demarcated in the light of such norms. The committee may identify the extent of floodplain zone/active floodplain zone from the edge of the river. The committee may complete its exercise within four months," the NGT order said.

# 5T Secy vets Srimandir heritage corridor work



5T Secretary VK Pandian and other officials near Srimandir, Saturday OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, Dec 19:** 5T Secretary VK Pandian Saturday visited the Holy City and reviewed the progress of Srimandir heritage corridor project. The 5T Secretary also took stock of the arrangement made by the district administration and the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) for reopening of Srimandir December 23.

The 5T Secretary reached near Srimandir around 5am and reviewed the arrangement for facilitating people's visit to the 12th century shrine amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

After remaining shut for devotees for around nine months due to the pandemic, Srimandir is all set to reopen December 23. The district administration and the SJTA have prepared a detailed standard operating procedure (SOP) for facilitating people to have darshan of Lord Jagannath and his siblings. The 5T Secretary reviewed land acquisition process for Srimandir heritage corridor project. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had earlier directed Puri district admin-

The 5T Secretary took stock of the arrangement made by the district administration and SJTA for reopening of the shrine

istration to complete the land acquisition process within three months.

The district administration is now laying an outer ring road around Srimandir to facilitate free movement of devotees. The 5T Secretary asked the officials to complete the outer ring road work before the reopening of Srimandir.

Development Commissioner Suresh Mahapatra, SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar, Puri Collector Balwant Singh, Superintendent of Police Kanwar Vishal Singh and other senior officials were also present during the 5T Secretary's visit. The officials also reviewed the preparation for reopening of Lokanath temple in the city here.

# BMC penalises litterbugs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has begun its crackdown on littering in public places and collected about ₹10,000 fine in three days.

Launched under 'Mu Safaiwala' campaign, the civic authority in November had passed an official order banning littering in public spaces. However, it was found that shops and other entities are not following the thumb rule of keeping dustbins in their units. "Our enforcement squad,

Saturday, visited Unit 2 market during business hours. It was found that many shops and other business establishments were not keeping dustbins in their units and were instead dumping their waste in public places. Ten such defaulters have been fined for their irresponsible behaviour and have been fined accordingly," a senior officer from the BMC enforcement squad said.

The official also added that certain violators have been warned about other punishments like closure of shops on repeated violations.

# Cottonfab will bring back smile to weavers: Jena

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** The 12th Cottonfab-2020 was inaugurated by Bhubaneswar-Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena at the exhibition ground here Saturday.

Addressing the people present at the exhibition ground, Jena said, "Odisha is recovering from the pandemic and it's a great sign of normalcy as this handloom expo is being held. Everyone must visit this expo while adhering to Covid-19 guidelines. The expo will bring back smiles into the lives of thousands of weavers who have waited for this moment of normalcy."

Cottonfab-2020 in-charge Javed Alam said, "I want to thank the BMC authorities for their cooperation and this fair will offer us our bread and butter. The expo remains open from 10:30am to 9pm and all precautions have been taken to follow social distancing both by buyers and sellers."

The expo used to have 180 stalls,



but this year only 30 stalls are being set up.

More than 122 artisans from 12 states have displayed their products such as Lucknowi Chikan dress materials, sarees, kurta pajamas, phulkari dress and dupatta from Punjab, Sambalpuri Ikkat sarees and dress materials from Odisha, Chanderi saree from Madhya Pradesh, Gadwal zari dress material from Andhra Pradesh and much more.

# NCPCR SUGGESTS PARI PROBE BY CENTRAL BODY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Expressing dissatisfaction over police investigation in Pari murder case, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has recommended a thorough investigation into the case by a central agency.

The Commission noted that the investigation conducted by the police authorities is "severely flawed with glaring defects, which has caused untoward delay in the investigation of this serious incident of murder of a minor girl."

The Commission also recommended disciplinary action against the investigating officers of Pari murder case.

"In view of the erroneous investigation conducted by the police authorities in this serious incident of murder of a minor girl, the Commission recommends for disciplinary action to be taken against the investigating officers in

# CLASS X GIRL MISSING FOR SIX DAYS

**MALKANGIRI:** A minor girl, here, is reported to have gone missing for six days now. The missing girl is from the tribal community and was pursuing her studies in Class X. The girl has been identified as Chandri, a resident of Budakhal village under Chitragapali panchayat under Kalimela police station. The incident came to the fore after the missing girl's family members lodged a missing report with Kalimela police station. According to the family members, a miscreant had forcibly taken Chandri on his motorcycle from the village six days ago. In the days followed, the family members searched for her at every possible place. It was when they failed in their attempts to trace her out, they sought police help. Registering a case, the police have launched an investigation.

the matter and requests your good offices to recommend for a thor-

ough investigation of this incident by a central agency," the Commission said.

The NCPCR has submitted detailed inquiry report in the murder case to Union Home Secretary and Odisha Chief Secretary.

Significantly, the NCPCR had taken suo moto cognisance of the matter upon a media report November 24. Keeping in view, the serious offence of murder of a minor girl, the allegations of missing organs from her body and the inaction of the police authorities in the matter, the Commission had issued letters to DM and SP, Nayagarh to investigate/inquire in this case and to provide NCPCR with certain documents such as age proof of the victim, copy of FIR, copy of MLC etc.

It is to be mentioned here that a five-year-old girl was abducted when she was playing outside her residence in Jadupur village of Nayagarh district.

# BJD executive meet today

**BHUBANESWAR:** The executive body meeting of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) will be held at 10am Sunday at its party office. This will be the first meeting of the executive committee, after its reformation. Party president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will address the meet through videoconferencing. All eyes are on his speech as he had attacked Opposition BJP and Congress while addressing party's youth leaders recently.

# User trial of ATAGS

**CHANDIPUR:** A user trial of indigenously developed Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) was conducted on the premises of the PAXE at Chandipur in Balasore district Saturday. The artillery gun system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) weighs 18 tonnes and has capacity to hit a target around 48 kms away. Project Director of ATAGS Shailendra Gade said India is the only country in the world to develop such advanced gun system which will be a milestone in the defence sector.

# Fake co dupes 52 investors of ₹1cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** A Raipur-based company has reportedly duped several gullible persons from Sambalpur of around ₹1 crore on the pretext of high returns on their investments in the company.

One of the victims identified as Bikash Podar has lodged a complaint with the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) in this regard.

According to the complaint, in 2017, the victims came across an advertisement by a company, QUICK Click AD Media LLP, owned by Bimalananda Bhuyan and his wife. The company was seeking orders for the making LED light advertisement boards through advertisements.

The accused persons started avoiding the depositors after getting the money. The company neither gave the LED boards nor paid them the promised returns

Later, they came to the corporate office of the company at Bhubaneswar where the accused persons allegedly informed the investors that the company was engaged in construction of LED advertisement boards in rural and urban areas of Odisha, Chhattisgarh and other states. The accused

showed them a fake company registration certificate.

The accused told them that they have to pay ₹54,000 as onetime payment and ₹3,500 every month as rent for the construction of boards in size 3'X3'. Accused Bhuyan also asked them to invest ₹3 lakh in the company so that they would get 70 per cent of the profit out of the business of constructing LED boards.

Lured by the offer, 52 persons allegedly gave ₹1, 01, 52,000 to Bhuyan. The accused persons started avoiding the depositors after getting the money. The company neither gave the LED boards nor paid them the promised returns on the investments. EOW has started investigations into the matter after registering a case.

# Akash Pathak admits to financial fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** Tainted IPS officer Abhay Kant Pathak's son Akash Pathak, who was arrested in connection with Tata Motors job fraud case, Saturday confessed to his crime, Commissionerate Police sources said.

Akash also confessed to the investigating team about the non-payment of dues to the tune of ₹65 lakh to a Bhubaneswar-based travel agency named M/s Sky King.

The travel agency had lodged an FIR in this regard December 1. According to a source in the police, Pathak had impersonated him-



self the Managing Director of Tata Motors and amassed a huge amount of money from several job aspirants on the pretext of providing them employment with the automobile major.

The Commissionerate Police will send Akash's signature as well as handwriting for forensic examination, a police official said.

# DDCE Senior Asst under Vig scanner

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** Vigilance sleuths Saturday carried out simultaneous raids on the properties of senior assistant of Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education (DDCE), Ashok Kumar Mishra.

Vigilance sleuths found Mishra holding properties worth around ₹1.38 crore

The raids were conducted on charges of accumulating assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Simultaneous raids were underway at his double storied residential building at Mancheswar, a double storied building at Prashanti Vihar, Patia, an official quarters at Vani Vihar campus, office room at DDCE, Bhubaneswar and his native house at Durgapur village in Cuttack district.

Vigilance sleuths conducted the raids on the strength of search warrants issued by the Honourable Special Judge Vigilance, Bhubaneswar.

During the search, the officers also detected that Mishra also owns another double storied building at Kalinga Nagar, Bhubaneswar. The sleuths also recovered cash amounting to ₹3, 55,000.

The Vigilance sleuths found Mishra holding properties worth around ₹1.38 crore.

# Drive to clear vehicles abandoned on city roads begins

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** The Commissionerate Police Saturday started a special drive to clear abandoned and unused vehicles parked along the city roads. The traffic police began the drive by removing such vehicles parked along the stretches in Baramunda, Kalpana Square and Rasulgarh areas in the city.

DCP (Traffic) Soumya Mishra who was present during the towing away of vehicles at Barmunda Saturday told the media that the cops would remove all abandoned vehicles from the roads and pavements at Barmunda, Kalpana and

Rasulgarh in the first phase. Subsequently the towing away of vehicles will be carried out at other stretches in the city.

She also revealed that the drive has been launched after receiving several complaints from the denizens regarding encroachments of large spaces by unattended vehicles causing congestion and accidents and obstructing normal movement of other vehicles on the road.

DCP Mishra urged people to inform the police about such encroachments by abandoned and unused vehicles through social media or they can dial the helpline number 100. She also warned that the cops would immediately tow

away these vehicles and keep them at a common yard. She warned that penalty amount would be collected from the owners of these abandoned vehicles when they try to release the same through Regional Transport Offices.

Later, the commissionerate police released a public notice informing them that upon receipt of information, the cops will find out details regarding the vehicles parked along the city roads. Later, the owners will be informed through phone calls and will be asked to take their vehicles within a specific time period. The owners will be penalized if they are found not removing their vehicles within the deadlines given.



# CLASSIFIED SALE

Bhubaneswar Janla residential purpose 2000 Sq.ft. land near Aditya Hyundai opposite HP Petrol Pump for sale @ 1250 per Sq.ft. M-8260667978.

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-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugd Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-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.



# EXPANSION OF ANG PROJECT GETS A PUSH

LAND HURDLE THROWS SPANNER AS WATER RESOURCES DEPT CARRIES FORWARD WORK

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, Dec 19:** Expansion of Ang irrigation project in Sonepur district has been stuck for years. However, even as the irrigation department has suddenly become active to hasten its work, land has come up as a hurdle to carry forward this project.

The farming community in the sadar block will immensely benefit from this project after its completion, a report said.

According to the report, agriculture in most parts under the sadar block in the district has remained out of irrigation coverage. In case of insufficient rainfall, farming is badly affected and sometimes droughts haunt the area.

In view of this situation, the state government thought of expanding the Ang irrigation project to irrigate farmlands in the area in 1981. Water resources minister Bijay Kumar Mohapatra had laid the foundation stone of the expansion project. But later its work had been stalled for paucity of funds.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik again laid the foundation stone of its expansion at Rengali panchayat, December 17, 2006. However, the project suffered setbacks again. The



Agriculture in most parts under the sadar block in Sonepur district have remained out of irrigation coverage. In case of insufficient rainfall, farming is badly affected and sometimes droughts haunt the area

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik again laid the foundation stone of its expansion at Rengali panchayat, December 17, 2006. However, the project suffered setbacks again. The project could not take off due to change in its design, cost escalation and hurdles in land acquisition.

Due to delay, the cost of the project escalated from ₹26 crore to ₹221 crore. Farmers were worried about the fate of the project amid repeated setbacks.

Finance and excise minister Niranjan Pujari initiated efforts to

break the stalemate. It works are said to be expedited.

Farmers said their dream for irrigation for four decades will be realized only after its completion. In Kharif season, the expanded project will be able to irrigate 13,509 hectares of land in the area.

The length of the distributary canal of Ang project from Pandkital

to Sonepur is 18.15 km. Of it, various stretches of Pandkital minor canal, Chandrapur and Jagannathpur sub-minor canals measuring 15 km in length have been dug.

The remaining work has been stuck due to land hurdles. Meanwhile, the project has got the stage-I clearance while land identification work has been in progress for its stage-II clearance.

To compensate for the loss of trees due to land acquisition, a decision has been taken to generate forests in 60 hectares in Bhaludunguri, Kulakhiapadar and Paikabahal. Similarly, Rugudipalli distributary canal will be of 7.2 km long while a stretch of 3 km has been excavated.

Besides, the water resources department has taken up steps for digging of Khaliapali minor, Rugudipalli minor and Kirtipur minor canals.

These canals will deliver water to 2200 hectares of farmland in Kariakhaman, Mayurudan, Rugudipalli, Kirtipur, Khaliapali and Gobindapur villages.

"Tenders will be floated soon for these works," said Dillip Kumar Patra, executive engineer of the Tel Water Resources Division.

## FOGGY MORNING



A road in Paralakhemundi of Gajapati district is enveloped with dense fog. Poor visibility was reported from different places in the district, Saturday morning

OP PHOTO

# Locals on edge over frequent jumbo intrusions in Bolangir

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir, Dec 19:** Elephant menace has returned to haunt three villages in Turekela block of Bolangir district. People are living in panic after a herd of 30 elephants from the Bolangir forest range went on a rampage and destroyed crops Thursday night.

The paddy crop rampaged by the pachyderms comes after Cyclone Amphan and the Covid-19 pandemic had put the farmers under severe distress. Villagers accused the forest department of failing to keep the animals at bay. This has led to widespread discontentment among locals.

The villagers alleged that other than destroying crops, the jumbos have also demolished several houses. People are now seeking compensation for their damaged crops and properties.

According to forest officials, the elephants entered the villages in search of food. They assured that



## Jumbo tramples man to death

**Dhenkanal:** In yet another man-elephant conflict, an elderly man was trampled to death by an elephant at Khatuathata village under Pandua police limits in Dhenkanal district Saturday morning. The deceased has been identified as Kartik Sahu (75). According to his family members, Kartik had out to attend nature's call at around 5.30am. Suddenly an elephant came from nowhere and giving little scope to Kartik to act, it caught him in its trunk, flung him onto the ground and trampled him. On hearing his distress cries, family members and neighbours came to his rescue and rushed Kartik to Dhenkanal district headquarters hospital (DHH). However, he succumbed while undergoing treatment. Dhenkanal DFO Prakash Chand Gogineni said the bereaved family will be compensated as per government rules. With frequent incidents of man-elephant incidents being reported from different parts of the district, the forest department is allegedly doing little to end the menace.

steps were being taken to drive the elephants away from the local settlements. They also said that compensation would be provided to the famers who have suffered damages.

The frequent intrusions by the pachyderms to the farmlands have robbed the farmers of their sleep. Along with the destruction of their crops, the locals have suffered other damages also. The situation has led to widespread panic as well as anger among the villagers.

# 6 earth movers gutted in Dhenkanal

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kamakhyanager, Dec 19:** Six earth mover machines, engaged at the construction site at Anlaberani area in Dhenkanal district where houses for people displaced by Odisha Thermal Power Corporation Limited (OTPCL) are under construction, were gutted late Friday night.

A total of 11 such earthmovers

were engaged at the construction site. According to contractor Himanshu Das, some miscreants set the vehicles on fire Friday night and six of them were completely gutted.

On getting information about the incident, a team from Pandua police outpost under Tumusonga police limits and fire personnel reached the spot. While the fire personnel doused the flame, the po-

lice launched an investigation. Notably, local people have been opposing the new township project of OTPCL.

Such acts of setting construction materials on fire are generally reported from Maoist-infested areas like Malkangiri. But in April 2018, Dhenkanal and five other districts like Jajpur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Gajapati and Ganjam were declared free from Maoists.

## Samaleswari temple to reopen from Jan 3

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Dec 19:** After a wait of around nine months following the outbreak of COVID-19, the Sambalpur district administration decided Friday afternoon in favour of reopening the 16th century old shrine Samaleswari temple in this city for devotees from January 3.

A detailed standard operating procedure for strict compliance of Covid-19 safety protocols will be issued very soon for the visitors as well as the temple servitors, an official source informed.

A meeting in this regard was chaired by commissioner of Sambalpur Municipal Corporation (SMC) Aniruddha Pradhan. Representatives of different religious institutions also attended the meeting.

Notably, Maa Samaleswari, the most revered goddess of undivided Sambalpur district, was closed since March 23 this year.

The temple trust board had of late convened a meeting after the plan to reopen Puri Jagannath temple was in the air.

## Electrocution: Wesco told to pay ₹12L to next of kin

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Dec 19:** A court has ordered Wesco to pay Rs 12 lakh as compensation to the family of a person who died of electrocution in Jujumare area of Sambalpur.

According to reports, Akula Sethi, a resident of Keshapali village, came in contact with live wires of an unprotected transformer. He was the only bread earner of the family. His family was helpless and had moved a petition (382) at the civil court in Sambalpur in 2015 against Wesco.

Holding the Wesco responsible for the death of Akula, the court ordered compensation of ₹12.25 lakh to the bereaved family members.

# Baripada night shelter a haunted house now

POST NEWS NETWORK



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Dec 19:** With a noble intention to provide shelter to the homeless, a night shelter was constructed here in 2012. Far from providing shelter, the facility has literally turned into a haunted house.

In order to provide shelter in night to those who come to Mayurbhanj district headquarters to get their various works done, labourers and homeless people, the night shelter was constructed in ward no-9 close to PRM Medical College and Hospital. Initially, the facility was run by an NGO. With the expiry of its period in 2017, it was separated.

The facility has since been not given to any organization, resulting in the building turning into a haunted house. After sunset, the building turns into a den for anti socials.

On the other hand, homeless people are often seen sleeping in bus stand, railway station, on footpaths and under trees.

"If the night shelter is made functional, it would be a great help to us," some homeless people added.

The facility can accommodate 50 people at a time with arrangement of food to the inmates. An inmate has to pay Rs 20 for 24 hours. But nothing is charged from the differently-abled and physically-challenged persons and orphans.

According to Dharmapada Singh and Bishu Hembram, whose patients are undergoing treatment at PCR Medical College and Hospital, find it difficult to return to their villages the same day. These people actually suffer a lot. They have to sleep here and there.

Dalit Adivasi Mahasangh chairman Rakesh Singh urged the administration to make the facility functional.

When contacted, Sadar sub-collector P Anwesha Reddy, who is also officiating as the executive officer, Baripada municipality, said the facility is under renovation. Once completed, it will be made functional, she added.

## 'Karaka' waterfall gets short shrift

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koksara, Dec 19:** Despite being gifted by nature with a dense forest cover and rich scenic beauty, the 'Karaka' waterfall in Kalahandi district has been facing neglect by the district administration for several years.

The apathetic attitude of the district administration has raised deep concerns among local denizens and intelligentsia.

'Karaka' waterfall, located in the



Sahajakhola forest area of Amapani panchayat under Koksara block draws hundreds of tourists and picnickers from the district as well from outside during winter.

The waterfall is accessible after covering a distance of about 15 km on national highway from the block headquarters.

However, the tourist destination lacks basic amenities like a urinal, the local denizens alleged. Locals have demanded its development which they claimed will contribute to the district's economy.

# Ancient Jain statue excavated in Koraput

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koraput, Dec 19:** During ongoing restoration work of Jain temple at Subai village in Koraput, excavators Friday afternoon discovered a stone statue besides other relics a few metres away from the temple.

The unearthed stone statue represents Jain religion, the excavators believed. It was found during the temple restoration work at Subai village which is a place of archaeo-

logical importance in Koraput.

Subai is a roadside village 16 km from Sunabeda town and 34 km from Koraput district headquarters. The temple has relics of a Jain monastery containing rare stone carvings of the Tirthankaras.

Notably, the Odisha State Archaeology under the department of culture has taken up the restoration of dilapidated shrines in the district.

"We were unaware of the exist-



ence of another temple near the existing Jain temple site. While excavating the proximity areas, we discovered a precious statue. There are

chances of getting more valuable artifacts of historical importance and ancient statues if further excavation is carried out in the surrounding areasm," said contractor Gopinath Bisoyi who has been engaged in the site excavation.

On the other hand, locals including the intelligentsia have demanded verification of its historicity by technical experts. They have also demanded preservation of the sculpture at Koraput Museum.

# Gandhradhi shrine in Boudh awaits tourism tag

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boudh, Dec 19:** Boudh district is rich with ancient monuments and sculptures, but scores of them have remained far from the sight of tourists due to lack of publicity and preservation, a report said.

One of the ancient temples is at Gandhradhi near Janhapanka.

Centuries ago, kings of Bhanja dynasty used to rule parts of Boudh district. They were followers of Shaivism and Vaishnavism. They had built famous Harihar temple at Jagati. The temple is known for its unique architectural style. The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) has taken up its conservation and named this shrine as Gandharadhi peetha.

It was learnt that the central government has provided crores of rupees for its conservation, but it was alleged that no remarkable step has been taken for its development.



Villagers have been demanding its development. Later, funds were provided from MLALAD for a community centre near it. However, 20 years have passed, but the work of this community centre has not been

completed. Tourists coming to the area have to face problems of accommodation.

Besides, a panthanivas has been set up in the area at a cost of Rs 50 lakh. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik

had inaugurated it. Its maintenance and upkeep has not been handed over to any agency. As a result, the facility is of no use for tourists.

People's representatives take pride for this famous shrine, but no step

has been taken to accord tourism status to the shrine, locals lamented.

Locals, historians and researchers have urged the district administration for the development of the place as tourist destination.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS & S DIVISION, BARGARH**  
Email : eerwss\_bgh@nic.in, Ph (O):-06646 233220, FAX : 06646 234626  
No. 3771 / Dt. 09.12.2020  
**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
Bid Identification No 05 Dt 09.12.2020 of 2020-21  
No O-722:- The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites tenders from the valid licensed holder contractors of class 'C' or 'B' registered with any department of State Government or equivalent class of Central Govt.etc. to be eventually drawn up in G2 Contract Form for the work as per terms and condition noted below.

- Name of the work: Execution of different water supply under Paikmal Block in the District Bargarh - 02 Nos.
- Approx. Estimated cost : Varies from Rs 27.95 lakh to 29.36 lakh
- Date and time of availability of document in the portal : Dt 21.12.2020 to Dt 21.01.2021 up to 5.00 P.M
- Last date/ time for receipt of bids in the portal : Dt 21.01.2021 up to 5.00 P.M
- Date & time of Opening of Tender : Dt 22.01.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
- Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh, District : Bargarh

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "<http://tendersorissa.gov.in>".  
The authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.  
Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh  
OIPR-25157/11/0006/2021

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, JAJPUR AT JARAKA**  
rwddivision\_jaraka@yahoo.co.in  
No O-729:-  
**SHORT TNDER CALL NOTICE**  
**'E' PROCUREMENT NOTICE No. Tender Online**  
**JJPR-II-06-2020-21 Date 14.12.2020**

- Name of work : Repair & Renovation to Road works in the District of Jajpur for the year 2020-21
- Total No. of work : 32 Nos. road works
- Estimated cost (Approx.) : As indicated against each work in the NIT
- Period of completion : As indicated against each work in the NIT
- Class of contractors : As indicated against each work in the NIT

Other details as follows:  
a) Procurement officer : Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Jajpur at Jarak  
b) Availability of tender : 21.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M.  
online submission of bid : to 27.12.2020 upto 5.00 P.M.  
c) Last date & time of seeking : 24.12.2020 upto 5.00 P.M.  
of tender clarification  
d) Opening of tender : 28.12.2020 at 11.30 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)  
Sd./- Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-II  
Jajpur at Jarak  
OIPR-25080/11/0004/2021



FOCUS CLIMATE CHANGE

# COUNTDOWN TO CATASTROPHE



Countries that have contributed the least to the climate crisis are now among the most committed to resolving it. This should set an example for developed countries, including the United States, whose emission-reduction plans have not yet materialised. The Paris agreement calls for financial aid from richer countries to support climate action

Jamaica, Rwanda, the Marshall Islands, and Mongolia are among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, and account for just a small percentage of global emissions. This year, their economies have also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet every one of these countries delivered updated climate plans to the United Nations, as set out in the 2015 Paris climate agreement, before the deadline at the end of this year.

In other words, countries that have contributed the least to the climate crisis are now among the most committed to resolving it. This should set an example for developed countries, including the United States, whose emission-reduction plans - due by midnight on December 31 - have not yet materialised.

In addition to climate plans, the Paris agreement calls for financial aid from richer countries to support climate action. To date, this support - also due by the end of 2020 - is lacking as well. The OECD estimates that only around \$79 billion of the promised \$100 billion annually is being delivered to the countries where it is needed most.

Vulnerable countries are already feeling the financial impact of climate change. According to the UN, climate vulnerability raised the cost of debt for such countries by more than \$60 billion over the past decade. Interest payments are expected to balloon to \$168 billion in the coming decade, for the same reason. The most at-risk economies require an immediate injection of liquidity, along with debt restructuring and forgiveness.

Now, COVID-19 is compounding these economic woes, and it is clear that the pandemic will not be the last of its kind. After all, climate change, deforestation, and the destruction of natural habitats increase the risk of new vector-borne diseases.

Advanced economies are responsible for helping to ensure that the developing world is not left mired in debt and battered by the interconnected threats of COVID-

19 and climate change. And, in addition to helping vulnerable countries, they need to reconsider their own COVID-19 recovery plans.

Unfortunately, that's not happening. Trillions of dollars are being directed toward recovery packages that economists tell us reward sectors responsible for pollution. The International Monetary Fund's 2020 World Economic Outlook also emphasises the G20 countries' responsibility to implement growth packages that reduce their reliance on fossil fuels. It is vital that governments understand that if we want to ensure a safer world for future generations, building back better and greener is not a policy just for the next year.

Vulnerable countries are tired of inaction. And they are not simply calling for help, but are committed to leading by example. The Central Bank of the Philippines, for example, recently adopted a sustainable-finance framework to safeguard the financial system from evolving climate risk. The new framework encourages banks to start pricing physical climate and transition risks, as well as valuing climate-resilience and low-carbon

opportunities. Moreover, the central bank must disclose its own exposure to environmental risks, which could lead to excluding specific assets - like fossil fuels - from its policies in the future. In late October, the country also imposed a moratorium on new coal-fired power stations.

On a global scale, the World Bank and the IMF are collaborating with the G20 to attract more investment to poorer countries by lowering the costs associated with "green" projects. In the United States, President-elect Joe Biden has vowed to re-establish the US as a country committed to the UN, multilateral agreements such as the Paris accord, and international law. America's return to a position of global leadership on combating climate change is to be welcomed. But, like other developed countries, the US still needs to deliver its updated climate plan.

The COVID-19 crisis underscores the urgent need for more ambitious measures. During World War I, the United Kingdom issued war bonds to finance both the conflict and the subsequent recovery. Similar instruments could be used

to help the Global South claw its way out of both pandemic and climate-related disaster. In addition, major development banks and private investors should demonstrate leadership by implementing the Paris agreement's vision of a global investment shift from dirty to clean energy.

Climate action cannot be delayed any longer, and the leaders of developed economies need to step up and follow the example already being set by developing countries. Real leaders are not those who shout the loudest or tweet the most. Real leaders are those who deliver on their promises. We urge richer countries to submit updated climate plans before the end of the year, and to uphold the other promises made in the Paris climate agreement - both for our sake and that of future generations.

**Mohamed Nasheed, a former President of Maldives, is Speaker of the People's Majlis (parliament). Loren Legarda, a former senator, is Deputy Speaker of the Philippines' House of Representatives.**

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TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS ARE BEING DIRECTED TOWARD RECOVERY PACKAGES THAT ECONOMISTS TELL US REWARD SECTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POLLUTION

Mohamed Nasheed & Loren Legarda

## Burden of proof

Uttar Pradesh's law banning interfaith marriages also carries forward another innovative feature of India's legal system in these present times. This is the shifting of burden of proof from the State to the accused. The 'innocent until proven guilty' maxim that underpins all law has been stood on its head and it is for the individual to prove their innocence to the State, which assumes that they are guilty.

This is unusual because no civilised nation runs its justice system in this fashion and even in India there are serious crimes which do not shift burden of proof. For instance if you murder or rape someone in India it is for the State to prove that you did so. The State has to record and present the evidence to the judiciary which will determine whether it meets the threshold for conviction. When burden of proof is reversed, once the State has made the accusation, it is the responsibility of the individual to show they are innocent. If they cannot then bail is denied and prosecution proceeds. The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 does not accept the testimony of an adult woman who has changed her faith after marriage as proof that no crime has been committed. It is for the male members of the family she has married into to demonstrate what the intention of her conversion was (Section 12). If the explanation is not to the satisfaction of the State, meaning the police or bureaucrat, then the offence remains and prosecution continues. The potential for corruption and coercion can be imagined.

The National Register of Citizens in Assam is another place where the burden of proof was reversed. It was not for the State to identify undocumented migrants and take action to deport them. It was for individuals, once their names were not put on the positive citizens' list, to line up with documents and prove that the presence of their ancestors had been registered on some or the other government document.

Different spellings of names, missing middle names or initials, change of surnames because of marriage were all used as reasons to strip people of their citizenship and right to vote. The corruption and coercion here was recorded but perhaps did not get the attention it deserved. The BJP government used contract workers on two-year contracts to be the 'judges' in the kangaroo courts where individuals had to present their documentation. Only those 'judges' who marked a maximum number of people as foreigners had their contracts extended. How do we know this? The government itself said it in an affidavit to the Gauhati High Court. Those whose contracts had not been extended moved court to say that they had been removed without any assessment of their work. The government countered by submitting the performance appraisal of the collective judges. This documented separated individuals purely by how many they had disenfranchised. There was no other mark of quality: those who did not adequately perform in the 'percentage marked foreigner' category were fired.

Readers may be familiar with the amendment to the UAPA laws passed by this government last year. Amnesty International said that the law, offers an overbroad and ambiguous definition of a 'terrorist act' which includes the death of, or injuries to any person, damage to any property, an attempt to over awe any public functionary by means of criminal force and any act to compel the government or any person to do or abstain from doing any act etc. It also includes any act that is 'likely to threaten' or 'likely to strike terror in people', giving unbridled power to the government to brand any ordinary citizen or activist a terrorist without the actual commission of these acts. Once the State has branded you a terrorist then UAPA requires you to prove your innocence even to secure bail. The reason why activists like Sudha Bharadwaj, Stan Swamy, Varavara Rao, Umar Khalid and Vernon Gonsalves will spend many years in jail without conviction is this reversal of burden of proof. The State doesn't have to do anything to keep denying them their freedom other than to oppose bail in court.

Gujarat has introduced a law which gives a life sentence for cow slaughter, the Gujarat Animal Preservation (Amendment) Act 2017. Under this law a man was convicted in 2018 after being accused of serving beef at his daughter's wedding. At trial, he told the court he had served mutton biryani. The judge refused to accept this and asked him to prove that this meat consumed months ago was not beef. When he couldn't to the satisfaction of the court he was convicted. He was Muslim of course but this need hardly be mentioned because it is understood. The force ruling India is introducing these laws and this change in our jurisprudence for a reason, which is to brutalise a section of Indian society. The effects of this can already be seen and will accelerate.

In weak States like India the government apparatus - police, judges and bureaucrats - pick up signals from the political authority. They have little or no individual agency and must toe the line. Those who do not are savaged by a vengeful political authority as we have seen happening to IPS officers who resisted mob violence in Gujarat.

That not enough of a scandal much less an uproar has been created by the reversal of burden of proof on cow, love jihad, dissent and citizenship - all aimed at a particular community - says something about us to ourselves and to the world.



Evolution of consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence.

SRI AUROBINDO



Aakar Patel

In weak States like India the government apparatus - police, judges and bureaucrats - pick up signals from the political authority. They have little or no individual agency and must toe the line

SPECTRUM CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

## Will this strengthen democracy?



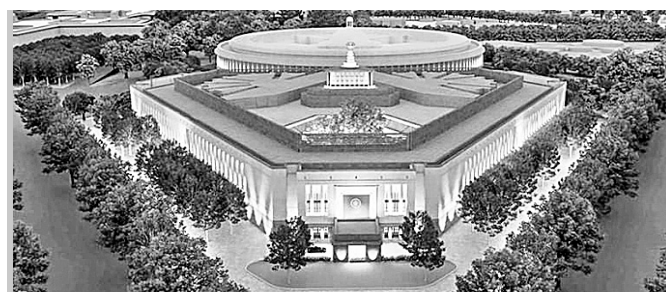
Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

UNLIKE INDIA, MANY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES THAT CAN EASILY AFFORD SUCH COSTLY PROJECTS ARE USING MUCH OLDER PARLIAMENTARY HALLS AS SYMBOLS OF HERITAGE

The main argument made by the Union government for the new Parliament building is that the current structure is too old and showing signs of structural corrosion and cannot accommodate rising numbers of representatives in the future. It is true that, in the future, there may be a need for a hall that can accommodate more people's representatives. But that time is far away. And, the current structure is not in such a bad shape that it needs rest. It can be used for another 50 years with renovation.

Parliament buildings across the world have become iconic symbols of the countries. Unlike India, many developed countries that can easily afford such costly projects are using much older parliamentary halls or similar halls as symbols of heritage. While their interiors may have been revamped, the facades have remained the same.

The United States Capitol was completed in 1800; the Binnenhof of the Netherlands was built primarily in the 13th century; the Palazzo Madama in Rome was completed in 1505; the Luxembourg Palace at Paris, France was originally built during 1615-1645. Compared to these parliament buildings, India's Sansad Bhavan is relatively new - the building



was completed in 1927.

Many things are being told in support of the construction of the new building such as a sacred venue for strengthening democracy, facilitating Aatmanirbhar Bharat, and enhancing national pride. But certain questions that creep in my mind pertain to the Central Vista project's timing, hurriedness and the massive cost, and the heritage value of the existing complex. The timing of construction smacks of insensitivity as the project is planned at a time when the economy is crumbling, people are grappling to cope with the pandemic and there is a massive shortage of resources to provide stimulus package to rejuvenate the economy and alleviate the unprecedented sufferings of millions.

Undoubtedly, the new building will provide a congenial space to debate public issues in a collegial

manner. But the current one is not much behind in that aspect. And do our legislators need so many comforts when a large number of people are languishing in poverty, starvation, inequality, unemployment and even many have to sleep in streets and pavements.

Further, the vibrancy and strength of democracy does not depend upon how beautiful and luxurious the Parliament hall is, but on how much the Parliament ensures genuine and qualitative debate, how other pillars of democracy act impartially, how many honest people without any criminal background occupy the seats of the hall, and how people are able to give independent opinions. Just the right to suffrage is not an indicator of the success of a democracy.

In reality, democracy is shriveling in India as its position is de-

clining in the global democracy index. The world's biggest democracy slipped 10 places in the 2019 global rankings to 51st place due to "an erosion of civil liberties in the country." Other pillars of democracy, especially the media, are gradually emasculated. This is reflected in the 'The Reporters Without Borders' annual global press freedom index released on April 21. The index has ranked India at 142 among 180 countries. In 2016, India was ranked at 133. There is annihilation of critical thinking, suppression of dissent, hatred is created against dissenters, and media is subverted by veiled threats or allurements of advertisements.

The problems associated with our democracy and the functioning of the government have nothing to do with the structure of the parliament hall. The factors that impede our democracy are failure of the Parliament to ensure qualitative debates, ignoring the Opposition while passing bills, lack of discussion on important bills before their passing, and people with criminal backgrounds getting easy entry to the hall as people's representatives thereby damaging the sanctity of the hall.

The author is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

### WISDOM CORNER

He who learns but does not think, is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger.

CONFUCIUS

We love life, not because we are used to living but because we are used to loving.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

We all want to be famous people, and the moment we want to be something we are no longer free.

JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

### WORDSWORTH

#### Waywiser

It consists of a wheel at the end of a handle, with a counter to measure the number of turns the wheel makes. It's a quick way of measuring a distance and has been known in various forms since antiquity - the Roman architect and military engineer Vitruvius described one in detail in the first century BCE. To name it, British surveyors of the seventeenth century borrowed a German word, Wegweiser, meaning literally something that shows the way, a signpost, but changed its sense. Waywiser was also given to what we now call a pedometer, which measures distances by counting the number of steps a person takes. The famous scientist Robert Hooke invented yet a third device with the name: It was one part of a way-wiser for the sea; the whole engine being designed to keep a true account, not only of the length of the run of the ship through the water, but the true rumb or leeward way, together with all the jackings and workings of the ship. An account by Robert Hooke, delivered at the meeting of the Royal Society on 28 Nov. 1683, quoted in The History of the Royal Society of London by Thomas Birch, 1757. Rumb would now be spelled rhumb, meaning "a line or course followed by a ship sailing in a fixed direction". Today the road version is usually given the trivially accurate name of surveyor's wheel. It has had others - clickwheel, trundle wheel, cyclometer (on a bike) and odometer (sometimes hodometer) - though this last one turns up today more often for the closely related device in your car that indicates how far you've driven.

#### Pushing people to the wall

Sir, December-January intensifies the chilly weather in north India. A cold wave is declared by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) in the plains when the normal temperature is, or below, 10 degree Celsius, and below 4.5 notches less than normal temperature for two consecutive days. The chilliest day in Delhi in a century was recorded last winter: This November is said to be one of the coldest Novembers in Delhi's history. This time around, an abnormal cool sea surface along the Pacific Ocean is said to have given rise to acute cold waves. A high degree of anticipation cannot be loosened towards saving lives because the cold waves may intensify. The plight of the impoverished and the destitute is inexpressible. Those with roofs over their heads suffer, too because Indian homes are not built to accommodate severe cold conditions unlike those of the western countries. The Air Quality Index (AQI) has already plummeted in north India. Energy, agriculture, health, power and transport are crucial areas that are affected by cold conditions. These warrant more impact based tailored forecasts. The IMD is doing a good job, and its responsibility is all the more nowadays. No person can stay afloat without a roof over his head in such extreme conditions. Arranging shelters and clothes for the homeless is a demanding, but inevitable task for a government. Philanthropists are on their toes; money and blankets will be the need of the hour for the homeless. Temporary shelters require to be built to protect the shelter-less from the dangerous cold. Lakhs of animals that are tottering from the shivering weather need to be taken care of. Both the Centre and the States have to take stock of the situation. Rain and snowfall may aggravate the cold wave. In general, as more and more lands are used, and forest cover reduced, greenhouse gases will push people to the wall.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA (MAHARASHTRA)

#### Skittled out

Sir, After promising much by scything through the Australian batting in the first innings and taking a fifty-plus lead, India hit a new low in their second essay, being skittled out for a paltry 36. Unbelievably, none of the Indian batsmen could reach double figures as the pace bowling duo of Josh Hazlewood (5/8) and Pat Cummins (4/21) ran amok. The Aussies strolled home by eight wickets with opener Joe Burns regaining touch with an unconquered 51. Virat Kohli and company would like to forget this match in a hurry.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

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# J-K DDC POLLS CONCLUDE PEACEFULLY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Dec 19:** The maiden District Development Council (DDC) elections in Jammu and Kashmir concluded on Saturday with an overall voter turnout of approximately 51 per cent, and the counting of votes will be taken up on December 22.

In the eighth and final phase of polling on Saturday, nearly 51 per cent turnout was recorded across 28 constituencies spread over 18 districts of the union territory, State Election Commissioner (SEC) K K Sharma said here.

The DDC elections, the first democratic exercise in Jammu and Kashmir after the Centre abrogated the special status of the erstwhile state and divided it into two union territories, commenced on November 28 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing a press conference, Sharma said the polling was peaceful and largely incident-free, barring a few minor incidents.

"We had a successful last phase of the polls which recorded a turnout of 50.98 per cent for the entire J-K," Sharma told reporters.

He said while 72.71 per cent polling was recorded in the Jammu Division in the final phase, 29.91 per cent turnout was registered in the

Kashmir Valley.

While the first phase recorded 51.76 per cent polling, the subsequent phases on December 1, 4, 7, 10, 13 and 16 witnessed 48.62, 50.53, 50.08, 51.20, 51.51 and 57.22 per cent polling, respectively.

The counting of votes for the DDC polls, which were held along with by-elections to panchayats, will be held on December 22.

He said over 3.21 lakh electors came out to vote in the final phase for which polling was held from 7 am till 2 pm, even as Kashmir valley reeled under sub-zero minimum temperatures.

"At some places the voting continued after 2 pm as several voters were waiting for their turn to cast the ballot," he added.

Sharma said that in the final phase in the Kashmir Valley, Kupwara district in the north recorded the highest turnout of 63.8 per cent, followed by 56.5 per cent in Bandipora, 44.6 per cent in Baramulla, 35.12 per cent in Budgam, 11.2 per cent in Kulgam, 8.6 per cent in Anantnag, 8.58 per cent in Shopian and 8.50 per cent in Pulwama.

In the Jammu region, Poonch recorded the highest turnout of 83.58 per cent, followed by Reasi (81.92), Rajouri (77.31), Kathua (73.93), Samba (73.65), Kishtwar (73.45), Ramban (73.42), Doda (70.33), Jammu



(69.39), Udhmapur (60.49).

Sharma said polling was held in a peaceful atmosphere and remained largely incident-free.

"There has not been any significant incident. However, at a few polling stations, attempts of intimidation and ballot papers being torn were reported. Re-polling was ordered after contesting candidates from several political parties, other candidates and voters complained about unlawful activities during polling at some polling stations of Mendhar and Shopian DDC constituencies," he said.

The SEC said a candidate came under a minor incident of stone pelting in Poonch.

"The PSO of the candidate acted

properly and opened fire in air to stop the crowd. This led the people to disperse and there was some injury. This was an unfortunate incident," he added.

He said people have participated with very keen enthusiasm in the elections.

The people of J-K want to participate in the development of the UT, he said.

"I want to recognise the role of political parties and independents for participating in these polls. Also, I thank the government machinery including the police and CAPFs for their efforts," Sharma said.

On a question about the possibility of the assembly polls in the UT after the successful culmination of

the DDC polls, Sharma said, "Assembly election is the mandate of the ECI (Election Commission of India). It is not right for me to comment. But, they (assembly polls) will happen sometime and the ECI will take steps for it."

Earlier this morning, the voting began on a dull note at various polling stations due to early morning chill. However, it picked up the pace as the winter sun shone and long queues of voters were visible outside almost all polling stations across the Union Territory.

Over 6.30 lakh electors, including 3,03,275 female voters, were eligible to vote in this phase, officials said, adding a total of 1,703 polling stations - 1,028 in the Kashmir Division and 675 in the Jammu Division - were set up.

The DDC elections recorded a heavy voter turnout in Jammu at 64.2 per cent in the first phase, 65.54 in second, 68.88 in third, 69.31 in fourth, 66.67 in fifth, 68.56 in sixth and the highest 71.93 in the seventh phase.

However, 10 districts in the Kashmir Division recorded a voter turnout out of 40.65 per cent in the first phase of the DDC elections, followed by 33.34 in second, 31.61 in third, 31.95 in fourth, 33.57 in fifth, 31.55 in sixth and 39.52 per cent in the seventh phase, the officials said.

# Bacterial infections in Kerala raise concerns

*The intestinal infection with communicable capacity has so far affected six people in Kozhikode*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kozhikode, Dec 19:** An 11-year-old boy has died of Shigella, an intestinal infection with communicable capacity, that has so far affected six people in Kozhikode, health officials said here Saturday.

Shigella is one of the leading bacterial causes of diarrhoea worldwide and is an intestinal infection caused by a family of bacteria.

The boy died Friday, officials said. In Kozhikode, the infections have been mostly reported from Kottaparambu ward within the corporation limits. Kozhikode District Medical Officer Dr V Jayasree told PTI that 26 diarrhoea cases had been reported, of which six were confirmed to be that of Shigella.

"The other people have been cured. Two children have been shifted to the medical college here

since they have fever," the DMO said. Dr Amar Fettle, state nodal officer for communicable disease, said Shigella usually spreads through food and water, which are contaminated to some extent by human excreta.

"The disease is treatable and is manageable by antibiotics. Proper sanitisation methods should be followed. It is not deadly but requires public awareness and one must take due precautions food and water safety along with proper waste management," Fettle told PTI.

The DMO said that none of those affected were in serious condition and the people need to maintain personal hygiene. District health authorities have initiated mitigation steps, including super-chlorination of wells of the region, and inspections of eateries, including hotels. Awareness classes were also being held, officials said.

# Omar terms ED attachment order of father's properties as 'baseless'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah Saturday termed the provisional attachment order of properties belonging to his father by the Enforcement Directorate as "baseless" and wondered how an ancestral property could be seen as proceeds of "crime".

In a series of tweets, Omar, who is the vice president of the National Conference, said his father, Farooq Abdullah, "is in touch with his lawyers and will fight all these baseless charges in the one place that matters - a court of law".

He said everyone is presumed to be innocent and is entitled to a fair trial "unlike in the court of the

media or the court of BJP managed social media".

Omar expressed wonder that the properties attached are largely ancestral dating from the 1970s with the most recent one built before 2003.

"There can be no justification for the seizures because they fail the very basic test of having been acquired as the proceeds of the crime being investigated," he said.

He said that his father came to know about the attachment of his properties in the ongoing investigation in to the JKCA matter through media.

"Not surprisingly the media was tipped off regarding the seizure before he had received any official notice or documentation," he said.

# Hotels booked to brim as tourists return to Valley

*The recent snowfall has triggered a remarkable influx of visitors as hundreds are keen to fulfil their passion for skiing or a joyride on the famous ropeway called 'Gulmarg Gondola'*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Kashmir's famous tourist resorts and hill stations, particularly Gulmarg and Pahalgam, are receiving a huge rush of visitors this winter as almost all the huts and hotels have been booked for the next several weeks.

Like scores of huts and hotels, the high-end Khyber Resort and Spa at Gulmarg is fully sold out till the middle of January 2021. "I have been shuttling between my office and Khyber in search of a room for our tourism advisor who is scheduled to attend an important event here on 31 December. I have completely failed as they don't have a single room unsold", Dr Javed-ur-Rehman, Assistant Director Tourism said.

He said 700 to 800 tourists come into Gulmarg every day. They include 200-300 visitors from all over India while around 500 local visitors also enjoy a trip every day.

The recent snowfall has triggered a remarkable influx of visitors as hundreds are keen to fulfil their passion for skiing or a joyride on the famous ropeway called 'Gulmarg Gondola'. The Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation is currently operating only the first phase of the ropeway as the skiing activity for now is limited to the lower end. A large number of common and amateur skiers have converged on Gulmarg.

"The high-altitude phase of Gondola, between Kongdori and Afarwat, over the alpine slopes will operate around the next snowfall as we require a minimum of 2 metre thick snow for the professional skiers there", Nisar Ahmad Wani, Director of Tourism, said. According to him, it was mainly due to Christmas and the New Year celebrations that all the huts and hotels had been booked in advance.

"We are going to have a huge snow carnival here. Like March 2020, Khelo India national games of 2021 are also being held at Gulmarg. These will be scheduled for January 2021. We will be starting the professional skiing events from 1 January 2021 as our snow safety officer will be arriving from the US on 28 December. It will be a three-month-long event which is expected to be attended by hundreds of celebrated skiers from all over the country and abroad", Wani said.

"Fortunately the fear of Covid-19 is receding and the air traffic from New Delhi and other cities to Srinagar is increasing sharply".

The Department of Tourism has already conducted Jashn-e-Kashmir, a winter cultural bonanza in October-November. A series of programmes, including a golf tournament, was organised at Pahalgam. Other programmes were held at Gulmarg and different places in Srinagar.

This has brought a cheer to



thousands of the Kashmiris associated with tourism after Kashmir reeled from the Coronavirus lockdown for seven months of Summer-2020 and remained jinxed for over a year. It began exactly when the Khelo India was underway with participation of hundreds of skiers at Gulmarg in March 2020. Prior to that, the entire tourism had come to a grinding halt due to the restrictions imposed by the authorities for two months after abrogation of Article 370 in August last year, followed by the three-month-long shutdown enforced by the separatists and the militants.

Commercial and academic activity resumed fully in the last week of February 2020 but it proved to be short-lived as the pandemic began within a month. Now it is after 16 months that the valley's ho-

tels and houseboats, and all others associated with tourism and handicraft, are getting some business. The voters' enthusiasm in the current District Development Council elections has added to the aura of festivity in the valley.

The celebrities enjoying in the valley include actor Sana Khan who is here on honeymoon with husband Mufti Anas Sayeed. The couple's pictures and videos on Instagram have gone viral.

While 8,42,202 domestic and foreign tourists had visited Kashmir in 2018, the numbers plummeted to 4,99,582 as all visitors and pilgrims from across the country and abroad were advised to leave ahead of August 2019. With the improvement in the situation, notwithstanding the Covid-19 lockdown, 28,030 tourists have visited Kashmir

this year till November 30.

According to officials, no tourists visited the valley in April, May and June 2020 as the air traffic, along with surface communication, remained closed due to the pandemic lockdown. With the initial relaxations, 186 tourists reported in July and 284 in August. In September, 848 tourists visited Kashmir. The inflow went up to 2,697 in October and 6,327 in November. The hoteliers are expecting the arrival of over 10,000 tourists in December and even more in January 2021.

"We have had no occupancy in the last 11 months. But, now we have started receiving orders for bookings. I have sold 10 rooms for March 2021," Shaukat Ali Wani, the owner of Wani Hotel at the Boulevard in Srinagar said.

# Kerala HC asks Vijayan govt to return ₹10cr to Devasom board

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kochi, Dec 19:** The full bench of the Kerala High Court Friday asked the Pinarayi Vijayan government to return the Rs 10 crore which was received by the Chief Minister Distress Relief Fund from the Guruvayoor Devasom Board in parts for the 2018 Kerala floods and the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board had first paid Rs 5 crore when the worst floods of the century devastated Kerala in 2018 and repeated the same in May 2020 when the Covid pandemic struck the southern state.

Soon after local BJP leaders and a few other Hindu devotees approached the Kerala High Court that this was unfair to handover the money of the Board to others as the



funds are to be used for the Board and for the temples under it.

A division bench of the court after hearing the case had earlier referred it to the full bench, which in its Friday's sitting asked for the money to be returned.

It said the trustee is only the custodian of the Board and rules do not permit these sorts of contributions. The full bench noted that the way on how it should be returned, would be decided by the division bench.

# Govt offices to get 'green' tag

*Those offices, which avoid using plastic and disposable items in day-to-day activities and encourage use of articles that can be recycled, would be declared as green*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 19:** The offices of government institutions and public sector undertakings in Kerala will soon turn 'green', thanks to an eco-friendly initiative of a state-run agency.

Those offices, which avoid using plastic and disposable items in day-to-day activities and encourage the use of articles that can be reused and recycled, would be declared as green, Haritha Keralam Mission

officials here said.

The distribution of the green certification to such institutions would be held January 26, they said. Haritha Keralam Mission is an ambitious programme envisaged by the state government to make the state clean, protect its water sources and soil.

Steps have already been made to identify such offices which are eligible for the green tag and certification, Mission district coordinator, D Humayun said here.

As part of the initiative, green protocol committees have been formed in offices and awareness programmes are being conducted, he said.

The 'green office' would strictly follow the ban on plastic and disposable articles, removal of unused furniture and e-waste and installation of waste treatment facilities for the disposal of organic and inorganic waste and introduction of eco-friendly utensils.

Such offices would also have features such as organic vegetable gardens and facilities to conserve water and electricity.

The green offices would be dust-free and toilet-friendly also, the Mission officials added.

Based on the reports submitted by the respective offices, the green audit review committee would visit the offices directly and inspect the facilities before declaring them as green offices, they added.

# Kerala warns of surge in Covid cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 19:** Kerala Health Minister KK Shailaja Saturday warned of a spike in COVID-19 cases, days after the local body elections in the state, and asked the people to be 'extremely careful' for the next few weeks.

The Health Minister also advised the public to self-quarantine and remain patient until a vaccine for the pandemic is made available.

"It's not time yet to go shopping with kids or to entertain huge gatherings for weddings and festivities. We need to remain patient until a vaccine is available. So until then, the political parties, families and individuals should ensure

that such gatherings are avoided and the health protocol is adhered to," Shailaja said during a



**Experts opine that an increase in cases can be seen after the elections. We need to be extremely careful for the next two weeks. People should not think that elections are over and the COVID-19 has gone**

KK SHAILAJA | KERALA HEALTH MINISTER

Facebook live event.

Citing expert opinion that COVID-19 cases may increase after the elections, she asked people to get themselves tested in case of any symptoms.

"Experts opine that an increase in cases can be seen after the elections. We need to be extremely careful for the next two weeks. People should not think that elections are over and the COVID-19 has gone. Even though the government has lifted the restrictions, people should restrain themselves and follow the COVID-19 health protocol," she said. The three-phase polling 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 on December 8, 10 and 14.

The entire election procedure was in compliance with COVID-19 protocols, masks, sanitising and social distancing norms were made mandatory at all polling stations.

Kerala's COVID-19 tally crossed the seven lakh mark Saturday with the addition of 6,293 cases, the health minister said.

The toll has mounted to 2,786 with 29 more deaths being added.

As many as 4749 people have been cured of the infection, taking the total recoveries to 6,36,814, the minister said in a press release. The active cases stood at 60,396 and the total caseload is 7,00,158. In the last 24 hours, 59,995 samples have been sent for testing. The test positivity rate has gone up to 10.49 per cent, while 72,93,578 samples have been examined. Among the districts, Ernakulam recorded 826 cases, the highest. Kasaragod accounted for 119 cases, the least. Kozhikode reported 777 cases, Malappuram 657 and Thrissur 656.



## of the day **quote**

Gujarat has been focussing on Industry 4.0 and also on an innovation-driven ecosystem

**VIJAY RUPANI** | GUJARAT CHIEF MINISTER

The Opposition leaders are saying that the three farm laws have been prepared by those who don't know anything about agriculture. I would like to ask whether Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi are farmers?

**SMRITI IRANI** | UNION MINISTER

In the western sector, our neighbour Pakistan keeps on doing nefarious acts on the border. Even after losing four wars, they're still fighting proxy wars through terror

**RAJNATH SINGH** | DEFENCE MINISTER

### SHORT TAKES

#### 3 of family run over by train

**Palghar:** Three members of a family from Nalasopara in Palghar district were killed and a 10-year-old girl severely injured while trying to cross the railway tracks Saturday morning, police said. The deceased comprise a 55-year-old woman, her 35-year-old daughter and 31-year-old son, while the injured girl is also a relative, a Vasai railway police official said. "The four left on a walk at around 7:30am but I did not accompany them as I was not feeling well. The four gave me Rs 2,000. Later I came to know of the horrific incident," the elder woman's husband told reporters.

#### Two shot dead in group clash

**Muzaffarnagar:** Two men were shot dead and another injured Saturday in a clash following a dispute over the venue of a meeting of a sugarcane farmers' society in neighbouring Shamli district. Shamli Superintendent of Police Sukriti Madhav Mishra identified the victims as Karmveer and Rahul, both around 30 years old and residents of Khandrawli village under Kandhla police station. Mishra said the society of cane growers of the village, which manages the disbursement of fund to individual farmers after its receipt from sugar mills, was to hold its meeting in the village.

#### Kidnapped boy rescued from Kolar

**Mangalore:** An eight-year-old boy from Ujire, who was kidnapped December 17 by a gang demanding a ransom of Rs 17 crore, was rescued from Kolar by the city police. Anubhav, son of Bijoy and grandson of an ex-serviceman Shivan, had been abducted on Thursday evening by the occupants of an Indica car bearing yellow number plate. Police sources on Saturday said the special squad of Mangaluru police with the support of Kolar Superintendent of Police, Kartik Reddy arrested the kidnapers.

#### RSS ideologue MG Vaidya dead

**Nagpur:** Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue and the organisation's first spokesperson Madhav Govind Vaidya died here Saturday after a brief illness, his family said. He was 97. Vaidya, who had recovered from coronavirus infection, died at a private hospital in Nagpur, his grandson Vishnu Vaidya told PTI.



Women are often easily targeted in the world of politics, so it is important for them to stay focused

**URMILA MATONDKAR** | ACTOR-POLITICIAN

#### ZOO SPREAD ACROSS 250 ACRES SET TO COME UP IN JAMNAGAR

As per details uploaded on the Central Zoo Authority, the mega zoo, to be called "Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Kingdom" will be spread over 250.1 acres



## NSCN-K UNLAWFUL OUTFIT, SAYS MHA NOTIFICATION

While many of the Nagas' demands have been resolved during the talks with the Centre, differences still remain over a separate flag and Constitution

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kohima, Dec 19:** The Nagaland government has said that a Union Home Ministry's (MHA) notification has declared NSCN (K), all its factions, wings and frontal organisations as an unlawful association under sections of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. A senior Nagaland Home Department official referring to the MHA's recent notification said that since September 2015, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) has been involved in 104 violence incidents, killings of seven security forces personnel, six civilians and abducted 75 civilians.

The notification said that the Central government is of the opinion that the NSCN (K), is continuously engaging in unlawful and violent activities thereby undermining the authority of the Indian government and the governments of Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. "NSCN (K) is spreading terror and panic among the people, aligning with other unlawful associations like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and Mettei organisations of Manipur and indulging in kidnapping for ransom and extortion of money".

The NSCN (K) has been obtaining assistance from anti-India forces in other countries to procure arms," the notification said. It said that the NSCN (K) has its



NSCN-K leader S S Khaplang FILE PHOTO

The NSCN (K) has been obtaining assistance from anti-India forces in other countries to procure arms, notification says

professed aim to create a sovereign Nagaland incorporating the Naga inhabited areas of Indo-Myanmar region by secession from the Indian Union in alliance with other armed secessionist organisations of Nagaland and northeastern region. "The Central government is also of the opinion that if there is no immediate curb and control of unlawful activities of NSCN (K), the organisation may make fresh recruitment, indulge in violent, terrorist and secessionist activities, collect funds and endanger the lives of innocent citizens and the security forces personnel, and therefore, circumstances do exist which render it necessary to declare the NSCN (K) as an unlawful association with immediate effect," the notification said. The Central government for the past many years has been holding talks with another Naga outfit - National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM). The NSCN-IM has held a huge

number of rounds of negotiations with the Central government in Delhi and even outside India after signing a ceasefire pact in August 1997. The Central government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had signed a "framework agreement" with the NSCN-IM in 2015. The NSCN-IM and the intelligence sources said that while many of the 31 demands of the Nagas have been almost resolved during the talks with the Centre, differences remain over a separate flag and a separate constitution. Nagalim, a long-pending demand of the NSCN-IM for a separate Naga state, encompasses the Naga-inhabited areas of Myanmar as well as parts of the northeastern states bordering Nagaland. Nagaland Governor and the central government's interlocutor for the Naga peace talks R.N. Ravi has recently rejected the demand for a separate flag and constitution for the state as demanded by the NSCN (IM).

## NCW seeks report on rape allegations against Hemant

A PIL has been filed in the Ranchi High Court alleging that a deliberate ploy is on to destabilise the incumbent Hemant Soren government in Jharkhand

AGENCIES

**Ranchi, Dec 19:** The National Commission for Women (NCW) has taken cognisance of media reports where a model has reportedly alleged that she was raped by current Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren in 2013.

Taking to Twitter, the NCW said, "[It] has come across media report regarding a model who has alleged that she was raped by Hemant Soren in 2013 and she and her family received threats against speaking about the alleged incident in public." The women's panel said taking note of the matter, NCW chairperson Rekha Sharma has written to Maharashtra DGP and sought a detailed action-taken report of the case filed in 2013 at the earliest. Meanwhile, the ruling Jharkhand



Mukti Morcha (JMM) in Jharkhand has reacted sharply to this and filed a PIL in the Ranchi High Court. The PIL, filed by one Jahan Ara, has alleged that a deliberate ploy is on to destabilise the incumbent Hemant Soren government in Jharkhand. The petitioner has demanded a CID probe into the matter, while former CM Raghubar Das, Jharkhand BJP president Deepak Prakash and BJP MP Nishikant Dubey have been named

as defendants in the PIL. In her PIL, Jahan Ara has claimed that by raking up an old matter of 2013, a campaign to "malign the image and topple the government" is on. JMM general secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya also objected to the NCW's decision and said its Chairperson Rekha Sharma is "part of the conspiracy" against the Hemant Soren government. "If she is not into any kind of politics, why did she tweet the allegations without seeking a report from Maharashtra Police," he said. The minister added that the Maharashtra Police had already closed this case after not finding any substance in the matter. Bhattacharya said that a similar attempt was made earlier by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey and others.



Youngsters play ice hockey amid sub-zero temperatures in Leh, Saturday

## Strong political patronage in UK stalling Mallya's extradition

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Fugitive tycoon Vijay Mallya's extradition is developing into a complex interplay of political connections, which helps him to continue to live in the UK, despite exhausting all avenues of appeal against his extradition. The legal wrangle has been given a peculiar identity - an issue outside and apart from the extradition process - which has effect under the UK law and its resolution is a pre-requisite to bring him back to India. According to a source familiar with the development, strong political patronage in the UK is nixing all efforts to extradite Mallya,



who is wanted in India for defaulting on loans worth thousands of crores of rupees. The source added that Mallya's extradition is before India's foreign secretary as an important matter seeking immediate attention. Also, a crystal-clear diplomatic stand on Mallya has been communicated to the UK authorities, yet

they continue to stall his extradition behind the veil of a confidential legal issue. Despite repeated efforts, the UK has declined to disclose these confidential proceedings, said the source. The high court dismissed Mallya's appeal against extradition April 20, 2020. He applied leave to appeal to the Supreme Court in the high court. On May 14, the high court of London rejected his application for permission to appeal to Supreme Court. Mallya has thus exhausted all avenues of appeal in the UK. In fact, the high court order had set Mallya on the path for extradition within 28 days, yet it is far from complete.

#### BJP leader extends support to Punjab farmers' agitation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Dec 19:** Former Union minister and senior BJP leader Birender Singh has extended his support to the ongoing farmers' agitation against the three agriculture-marketing laws passed by the Centre. Singh is grandson of Sir Chhotu Ram, a prominent politician during the pre-independence era who championed the interest of farmers. Singh, whose son Brijendra is a sitting BJP MP, said it was his moral responsibility to stand with the farmers who he said are "worried" as they fear the new legislations will have an "impact" on their economic condition. "Whatever I have achieved in politics, would not have been possible had I not been the grandson of Sir Chhotu Ram," Singh. "Therefore, it is my moral responsibility to stand with the farmers in their fight today and, therefore, I have decided to support this (farmers') fight," said Singh, a prominent Jat leader in Haryana. Singh further said that he along with his supporters will soon observe a symbolic hunger strike in Haryana's districts bordering Delhi. Under the banner of Chaudhary Chhotu Ram Vichar Manch, the former Union minister along with his supporters had sat on a protest at Rohtak Friday.

#### 'Made in Punjab' water geyser makes entry at Singhu border



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** After automatic "roti" machines, hi-tech solar panels and fully-loaded washing machines, turning heads in the ongoing farmers' protest at the Singhu border are the newly-installed "Made in Punjab" instant water geysers. The innovative, wood-fired water geyser, which has a hole in the middle to burn the wood, has a funnel-like inlet on one side to put normal water and an outlet on the other for the piping-hot water. "This is Punjabi jugaad. We call it a desi geyser. Every house in Punjab has it. Now, we have it here also. It was given to us by the sangat for use in langar. Anyone is free to use it," said 52-year-old Manjinder Singh while preparing kheer for the protesters. Though not as daunting in its appearance as the gigantic roti-making machines, the easy-to-use indigenous geysers are proving to be super-effective for the protesting farmers - be it for cooking or bathing, especially in the chilly winter spell. It costs Rs 3,000-3,500 a piece, and with a visible dip in the temperatures, is now seen across the protest site. It works perfectly on inexpensive fuel like firewood or charcoal and even on domestic waste, thus doubling up as an incinerator and solving waste-disposal problems. "A truckload of waste is generated here every day. The presence of these geysers would also help get rid of some of the garbage, which is not a small thing," said a volunteer from a nearby langar. While Gurbreet Singh (36) from Ludhiana is happy to see Punjab's tried-and-tested geysers at the protest site, Ajay Nagar (27), a Ghaziabad resident, is absolutely stunned to know about it. "You keep hearing from the media about the new innovative things the protesters are using at the protest sites. Today, I saw one for myself. I never knew something like this existed before," Nagar, who had come to support the protest along with his friends, said. Earlier, the presence of foot-massagers, a "pizza langar" and a "Salon Sewa" at the protest sites also hogged the headlines.

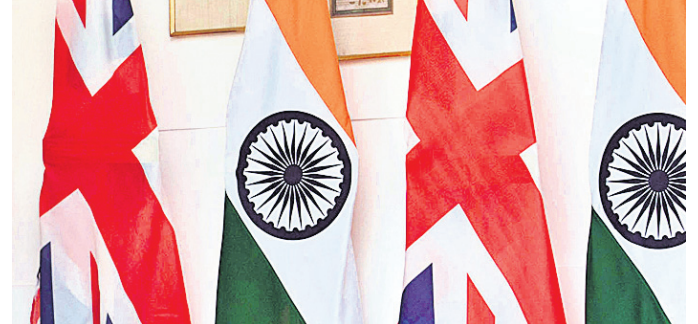
## India, UK ties in new world order keep China in crosshairs

The UK is set out to rebuild a new identity post-Brexit while India is recalibrating relationships in the wake of the unexpected Chinese aggression

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** India and the UK are all set to revamp their relationship after momentous changes in both countries. The UK is set out to rebuild a new identity post-Brexit while India is recalibrating relationships in the wake of the unexpected Chinese aggression. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accepted British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's invitation for the G7 summit to be held in the UK next year. Notably, the UK has also invited Australia and South Korea besides India. Johnson himself is India's chief guest for the Republic Day January 26. The Guardian said that the British Prime Minister's visit to India in January is part of plan to widen G7 into broader grouping of democ-

racies to challenge China and other authoritarian states. It said: "The idea of a 'D10' grouping ideologically committed to combating the match of authoritarian states chimes with Joe Biden's plan to hold a summit of democracies..." The British newspaper adds: "China will view any attempt to set up an alliance of democracies with suspicion, and has been warily watching a succession of European countries taking a greater interest in the Indo-Pacific including Germany and France." India too is upbeat about a swing in relations. Modi has called for "an ambitious and outcome-oriented 360-degree roadmap covering trade and investment, defence and security, migration and mobility, education, energy, climate change and health."



For the British Prime Minister too, the India visit will be the first major bilateral visit since taking office wherein he is also looking at stepping up British engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is currently in India to lay strong foundations for Johnson's visit in January. China is definitely on the minds of the two nations as evident from the invite extended to Modi for the G7 meeting as well as the fact that the term "Info-Pacific" is being used in official communiques by the British. The China ghost lurks. Just be-

fore Raab touched down in India, the world was splashed with information on how China has embedded lakhs of communist party members in sensitive institutions and companies across the world, including the UK and India. Also on the agenda of the two nations are emerging technologies like cybersecurity, telecoms networks, 5G technology and how to make these more secure. The British Foreign minister said: "As we are coming to the end of the transition of the Brexit phase, I think you can expect the UK to be more active and energetic in particular the Indo-Pacific tilt. We spent our time talking about Covid and what we can do." The Indo-Pacific will guide year 2021 as well. Japanese news agency Kyodo News reported early

December that the British Royal Navy's aircraft carrier, Queen Elizabeth, plans to hold joint maritime exercises with US forces as well as Japan's Self-Defense Forces near the Nansei Islands chain in southwestern Japan. With this, the UK too has joined other European nations in locking their focus on the region. New Delhi and London are looking at augmenting relations in almost every important sphere. Economics and trade top the list. In the coming year, both countries will be prominent on the global stage - India will join the United Nations Security Council while the UK will head the G7 and also the UN Climate Change Conference. As both chart out a more prominent role in world affairs in a fast-shifting geo-political climate, it makes sense to bond together over common goals.



of the day quote

I never thought of becoming chief minister. This is God-given... I utilised it to serve the people

K PALANISWAMI | TAMIL NADU CM

There will be an open debate on the Yogi model versus Kejriwal model of education in Lucknow December 22. It will be a healthy and meaningful debate for our democracy

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CM

They (the protesting farmers) are sitting at the highway, shivering, with little kids, some people have lost their lives, and how long will we keep watching this?

SONU SOOD | HINDI FILM ACTOR

SHORT TAKES

3 killed in Bengal market fire

Bhargar (West Bengal): Three persons were killed as a fire broke out at a market in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district in the early hours of Saturday, officials said. A short-circuit caused the fire that first broke out at a kerosene outlet in the Ghatakpukur Bazar area in Bhargar, around 20 km from Kolkata, they said. Drums of kerosene stocked in the shop started exploding, following which the flames spread to an adjacent eatery, a shop and a house, they said.

Four injured in Naxalite firing

Latehar: A group of Naxalites raided a coal mining project in Jharkhand's Latehar district and opened indiscriminate firing in which four persons were injured, police said Saturday. The Naxalites went to the Tetariakhar coal project under the jurisdiction of Balumath police station in the district on Friday night and opened fire, they said. The Naxalites also set four trucks on fire, the police said.

Cop among 5 held for drug haul

Gangtok: An officer of the Sikkim Police was arrested along with four other persons in one of the biggest drug hauls in the state, officials said Saturday. A consignment, worth around ₹10-14 lakh, was seized in the raid at Samdong in the East Sikkim district Thursday, Deputy Inspector General Pravin Gurung said. The consignment had 23,184 spasmoproxyin capsules along with 576 files of it, and 100 files of N10 capsules, besides 52 gm of brown sugar and 457 bottles of cough syrup, he said.

Wistron violence could sour Apple's 'Make in India' plans

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 19: Violence at a Wistron Corp factory in Bangalore is likely to stall the company's and its client Apple Inc's drive to expand local manufacturing, while forcing the government to redouble efforts to encourage foreign investors. Thousands of contract workers angry over the alleged non-payment of wages, destroyed equipment and vehicles at a Wistron plant December 12, causing an estimated \$60 million in damages.

The Taiwanese company, one of Apple's top suppliers, had been hiring in significant numbers at the plant that became operational earlier this year. It assembled the second-generation iPhone SE there and was expected to start producing newer models, but the violence has led the company to shut the site

Second peak of COVID unlikely in India: Experts

Healthcare experts have said that there may not be a second peak of Covid-19 in the country, and even if it occurs, it is unlikely to be as strong as the first one

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 19: Healthcare experts have said that there may not be a second peak of Covid-19 in the country, and even if it occurs, it is unlikely to be as strong as the first one. The comments come as the country's Covid-19 caseload surpassed the one crore mark, though the number of daily cases and daily fatalities have been continuously coming down.

Noted virologist Dr Shahid Jameel said India's curve for daily cases is on a downward slope since a peak in mid-September.

"At this time, we are getting about 25,500 cases daily compared to over 93,000 cases per day in mid-September. I believe the worst is over. But there will be small peaks in the future just as we witnessed in late November," he said.

"I don't think there would be a second peak as we have gone through the festive season (Dussehra to Diwali) and a state election without a significant jump. What is the reason for this? If we go by the second national sero survey, likely cases were 16 times confirmed cases. By that factor, India would have 160 million cases now," he told this news agency. It is possible that by now there are over 300-400 million in-

fections in the country, Jameel said. "By that token, we are seeing large parts of the population getting protected and breaking transmission of the virus," he said.

"Unexposed and susceptible people will continue to get infected. If immunity lasts a year or less, then we may have small peaks at regular intervals for the next few years. Good vaccine coverage will control this effectively," he said.

When asked about a possible sec-



India hits 10mn nCoV cases but pace slows

NEW DELHI: India exceeded 10 million infections of the new coronavirus Saturday, much later than predicted only a month ago as the pace of infections slow, despite many in the country giving up on masks and social distancing. After hitting a peak of nearly 98,000 cases in mid-September, daily infections have averaged around 30,000 this month, helping India widen its gap with the United States, the world's worst affected country with more than 16 million cases. India reported 25,152 new infections and 347 deaths in the past 24 hours, data from the health ministry showed. The virus has so far killed 145,136 people in the country. India took 30 days to add the last million cases, the second slowest since the start of the pandemic. The country expects to roll out vaccines soon and is considering emergency-use request for

three shots, developed by Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer and local company Bharat Biotech. But some health experts say the fall in cases suggests many Indians may have already developed virus antibodies through natural infection.

Trinamool witnesses biggest one-day exodus since inception

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Midnapore/Kolkata, Dec 19: In the biggest exodus from the TMC on a single day, party heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari and 34 other leaders, including five MLAs and an MP, switched over to the BJP on Saturday, reflecting the unease in West Bengal's ruling party ahead of the Assembly elections.

These leaders joined the BJP at a rally Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed in Midnapore, where he taunted TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, saying she will be left alone in her party by the time the assembly elections, due in April-May next year, are held.

Senior TMC leader and spokesperson Saugata Roy described those who joined the BJP as "traitors and weathercocks", saying that it is good that such elements are leaving the party.

Besides the TMC lawmakers, two CPI(M) MLAs and one each of the CPI and the Congress joined the saffron camp.

According to TMC sources, this is the biggest single-day desertion from the party since Banerjee formed it in 1998 after breaking away from the Congress.

Since the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, when the BJP bagged 18 seats, just four less than the ruling party, 10 TMC MLAs and one each from the Congress and the CPI(M) had switched over to the saffron camp. However, none of them resigned as MLAs.

After Saturday's desertion, 15 MLAs of the TMC, three of the CPI(M) and two belonging to the

After Saturday's desertions, 15 MLAs of the TMC, three of the CPI(M) and two belonging to the Congress are with the BJP which had won a meagre six seats in the 294-strong state Assembly in 2016

Congress are with the BJP which had won a meagre six seats in the 294-strong state Assembly in 2016.

Adhikari, who was handed over the BJP flag by Shah at a rally at Midnapore, has resigned from the TMC and given up his Cabinet posts. He also quit as an MLA but his resignation is yet to be accepted.

Two-time TMC MP from Bardhaman Purba Lok Sabha constituency Sunil Kumar Mondal, who was vocal about his differences with the party leadership recently, also joined the BJP.

Mondal was an MLA of the All India Forward Bloc, a constituent of the Left Front, but switched over to the TMC in 2014. The five TMC MLAs who joined the BJP at Shah's rally are Banasri Maity, Silbhadra Dutta, Biswajit Kundu, Sukra Munda and Saikat Panja.

Dipali Biswas, who had won the Gajole seat in 2016 on a CPI(M) ticket but joined the TMC in 2018, was also inducted into the BJP. She has not yet resigned as a CPI(M) MLA.

Haldia's CPI(M) MLA Tapasi Mandal, Tamluk's CPI lawmaker Ashok Dinda and Congress's Purulia MLA Sudip Mukherjee were among those who joined the BJP at the

rally. Former TMC MP Dasarthy Tirkey and former minister Shyamaprasad Mukherjee also changed sides.

At least 28 other TMC leaders including ward councillors, Zilla Parishad members and district functionaries also crossed over to the BJP.

A senior TMC leader said the party is apprehensive about more desertions.

"This is the biggest single-day exodus the party has ever faced. When the party fared badly in the 2004 Lok Sabha election, there was desertion. But it was never on this scale. We think more desertions are likely to follow," the TMC leader told PTI on condition of anonymity.

Adhikari, a former two-time MP and twice MLA, was reportedly unhappy over organisational changes and the growing clout of poll strategist Prashant Kishor and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee, who is a nephew of the chief minister.

Senior TMC leader and party spokesperson Saugata Roy reacted angrily, saying "They (those who left the party) are traitors and weathercocks. But they will regret their decision as the TMC will return to power with a bigger mandate. It is good that such elements are leaving the party."

CPI(M) state secretary Surya Kanta Mishra said the party had planned to expel Tapasi Mondal for anti-party activities and an internal inquiry is pending against her.

State Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury termed the growing resentment in the TMC as "poetic justice".

2 held under anti-conversion law released

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moradabad (UP), Dec 19: Two brothers who were arrested earlier this month under the anti-conversion law were released Saturday following an order by an Uttar Pradesh court.

The Muslim man and his brother were arrested December 4 after they visited the registrar's office in Moradabad to record his marriage to a Hindu woman, whose family filed a complaint.

A video purportedly showed Bajrang Dal activists asking the couple if the woman had given notice to the district magistrate over her intention to change her religion, a requirement under the new ordinance.



The Kanth police had submitted a report that it could not find evidence of the case after Pinki denied the allegations of forceful conversion by Rashid and his brother Salim, following which the chief judicial magistrate ordered Friday the release of the two, prosecuting officer Amar Tiwari said. The two were released from the Moradabad prison on Saturday, according to jail sources.

Meanwhile, the mother-in-law alleged that Pinki suffered mis-

carriage after she was tortured at the government shelter home.

The recently promulgated Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance nullifies marriages if they are carried out for the sole purpose of religious conversion. The state government had November 24 approved the draft ordinance, which provides for a jail term of up to 10 years for violators.

It was promulgated amid assertions by BJP leaders that a strict law was needed against "love jihad", a term coined by right-wing activists to discredit interfaith marriages by describing it as part of an alleged conspiracy by Muslim men to convert Hindu women in the guise of love.

BUILDING BRIDGE



Labourers make a temporary pontoon tank bridge over Ganga river for the upcoming Magh Mela festival amid coronavirus pandemic at Sangam in Prayagraj, Saturday

India requires ₹80K cr for vax distribution next year, says SII

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 19: Pune-based vaccine-maker Serum Institute of India, which has partnered with AstraZeneca to manufacture the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, Saturday said that the country would require a massive funding of ₹80,000 crore for distribution of the Covid vaccine for the next one year.

The Central government plans to vaccinate nearly 30 crore people in the first phase of drive. It will be offered to one crore healthcare workers, along with two crore front-line and essential workers and 27 crore elderly, mostly above the age of 50 years with comorbidities.

Three vaccine candidates - Serum Institute-Oxford's Covishield, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin and Pfizer vaccine are in the fray for emergency



use authorisation. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has sought additional data from the Serum Institute as well as Bharat Biotech to get approval.

Speaking about the logistics of the vaccine after it is granted approval, Dr Satish D Ravetkar, Executive Director of Serum Institute of India said, "The funding for such large scale distribution would be huge, and India should be ready with a funding of around ₹80,000 crore for next one year for distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine."



# international

## of the day quote

Migrants have played an outsized role on the frontlines of responding to the crisis - from caring for the sick and elderly to ensuring food supplies during lockdowns. Just as migrants are integral to our societies, they should remain central to our recovery

ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Despite everything I caught this virus - perhaps, doubtless, a moment of negligence, a moment of bad luck, too

EMMANUEL MACRON | FRENCH PRESIDENT

The authorisation of two vaccines, Pfizer-BioNTech and now Moderna, assures us that brighter days lie ahead. We are grateful to the scientists, medical experts, and trial participants who helped to deliver these vaccines

JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT-ELECT

## SHORT TAKES

### Rockets fired

**Kabul:** Five rockets were fired at a major US base in Afghanistan Saturday, but there were no casualties, NATO and provincial officials said. The rockets hit Bagram Airfield, said Wahida Shahkar, spokeswoman for the governor in northern Parwan province. Shahkar said that 12 rockets were placed in a vehicle and five of them were fired while police were able to defuse seven others.

### One dead

**Athens:** One woman died and another two were rescued from the sea off the eastern Greek island of Lesbos Friday, in an incident involving an inflatable dinghy carrying Somali migrants. Greece's coast guard said 24 migrants who were located safe on shore early Friday told authorities that three women in their party had fallen into the sea as the boat approached Lesbos, and were still missing.

### 1 killed, 2 missing

**Beijing:** One person was killed and two went missing after an explosion at a chemical plant in northeast China's Heilongjiang province early Saturday, local authorities said. The accident in the workshop of the chemical company in the city of Anda also left four people injured, including two seriously, the municipal government said.

### 12 killed, 6 hurt in collision

**Dhaka:** At least 12 people were killed and six others injured when a train ploughed into a bus at a railway crossing in Bangladesh Saturday, according to media reports. The incident happened at Joypurhat district when the Rajshahi-bound Uttara Express train, en route from Parbatipur, hit the passenger bus at Puranapool railway crossing, the Daily Star reported. The train dragged the bus on the railway tracks for about half a kilometre, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

### Pak minister COVID positive

**Islamabad:** Asad Umar, Pakistan's Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, announced that he has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, joining a list of top politicians to be infected with the disease.

## China 'obstructing' WHO probe: US

*"Even today, nearly a year after the world first learned of the outbreak, the Chinese Communist Party is still spreading disinformation regarding the virus and obstructing a World Health Organisation investigation into its origin and spread," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, Dec 19:** Urging the international community to demand transparency from China about the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, the US has accused Beijing of "obstructing" a WHO probe into the origin of the deadly virus in the central Chinese city of Wuhan and "peddling" questionable vaccines one year after the disease broke out.

The US leads the world with over 17,442,100 confirmed coronavirus cases and more than 313,000 deaths. "Even today, nearly a year after the world first learned of the outbreak, the Chinese Communist Party is still spreading disinformation regarding the virus and obstructing a World Health Organisation (WHO) investigation into its origin and spread," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

"It is also peddling vaccines that lack essential data on safety and efficacy, due to a fundamental disregard for transparency and accountability regarding results from clinical trials. Both actions put Chinese citizens, and the world, at risk," he said. Pompeo said nations of the world should demand transparency from Beijing about the origin and spread of the pandemic that has led to more than one million lives lost and millions of livelihoods ruined. If they do not do so, China's record of public-health crises makes another future pandemic originating from China de-



pressingly likely.

"It has now been a year since China first identified a patient in Wuhan stricken with an unknown pneumonia, now known as COVID-19. Since then, the US and other free nations, such as Germany and the UK, have led a remarkable and unprecedented vaccine development effort that is delivering hope across the world," he said.

The US on Friday authorised the emergency use of the anti-coronavirus vaccine developed by Moderna, a week after the one co-developed by Pfizer and BioNTech received a similar approval. Pompeo said the pandemic is "no accident".

"Time and again, democracies that value transparency, the rule of law, property rights, and free-market capitalism have produced innovative solutions to public health crises...In contrast, authoritarian regimes control information and stifle innovation," he said.

## Pak summons Indian diplomat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, Dec 19:** Pakistan Saturday summoned India's Chargé d'Affaires Gaurav Ahluwalia to register a protest after a United Nations Military Observers (UNMO) vehicle was targeted in the country's Chirikot sector along the Line of Control (LoC).

The Indian diplomat was summoned to the Foreign Office (FO) here a day after the Pakistan Army accused the Indian Army of "deliberately" targeting the UNMO, an allegation dismissed by India as completely false, baseless and factually incorrect.

The FO said that the UN Observers were on their way to Polas village to meet with the victims of ceasefire violations when their vehicle was targeted. While the vehicle was damaged, the two UNMOs remained unharmed, it said.

Military sources in New Delhi have rejected the allegation, saying reports of targeting the UN vehicle are not true. Meanwhile in New York, United Nations Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq, commenting on the incident on Friday, said: "I believe that the details we have are in fact that there was no one hurt but there has been a vehicle damaged in an incident and the mission is currently investigating the incident".

## UNICEF to transport up to 850 tonnes of Covax per month

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**United Nations, Dec 19:** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) could potentially transport up to 850 tonnes of Covid-19 vaccines per month in 2021, should such quantities become available, according to a new assessment published Friday.

The assessment is part of UNICEF's work to lead on the procurement and delivery of Covid-19 vaccines for 92 low- and lower middle-income countries on behalf of the COVAX Facility, an international initiative aimed at ensuring equitable global access to Covid-

19 vaccines, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organisation, a UNICEF press release said.

"This is a mammoth and historic undertaking," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. "The scale of the task is daunting, and the stakes have never been higher, but we are ready to take this on." The UNICEF assessment looked at global airfreight capacity and transport routes to better understand the challenges of delivering Covid-19 vaccines in 2021. It found that commercial airlines will be able to deliver vaccines to almost



**The UK and the European Union will continue the post-Brexit trade talks, but there remains a gap that needs to be bridged**

BORIS JOHNSON | BRITISH PM

## Hosp fire kills 9 COVID patients

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Ankara, Dec 19:** A fire broke out Saturday at an intensive care unit treating COVID-19 patients in southern Turkey after an oxygen cylinder exploded, killing nine people, the health minister said.

The state-run Anadolu news agency said the fire took place at the privately-run Sanko University Hospital unit in Gaziantep, 530 miles (850 kilometers) southeast of Istanbul. It cited a hospital statement identifying the victims as being between 56 and 85. The fire was quickly brought under control.

The statement said 14 patients undergoing intensive care treatment were transferred to other hospitals. An investigation is underway. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca tweeted that nine people were killed in the fire, raising the earlier estimate of eight dead by the hospital and the Gaziantep governor's office. There was no immediate explanation for the discrepancy.

The governor's office said 19 patients were in the unit when a "high pressure oxygen device" exploded at 4:45 am. Other than the fatalities, no others were injured in the fire, it said.

Intensive care units across Turkey currently have a 74% bed occupancy rate due to the coronavirus outbreak, according to government figures, although medical associations say the figure is higher and their hospitals are overrun with COVID-19 patients.

Friday, Turkey's Health Ministry reported 26,410 new coronavirus cases, bringing the country's total since March to 1.98 million. The figure includes asymptomatic cases, which Ankara did not report in the four months up to late November, prompting criticism that the government was trying to hide the extent of the country's outbreak. Turkey hit a record daily high of 246 COVID-19-related deaths reported Friday for an overall reported coronavirus death toll of 17,610.

## Imran says Army 'works under' him

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, Dec 19:** Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has asserted that the Army is a state institution which works under him, amidst Opposition's allegations of the powerful military establishment's interference in the country's politics and elections.

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), a 11-party opposition alliance, has been holding massive rallies since its inception in September to seek Khan's ouster and press the military to stop interfering in politics. The PDM has been accusing the Pakistan Army of installing "puppet" Prime Minister Khan through a manipulated election in 2018.

The Army, which has ruled Pakistan for more than half of its 70 plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in the matters of security and foreign policy. However, the military has denied meddling in the coun-



try's politics. Khan also denies that the army helped him win the election in 2018.

According to the 'Lahore Declaration' signed by the Opposition parties on Monday, the military establishment had stolen the people's mandate in the 2018 election and imposed a "hybrid and inefficient" government on the masses.

In an interview to SAMAA TV Friday, 68-year-old Khan rebutted accusations that he does not have any real authority and said that

the Pakistan Army is a state institution, which works under him. On Opposition's claims that the government wouldn't hold if not for the support from the powerful establishment, the cricketer-turned-politician said he is the country's democratically elected Prime Minister and so the institutions back him.

The PDM has set a January 31 deadline for Khan to step down or face a long march to Islamabad. The coalition pledged that it will make sure that there is no interference of the institutions of "the establishment and intelligence" in politics and at the same time it will make the security institutions stronger on the professional lines.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme and three-time former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, 70, has been repeatedly blaming Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and spy agency ISI chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed of meddling in Pakistan's political affairs.

## CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



People fill Mesa Redonda Market, a popular spot for Christmas shopping in Lima, Peru

PTI PHOTO

## Chang'e-5 retrieves 1,731 grams of moon samples

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Beijing, Dec 19:** China's Chang'e-5 probe has retrieved about 1,731 grams of samples from the moon, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

Zhang Kejian, head of the CNSA, handed over the samples to Hou Jianguo, president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) Saturday, reports Xinhua news agency. Chinese Vice Premier Liu He, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, attended the ceremony. He hailed the Chang'e-5 lunar mission as an important milestone in building China's strength in aerospace.

Liu also asked to organise the collaboration and cooperation in tackling lunar sample research difficulties and contribute Chinese wisdom to deepening the scientific understanding of the universe's formation and evolution.

The samples were later transferred to the lunar sample lab at the National Astronomical Observatories under the CAS. Scientists will carry out the storage, analysis, and research of the country's first samples collected from the extraterrestrial object.

The CNSA said it would release the relevant policies for the lunar



In this photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, a staff member places a cover over a container of soil and rocks from the moon during a handover ceremony for lunar samples collected by China's Chang'e 5 lunar lander at the China National Space Administration in Beijing, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

samples retrieved by Chang'e-5 to coordinate and promote scientific research, encourage more scientists at home and abroad to participate, and strive to secure more scientific achievements. The CNSA will also carry out public science popularisation programs and cultural exchanges related to the mission.

Chang'e-5 is one of the most complicated and challenging

missions in China's aerospace history. It is also the world's first moon-sample mission in more than 40 years. The Chang'e-5 probe, comprising an orbiter, a lander, an ascender, and a returner, was launched November 24. The return capsule landed in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in the early hours of Thursday, bringing back the samples collected from the moon.

## US Space Force members get new name: 'Guardians'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Washington, Dec 19:** US Vice President Mike Pence announced that service members in the Space Force, which has assigned approximately 16,000 military and civilian personnel, will be called "Guardians", following which social media was abuzz with "Guardians of the Galaxy" trends and memes.

"It is my honour, on behalf of the President of the US, to announce that henceforth the men and women of the US Space Force will be known as Guardians." The Hill news website quoted Pence as saying during a White House ceremony marking the service's first anniversary since its formation. "Sailors, soldiers, airmen, Marines and guardians will be defending our nation for generations to come." On behalf of your commander in chief, let me urge each and every one of you guardians to keep pushing, keep pushing, keep pushing the vision and the mission of the US Space Force, which is to ensure that America remains as dominant in space as we are on land and sea and air," he added.

The US Space Force, which officially came into being as an independent military service in December 2019, was cre-



ated by Trump in 2016 as the sixth branch of the military, aimed at protecting the country's assets in space from foreign governments.

It is overseen by the US Air Force and does not intend to put troops into orbit. Following the ceremony, the Space Force tweeted: "Today, after a year-long process that produced hundreds of submissions and research involving space professionals and members of the general public, we can finally share with you the name by which we will be known: Guardians." "The opportunity to name a force is a momentous responsibility. Guardians is a name with a long history in space operations, tracing back to the original command motto of Air Force Space Command in 1983, 'Guardians of the High Frontier'. The name Guardians connects our proud heritage and culture to the important mission we execute 24/7, protecting the people and interest of the US and its allies."



all 92 low- and lower-middle-income countries, which are among the 190 economies participating in the COVAX Facility, at an estimated

cost of up to \$70 million, the Xinhua news agency reported.

Comparing vaccine volume estimates against commercial and

cargo routes across the globe, the assessment also found that current air cargo capacity would be sufficient to make deliveries covering 20 per cent of the population for most of the 92 countries. Covid-19 vaccines are expected to be primarily shipped using existing passenger and cargo flight capacity, although charters or alternative transport options may still be needed for some small countries and others with access issues.

UNICEF is working with airlines and the wider logistics industry to prioritise the delivery of Covid-19 vaccines around the world.

A UNICEF meeting this week with more than 300 vaccine procurement experts globally, including government officials, looked at ways to procure and roll out Covid-19 vaccines and strengthen regulatory systems and supply chains.

Funding is critical. UNICEF has called for 410 million dollars to help countries with the delivery of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostic tools in 2021. Further, UNICEF estimates a funding gap of 133 million dollars to cover in-country vaccine logistics and the required cold chain equipment for the poorest 92 countries.





Send me your inputs so that we can see a Budget which is a Budget like never before, in a way  
**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN** | FINANCE MINISTER

## AIR TAXI INDIA GETS PERMIT

The civil aviation regulator has granted operation permit to Air Taxi India, making the company the newest airline in the country. According to a senior DGCA official, the airline has received the permit this week and is set to launch regional operations



## of the day quote

We need to have the government indemnify manufacturers, especially vaccine manufacturers, against all lawsuits. In fact, COVAX and other countries have already started talking about that  
**ADAR POONAWALLA** | CEO, SERUM INSTITUTE OF INDIA

It's not cosmetic, it's not showmanship, the Tata Group has put the country together showing we can stand up and marshal our efforts to do what you have set ourselves to do  
**NARENDRA MODI** | PRIME MINISTER

We remain committed to support our selling partners to sustain the growth momentum built over the past few months through various sale events and special initiatives. This SBD, our customers purchased some of the most unique products offered by Indian SMBs  
**PRANAV BHASIN** | DIRECTOR, MSME & SELLING PARTNER EXPERIENCE, AMAZON INDIA

# Apple puts iPhone partner Wistron on probation

Apple, earlier, had said it was undertaking a detailed investigation following the violent incident at Wistron's Narasapura facility in Karnataka last week

### AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Apple, Saturday said it has placed Wistron on probation and it will not receive any new business from the US-based company before corrective actions are completed.

Apple, Monday, had said it was undertaking a detailed investigation following the violent incident at its supplier Wistron's Narasapura facility (in Kolar district) in Karnataka last week.

"Apple employees and independent auditors hired by Apple have been working around the clock to investigate the issues which occurred at Wistron's Narasapura facility," Apple said in a statement.

It added that while these investigations are ongoing, preliminary findings indicate violations of its supplier code of conduct by failing to implement proper working hour management processes that led to payment delays for some workers in October and November.

"As always, our focus is on making sure everyone in our supply chain is protected and treated with dignity and respect. We are very disappointed and taking immediate steps to address these issues," Apple said.

Apple said it has "placed Wistron on probation and they will not receive any new business from Apple before they complete corrective actions".

Apple employees, along with independent auditors, will monitor their progress, it said adding that its main objective is to make sure all the workers are treated with dignity and respect, and fully compensated promptly.



## A section of workers at Wistron Corporation's manufacturing facility in Kolar district near Bangalore went on a rampage December 12 over non-payment of their wages

"Wistron has taken disciplinary action and is restructuring their recruitment and payroll teams in Narasapura. They have also set up an employee assistance program and a 24-hour grievance hotline in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, and English to ensure all workers at the facility can voice any concerns, anonymously," the statement noted.

A section of workers at Wistron Corporation's manufacturing facility in Narasapura Industrial Area in Kolar district near Bangalore went on a rampage December 12 over non-payment of their wages.

Over 160 people have been arrested by the police in connection with the violence during which stones were hurled, windows and doors broken and vehicles in the parking lot overturned and set on fire. Video footage of the attack was widely circulated on social media.

The Cupertino-based company has a strict supplier code of conduct and follows up on any reports of violations. In 2019, it interviewed more than 52,000 supplier employees as part of its supplier assessments.

Apple, in its supplier code of conduct, states that suppliers must meet all legal requirements relating to wages and benefits, including paying accurate wages in a timely manner. It prohibits use of wage deductions as a form of disciplinary measure and states that all use of temporary and outsourced labour shall be within the limits of the local law.

In November, Apple had suspended new business with one of its suppliers Pegatron Corp after labour violations were reported. Besides the iPhone, Wistron also manufactures IT products for Lenovo and Microsoft, among others.

## 'Manufacturing base expansion can lead to double-digit growth'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** India has the potential to achieve double-digit growth through a healthy dose of digital services and manufacturing base expansion which will be driven by demand from the rural sector, youth and the aspirational middle class, Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur said Saturday.

The minister of state for finance said that in the past six years, the Modi government has consistently introduced reforms that have brought about significant changes.

"And now all indicators, from inflation to fiscal deficit, from forex reserves to current account deficit, from GDP growth to financial inclusion—all point to a very stable and sustainable economic position," Thakur said.

Talking about the recovery post lockdown, he said, it has been broad-based and has not come only from the agriculture sector.

Of the 48 high-frequency indi-



cators used by the Reserve Bank to track the economy, 30 parameters overtook the February's level, he said addressing 48th National Convention of Company Secretaries.

"We have seen stellar recovery in passenger vehicle sales, 2-wheeler sales, oil consumption, steel production, cement production, international air cargo amongst other areas," he said.

Due to the gradual and thoughtful unlocking of the lockdown and the resumption of the business activities in the second quarter, he said, "we are looking at a strong economic revival, based on strong fundamentals and a slew of structural reforms."

# Banks pursue UK bankruptcy order against Mallya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, Dec 19:** A consortium of Indian banks led by the State Bank of India (SBI) returned to the High Court in London for a bankruptcy application hearing against liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya, as they pursue the recovery of debt from loans paid out to his now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines.

At a virtual hearing before Chief Insolvency and Companies Court (ICC) Judge Michael Briggs Friday, both sides depose retired Indian Supreme Court justices as expert witnesses on Indian law in support of their arguments for and against a bankruptcy order against Mallya in the UK.

While the banks argued a right to waive their security over the Indian assets involved in the case in order to recover their debt in the UK, lawyers for the 65-year-old businessman argued that the funds in question involved public money held by state-owned banks in India which precluded them from such a security waiver.

"As a commercial entity, a bank has a right to exercise its commercial wisdom to decide what it wants to do with its security," noted barrister Marcia Shekerdemian, arguing on behalf of SBI and others.

She cross-examined Retd Justice Deepak Verma, who deposed via video link from India on behalf of Mallya to establish that the banks cannot give up their security on the Indian assets and then pursue a bankruptcy order under English law because public money and public interest is involved in the case in India.

Retd Justice Gopala Gowda argued the reverse in his cross-examination by Mallya's barrister Philip Marshall, saying the banks



had a right to relinquish their security in pursuit of unpaid dues.

The exchange between the lawyers got heated at several points during the course of the virtual hearing, also being followed by Mallya, with Judge Briggs stepping in to urge a focussed question and answer approach to expedite the proceedings.

However, the depositions left no time for closing submissions in the case, which has now been adjourned to a yet-to-be-agreed date in the New Year.

Meanwhile, Marshall once again raised the issue of access to court-held funds from the sale of a French property for Mallya to be able to cover the legal fees of the next hearing as he no longer has a source of income from his consultancy work.

The SBI led consortium of 13 Indian banks, which also includes Bank of Baroda, Corporation Bank, Federal Bank Ltd, IDBI Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Punjab & Sind Bank, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of Mysore, UCO Bank, United Bank of India and JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Co. Pvt Ltd, had initiated the proceedings against Mallya in December 2018.

## SHORT TAKES

### SpiceXpress to extend support

**Mumbai:** Third-party integrated logistics platform Shadowfax Saturday said it has onboarded budget carrier SpiceJet's dedicated freighter division SpiceXpress to provide ground services support to the carrier in vaccine transportation. Under the partnership, Shadowfax plans to deploy a fleet of over 250 refrigerated vehicles which will provide a speedy and reliable transportation solution for vaccine delivery.

### Honda stops production

**New Delhi:** Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) has decided to pull the plug on production at its Greater Noida plant in Uttar Pradesh, sources said Saturday. The automaker, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Japanese Honda Motor Co, had set up the Greater Noida plant in 1997. Industry sources said the plant would, however, continue to house the company's corporate head office, spare parts division and R&D centre among other functions.

### IndiGrid to get two projects

**New Delhi:** Infrastructure investment trust IndiGrid Saturday said it has inked an agreement to acquire 100% stake in two projects of FRV Solar Holdings for ₹660 crore. The completion of acquisition would depend upon receipt of relevant approvals and completion of contractual obligations, IndiGrid said in a BSE filing. "IndiGrid has signed securities purchase agreement December 18 for acquisition of 100% in FRV AP Solar Farm-I Private Ltd," it said.

### IDBI Bank raises ₹1,435 crore

**New Delhi:** IDBI Bank has raised ₹1,435 crore through an issue of equity shares to 44 qualified institutional investors, according to a regulatory filing. The bank had targeted to raise ₹2,000 crore (base size ₹1,000 crore and green-shoe option of ₹1,000 crore) through the QIP issue at a floor price of ₹40.63 apiece. The QIP committee of the BoD at its meeting held December 19 approved the issue and allotment of 3,71,808,177 equity shares to 44 eligible qualified institutional buyers.

# 'Pharma cos to benefit from improving demand'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Indian pharma companies are expected to benefit from improving demand in the US market, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra). As per the ratings agency, these companies have garnered 45% of all new Abbreviated New Drug Application (ANDA) approvals over the past nine months. Besides, Ind-Ra expects the regulatory environment to remain stringent.

However, it said well-equipped companies would be able to take the advantage of a better pricing outlook emanating from supply shortages and recalls.

"Indian companies have received a higher share of new ANDA approvals since April 2020 led by significant manufacturing facility clearances, GDUFA-II (Generic Drug User Fee Amendments), and a strong filing momentum aided by historical investments in R&D," Ind-Ra added in a report.

"Ind-Ra has seen an increasing

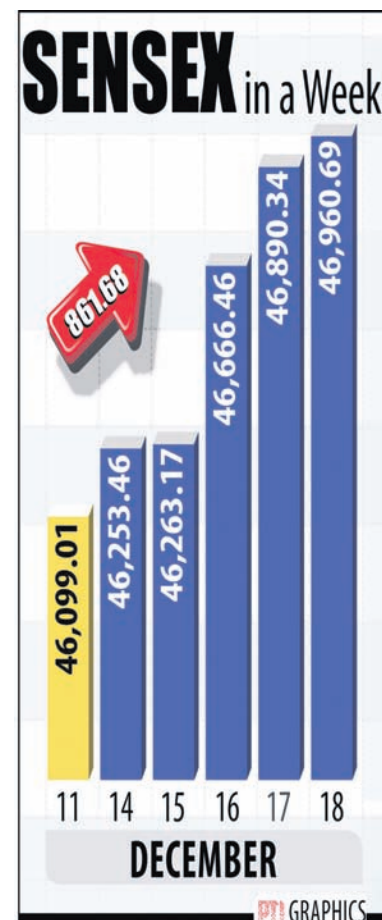


drug demand since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic led by supply chain issues, channel filling and demand for Covid-19 led preventive products. In the past, too, there was drug shortage in the US due to the exit of the large generic players from unviable products.

"Overall drugs shortages in the US are leading to moderate-to-stable pricing pressures."

Furthermore it cited that majority of the drug recalls (91 per cent) from the US markets are from the non or least serious category (Class II and III recalls).

Accordingly only 'Class-I' drug recalls are serious in nature.



## BIZ BUZZ

### itel rolls out Thermo Edition

**Bhubaneswar:** itel launched it2192T Thermo Edition, India's first phone in entry segment with body temperature monitoring facility anytime, anywhere. The product aims to empower the masses of India to be self-responsible and adhere to necessary responsibilities in order to keep them and their closed ones safe during the pandemic. itel it2192T Thermo Edition is available at ₹1,049, that comes packed 'King Voice' feature, a text to speech feature. It also reads out the body temperature for consumers that make it more convenient for specially-abled people. Made with a purpose targeting multilingual India, the it2192T transcends the limits of language and offers support in eight regional languages. It comes with up to four day's battery backup with 1000mAh long-lasting battery with super battery mode.

### Motorola launches Moto G9 power

**Bhubaneswar:** Motorola announced the launch of their latest offering in the affordable segment with moto g9 power. This latest addition to the 'moto g' family packs a segment-leading 6000 mAh of battery that would allow you to say goodbye to your chargers and power banks for up to 60 hours on a single charge. moto g9 power is also the first device in the power line in the 'moto series' that also comes with a 64MP ultra high-resolution triple camera system with Quad Pixel technology that delivers exceptional clarity and colour accuracy. The new model also comes with the latest Snapdragon™ 662 processor with Stock Android Experience, 4GB of DDR4xRAM, 64 GB of storage, IP52 Certification for dust and water resistance and a Dedicated Google Assistant button. The power packed moto g9 power will be available at a remarkable price of just ₹11,999.

### Khimji announces 'End of Season Sale'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** The much awaited Khimji's end of season (EOS) sale is on to hit the customers' personality kit with exquisitely designed jewellery. The value packed EOS sale offers up to 70% off on making charge of Gold jewellery, up to 25% on diamonds and up to 60% on luxury watches in all stores across the state.

Apart from this the sale also offers flat 10% and 25% off on MRP and making charge of silver jewellery. The sale is valid till January 10, 2021.



The value packed EOS sale offers up to 70% off on making charge of Gold jewellery, up to 25% on diamonds and up to 60% on luxury watches in all stores across Odisha

# More men than women freelancing during Covid: Survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 19:** Even as the white-collar gig economy (temporary positions) grew at an accelerated pace post COVID-19, a survey has revealed that more men compared to women are freelancing since the onset of the pandemic.

The data from freelance platform Flexing It, which witnessed 200% growth in the total number of freelancers registering post COVID-19, found that women accounted for less than 30% of new registrations and only 20% of the platform's active talent pool.

While Flexing It survey found that when women do choose to freelance, they are highly successful at leveraging the flexibility offered by freelance work, however, independent work remains a greatly underleveraged career strategy overall for women.



Flexing It is a platform that connects organisations to consultants and expertise on an 'on demand' basis to an independent talent pool of over 70,000 consultants.

The survey also revealed that women in freelancing earn less

than men and the gender pay gap increases as experience levels rise with women consultants, who quote lower fees from men for the same skill and experience levels.

According to data from the platform, the average income of women

The data found that women accounted for less than 30% of new registrations

The survey finds independent work remains a greatly underleveraged career strategy overall for women

The survey further revealed that almost a quarter of women registering on the platform since the onset of COVID are for Human Resource, consultants, marketing and strategy consultants

The survey also revealed that women in freelancing earn less than men and the gender pay gap increases as experience levels rise with women consultants

However, the income of women stagnates at this point while that of men continues to grow post 20 years of experience, while the average income of men rose by 20% while that of women remained the same, it added.

The survey further revealed that almost a quarter of women registering on the platform since the onset of COVID are for Human Resource, consultants, marketing and strategy consultants. IT and professional services or consulting are the top industries from which women are registering during the pandemic, it added.

The survey also found that almost 40% of the women freelancers registering since the onset of COVID have between 10-20 years of experience, while almost 40% of the men registering in the same period have over 20 years of experience, it stated.

Director of Khimji group Mitesh Khimji said "This EOS sale is purely targeted at cultural sentiments of our people. Foreseeing the near future of the industry, I hope this will definitely help the purpose of investment on metal."

This is not first time when Khimji as a customers' loved brand goes beyond all boundaries to bring sentimental proposition in the business. Recently, the company had come up with a unique unlock sale which witnessed unbelievable response.

Khimji has its stores in Bhubaneswar, Rourkela, Berhampur and Cuttack. The jewellery brand offers a vast and unique collection of gold, diamond, platinum, silver and other precious metals and stones. Apart from jewellery, Khimji has a unique collection of top international brands of watches and perfumes as well.



# How's the Josh ...low sir!

HAZLEWOOD'S MESMERISING FIVE-WICKET HAUL FORCE INDIA TO RECORD THEIR LOWEST SCORE IN TESTS AFTER BEING BOWLED OUT FOR A PALTRY 36 AS AUSTRALIA COMFORTABLY WIN THE MATCH IN TWO AND HALF DAYS TAKING A 1-0 LEAD IN THE BORDER-GAVASKAR TROPHY



TOO HOT TO HANDLE: Josh Hazlewood celebrates one of his wicket with his teammates in Adelaide, Saturday

PIC: ESPNCRICINFO



### SCORECARD

**India 1st innings 244 all out**  
**Australia 1st innings 191 all out**  
**India 2nd innings (overnight 9/1)**

Mayank Agarwal c Paine b Hazlewood 9, Jasprit Bumrah c & b Cummins 2, Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b Cummins 0, Virat Kohli c Green b Cummins 4, Ajinkya Rahane c Paine b Hazlewood 0, Hanuma Vihari c Paine b Hazlewood 8, Wriddhiman Saha c Labuschagne b Hazlewood 4, Ravichandran Ashwin c Paine b Hazlewood 0, Umesh Yadav not out 4, Mohammed Shami retired hurt 1; **Total: 36 (21.2 overs).**

**Fall:** 1/7 (Shaw), 2/15 (Bumrah), 3/15 (Pujara), 4/15 (Agarwal), 5/15 (Rahane), 6/19 (Kohli), 7/26 (Saha), 8/26 (Ashwin), 9/31 (Vihari), 9/36\* (Shami, retired hurt).

**Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 6-3-7-0, Pat Cummins 10.2-4-21-4, Josh Hazlewood 5-3-8-5.

**Australia 2nd innings**

Matthew Wade run out 33, Joe Burns not out 51, Marnus Labuschagne c Agarwal b Ashwin 6, Steve Smith not out 1; Extras: 2 (lb-1, nb-1); **Total: 93/2 (21 overs).**

**Fall:** 1/70 (Wade), 2/82 (Labuschagne).

**Bowlers:** Umesh Yadav 8-1-49-0, Jasprit Bumrah 7-1-27-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 6-1-16-1.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Adelaide, Dec 19:** The Indian cricket team under Virat Kohli faced their worst hour of embarrassment while collapsing to their lowest Test score of 36 as a rampaging Australia cruised to an emphatic eight-wicket victory inside two and half days in the opening Day/Night Test here Saturday.

There were no demons in the pitch but Josh Hazlewood (5-3-8-5) and Patrick Cummins (10.2-4-21-4) displayed fast bowling of highest quality to dismantle the visitors.

The sequence of 4, 9, 2, 0, 4, 0, 8, 4, 0, 4, and 1 on the scoreboard will rankle the fans but more so this team, for a very long time.

India's earlier lowest score was 42 at the Lord's in 1974 against England, known in Indian cricket parlance as the 'Summer of 42'. Saturday's total was also the lowest score in the brief history of D/N Tests and the joint

## LOWEST TOTALS IN TEST HISTORY

Score	Team	Versus	Venue	Year
26	NZ	ENG	Auckland	1955
30	SA	ENG	Port Elizabeth	1896
30	SA	ENG	Birmingham	1924
35	SA	ENG	Cape Town	1899
36	SA	AUS	Melbourne	1932
36	AUS	ENG	Birmingham	1902
36	IND	AUS	Adelaide	2020

## Numbers' game

- 201** No. of Test wickets for Josh Hazlewood, reaching the 200-mark with the wicket of R Ashwin
- 150** No. of Test wickets for Pat Cummins as the World No.1 bowler dismissed Virat Kohli to hit the milestone
- 3** No. of Test match defeats in succession for Kohli as captain for the first time, losing to New Zealand in two Tests and now against Australia
- 0** For the first time in 12 years, Kohli finished a calendar year without an international century as the last time this happened was in 2008, his debut year
- 6** No. of innings India have failed to go past 250-run mark in Tests as the instances began in New Zealand earlier this year

fifth lowest overall.

The easy target of 90 runs was achieved by the home side in only 21 overs without much fuss. They only lost Matthew Wade (33) and Marnus Labuschagne (6) in pursuit of the easy goal and in the process, opener Joe Burns (51 not out) got a confidence-boosting half century.

The home team collected 30 World Test Championship points from the win, while their skipper Tim Paine was adjudged player of the match for his gritty first innings knock of 73.

India have now lost three successive Tests well inside three days with two being in New Zealand earlier this year.

To make matters worse for the visitors, star pacer Mohammed Shami's series could well be over due to a wrist injury from a short ball from Pat Cummins, which could potentially be a fracture. Shami could

not continue and the Indian innings was terminated at 36/9 in 21.2 overs.

The likes of Sunil Gavaskar and the late Ajit Wadekar had long carried the baggage of that English Summer, inarguably one of the worst in the annals of Indian cricket.

It will now be replaced by the 'Summer of 36'.

Call it irony, but just like Gavaskar then, a modern day great like Virat Kohli will have this bit of avoidable history in his legacy, a day when one could hardly figure out what went wrong.

At one stage, India were reduced to 26/8 and looked like equalling the lowest ever Test score (26 by New Zealand vs England) but Hanuma Vihari's boundary helped them evade entry into the dark pages of cricketing history.

The Indian batting was completely exposed by the extra bounce generated by Australian pacers, who bowled every delivery on the off-middle channel after landing on the seam.

In an inexplicable collapse, India's much vaunted batsmen fell like nine pins with not a single one able to reach double figures.

Once nightwatchman Jasprit Bumrah (2) was out in the first over, Hazlewood and Cummins, literally decimated the tourists and also caused lasting damage to their pride. The likes of Mayank Agarwal (9), Cheteshwar Pujara (0) and Ajinkya Rahane (0) were all out in similar fashion.

All the deliveries were almost identical, angled in, which forced the batsmen to jab at them and just bounced a wee bit more. They de-

## THE 'OTP TO FORGET'

**VIRENDER SEHWAG:** The OTP to forget is 49204084041 (Indian batsmen's scores in the second innings).

**SACHIN TENDULKAR:** With the way India batted & bowled in the 1st innings, they were in the driver's seat, but the Aussies came back really hard this morning. That is the beauty of Test cricket. It's NEVER over till it's over. India was outclassed in the 2nd half. Congratulations to Australia!

**SUNIL GAVASKAR:** I mean, any team that is all-out for its lowest Test score since the time it started playing Test cricket, that's never good to see. But having said that, if any other team had been facing that kind of bowling, they would have also got out, maybe be not all-out for 36, maybe 72 or 80-90. So it's not fair to blame the Indian batsmen for the way they got out because it was just simply superb bowling by the Australian bowlers.

**BISHAN SINGH BEDI:** This is unmitigated disaster, 36 all out - absolutely. This can't be explained. Every good ball got a wicket. Mind you, the Indians did not throw away their wickets. They were edging the ball, and it was carrying. This is one of those things in cricket that can happen. And it has happened. You've got to accept it. My sympathies are with the Indian team. But the Australians really dominated and dwarfed the Indian batting line-up.

**SANJAY MANJREKAR:** 36 will no

doubt be looked at in isolation & should be too, but here's India's totals in last 3 Tests (2 in NZ) when the ball has moved around - 165, 191, 242, 124, 244, 36. Clearly India needs to improve its defensive skills. Easier said than done in today's environment.

**SHANE WARNE:** Wow!! What a bowling display that was from Pat Cummins & Josh Hazlewood here in Adelaide. Just outstanding. Have to feel for the Indian batsman as never saw that coming - it was one of those days where the batsman

nicked everything & didn't play and miss at all! Unbelievable...

**DAVID WARNER:** Unreal win by the lads today, bowlers what an effort today!! Simply unbelievable day of cricket.

**MICHAEL VAUGHAN:** Told ya ...India are going to get hammered in the Test Series.

**RP SINGH:** It was a bad day today no doubt but remember it's a 4-match series. We have bounced back in past and this team can do that too.

## Shami suffers wrist injury

**ADELAIDE:** Indian pacer Mohammed Shami's participation in the remainder of the Test series against Australia was thrown into doubt Saturday after he suffered a wrist injury in the opening Test here and found himself 'unable to even lift his arm'. The fast bowler was hit on the elbow by a Pat Cummins short ball during India's second innings Saturday which ended at a record lowest 36 for nine. He has been taken to a hospital for scans. "No news on Shami, he's going for a scan now. He was in a lot of pain, couldn't even lift his arm. We'll probably know in the evening what happens," Kohli revealed after the visitors succumbed to an eight-wicket loss.

## Ali, Crivellaro goals secures Chennaiyin win over Gaurs



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Goa, Dec 19:** Chennaiyin FC finally managed to register a win after five games, with 2-1 victory over FC Goa in the Indian Super League (ISL) at Fatorda Stadium here, Saturday.

In a game that saw 39 shots at goal, Rahim Ali (53rd minute) scored the match-winner after Jorge Ortiz (9) cancelled out Rafael Crivellaro's (fifth) olympic-goal opener. It was an easy win for the visitors who should have finished with a bigger goal margin, had it not for their

poor finishing.

Chennaiyin FC fired warning shots early in the game. Thapa made a darting run on the right and cut the ball back to an unmarked Crivellaro. The latter's first-time shot was pushed behind by Mohammad Nawaz.

The visitors were soon ahead in the game and it came from a moment of individual brilliance. Crivellaro got his corner-kick to loop over the Goa defenders and land in goal.

But the lead lasted for just four minutes as the Gaurs came up with an instant response in the ninth minute. Ortiz found Alexander Jesuraj on the right who squared the ball back to the Spaniard. His shot found the roof of the net.

Chennaiyin finally got their deserved lead in the 53rd minute when Crivellaro kept his composure in beating Donachie before playing a low cross at the far post where second-half substitute Rahim Ali had little work to tap the ball into empty net.

## FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

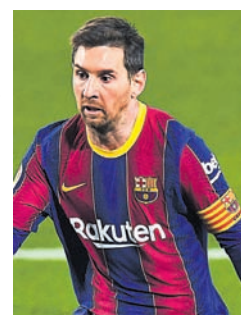
### Salah, Firmino braces help Liverpool crush Crystal Palace



**London:** Mohamed Salah made sure he had the final say in Liverpool's 7-0 rout of Crystal Palace after being dropped from the starting lineup Saturday, scoring twice after coming off the bench. The Premier League's top scorer was unusually benched - by coincidence or not - hours after an interview was published in which he flirted with a move to Spain and grumbled about not captaining the English champions. After coming off the bench in the second half, the Egyptian netted the final two goals inside three minutes late in the second half. With Salah not starting, it was a rare chance for Roberto Firmino and one the striker seized with his first double in a Premier League game in 650 days. Salah was the provider of Firmino's second in the 68th minute. This ruthless attacking display began with Takumi Minamino scoring his first league goal exactly a year after his transfer was announced by Liverpool. Sadio Mane and captain Jordan Henderson were also on target as Liverpool claimed their biggest away win in the league since 1991 to go six points clear of Tottenham at the top.

### Messi equals Pele, but Barca held by Valencia

**Barcelona:** Lionel Messi equalled Pele's one-club goals record but it was not enough for Barcelona as they were held to a 2-2 draw by Valencia's in Saturday's entertaining La Liga clash. The superstar forward notched his 643rd goal for the Catalan giants on the brink of half-time, scoring in the aftermath of having a penalty saved by Jaume Domenech. That milestone goal cancelled out Mouctar Diakhaby's deserved opener for Valencia, and Ronald Araujo then put the hosts in front with an acrobatic strike - his first Barcelona goal at senior level. But Barca could not hold on for a third straight league win - and a fifth in a row at Camp Nou - as Maxi Gomez prodded in 21 minutes from time to inflict another title blow on Ronald Koeman's men. Messi's spot-kick was pushed to one side by Domenech, only for Jordi Alba to send a deflected cross towards the back post for the Argentina international to nod over the line from two yards for his landmark goal.



## Boxing WC: Panghal wins gold, Satish clinches silver



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** World silver-medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) notched up a gold medal without having to fight his final bout, while veteran Satish Kumar (+91kg) settled for silver after an injury prevented him from competing in his summit clash at the Cologne World Cup in Germany Saturday.

Panghal was given a walkover by Germany's Argishti Terteryan.

Satish, who made the final after beating France's Djamil Dini Moindze in the semifinal last night, had to withdraw against Germany's Nelvie Tiafack owing to an injury.

Also making the final were Sakshi and Manisha in the women's 57kg category. The two boxers will now take on each other in the final.

While Manisha defeated two-time World Championship silver medal-winning compatriot Sonia Lather 5-0, Sakshi got the better of Germany's Ramona Graff 4-1.

However, Asian Games bronze winner Pooja Rai settled for a bronze medal after going down to the Netherlands' Nouchka Fontijn.

Also ending with bronze medals were Mohammed Hussamuddin and Gaurav Solanki in the men's 57kg category. Hussamuddin lost to local hope Hamsat Shadalov Solanki, on the other hand, was out-punched by Frenchman Samuel Kistohurry.